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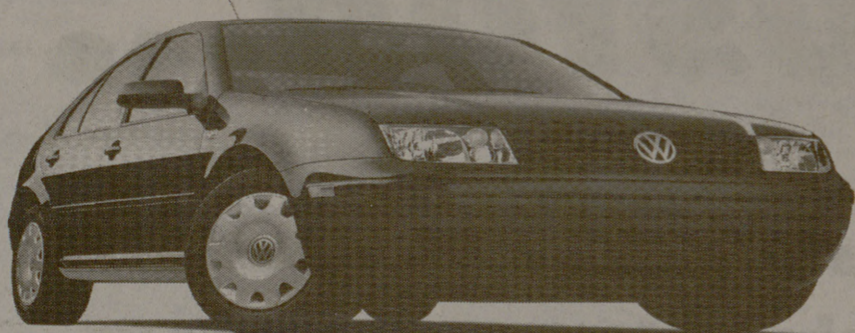
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Johnson, 13 others nominated for induction in Hall of Fame

SPRINGFIELD, Mass. (AP) — A few years later than he wanted, Magic Johnson is in position to join friend and rival Larry Bird in the Basketball Hall of Fame.

Johnson, unable to persuade the hall to waive its five-year retirement requirement so he could enter alongside Bird in 1998, was nominated for induction Wednesday in his first year of eligibility.

Johnson, who led the Los Angeles Lakers to five NBA championships, was nominated along with 13 other players and coaches and the Harlem Globetrotters.

"He's an obvious choice to me or anybody else that follows the game," said Lakers general manager Mitch Kupchak. "It's a formality, another jewel in his career."

There are so few doubts about the outcome of the Honors Committee vote that, in a break with tradition, the Hall of Fame is announcing its inductees in June in Los Angeles, where Johnson spent his entire 13-year pro career.

In his rookie season with the Lakers, Johnson seized control of Game 6 of the 1980 NBA Finals against the Philadelphia 76ers.

Starting at center for the injured Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and playing all five positions during the game, Johnson had 42 points, 15 rebounds and seven assists, leading the Lakers to the first of five titles during the decade.

At 21, Johnson became the first rookie to be selected Finals MVP.

The Lakers also won titles in 1982, '85, '87 and '88, and Johnson was the league MVP in 1987, '89 and '90. He was MVP of the All-Star game in 1990 and '92.

"Magic's contributions to the game make him one of the most deserving ever for this exceptional acknowledgment," said Larry Bird.

In 1979, Johnson led Michigan State to the NCAA championship over Indiana State and Bird in the first of their duels. They squared off three more times in the NBA Finals during the 1980s in a rivalry that ignited fan interest and transformed pro basketball.

Johnson left the NBA after the 1990-91 season following a stunning announcement that he had HIV. He returned to help the United States win Olympic gold in 1992 and returned to the NBA in the 1994-95 season, surpassing the 10,000 assist plateau.

Johnson hoped to enter the

Chicago Bulls and 76ers James Worthy of the Lakers of the game's greatest finishers.

Nominees need 18 votes from the Hall of Fame Committee for induction.

The coaches nominated Larry Brown, who won NCAA championship Kansas and last season Philadelphia to the Finals; Lefty Driesell, fourth-winningest coach in NCAA Division I history with 782 victories in a 44-year coaching career; Lute Olson, who led Arizona to the 1989 NCAA championship; Eddie Sutton, now Oklahoma State.

Bill Sharman, inducted as a player in 1976, is now a coach. He guided the Lakers to the 1972 NBA championship and also won championships with the Cleveland Cavaliers and the Utah Stars (1971).

Phoenix Suns CEO Steve Colangelo; college and professional coach Tex Winter; wheelchair basketball player Junius Kellogg were nominated as contributors, as were Globetrotters.

Earl Lloyd, the first African American player in the NBA, was nominated by the Hall of Fame Committee, along with coach Forrest Anderson, contributor Grady Lewis.

Cathy Rush, whose national championships at Immaculata College in 1970s brought national attention and scholarship money to women's college basketball, was nominated by the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame Committee. Players Debra Meneghin and Drazen Petrovic and coach Pedro Ferrandiz were nominated by the International Committee.

"He's an obvious choice to me or anybody else that follows the game. It's a formality, another jewel in his career."

— Mitch Kupchak
Lakers' general manager

Hall of Fame with Bird, who was inducted in 1998. He even asked the Hall to waive its rule requiring players be retired five years before induction.

"When he was young he was not a great shooter, his gift was passing and creating a type of up-and-down game that was fun to watch," Kupchak said. "But he kept working on it — he was always working on his game — and became an excellent shooter. Toward the end there was nothing that he couldn't do."

The other players nominated are Portland coach and former 76ers guard Maurice Cheeks; scoring star Adrian Dantley; defensive ace Bobby Jones; seven-time All-Star Chet Walker, who played with

Redemption

Continued from page 1B

the winner of the Texas-Nebraska match at 3 p.m. Saturday. The finals will be held Sunday at 1 p.m.

The tournament will also affect the Aggies' goal to play at home when the first rounds of the NCAA tournament start in mid-May.

The Aggies are currently No. 17 in the country, and the top 16 teams in the nation are set to be the likely hosts of first- and second-round action in the NCAA Tournament.

"I think the outcome of this tournament will really affect our seeding heading into the NCAA tournament," Cass said. "If we don't get anything done this weekend, it might hurt our argument to be in the top 16, so it is very important for us to have some solid outings this weekend."

The finals of the NCAA Tournament will be held for the first time at the Varsity Tennis Center beginning May 18.

"Being able to host the first two rounds of the tournament would be a big advantage for us," Cook said. "This tournament will have a huge impact on the NCAA field, so we're going to make whatever changes we can to have a shot at playing at home for the entire NCAA tournament."

Aim

Continued from page 1B

second time the Aggies have hosted the event. "It was a little bit of a surprise to host it this year," said A&M head coach Bobby Kleimecke. "It works out good for us because we had gotten tired of traveling. It's nice to be able to host home and not have to travel right now."

Fans who have traveled by the tennis courts may have noticed the temporary stands erected to accommodate the additional expected spectators. "This is going to be an exciting weekend," Terburgh said. "I couldn't believe they were preparing for that many people with the extra stands they set up."

The Aggie seniors hope to have an opportunity to host a NCAA regional in College Station but are aware that if they do not, the Big 12 tournament would be a great way to finish their college career at home.

"We are hoping that this isn't their last match here," Kleimecke said. "This group of seniors has given us a strong nucleus for us, and we want to send them out with good thoughts but hopefully we will get to host a NCAA regional here as well."

The Aggies' first match will be Friday at 3 p.m. against the winner of OU and Nebraska, followed by the semifinals on Saturday at 3 p.m. and a possible showdown between A&M and UT on Sunday for the championship at 1 p.m.

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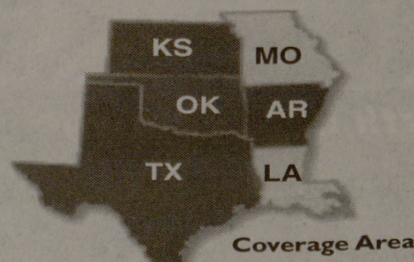
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