

LAS VEGAS

Sentinel Voice Sports

PORTLAND AND UTAH TEAMS TO BEAT IN THE WEST BULLS LOOK UNBEATABLE HEADING INTO PLAYOFFS

By W.G. Ramirez

The same question has been asked over and over again. It all started after Chicago's five-game championship series victory over the LA Lakers, then was repeated during the pre-season, All-Star break - same thing. Now we are in the midst of the NBA playoffs and the question still remains, "Can anyone stop the Chicago Bulls?"

Eastern Conference

The Bulls' first nemesis in the playoffs will be the Miami Heat, the first of the most recent expansion teams to make the playoffs. The Bulls hold a 14-0 record against Miami in the four years since Miami joined the NBA, and with Michael and Scottie hungry for a repeat, there won't be much sunshine, in Miami, for the Heat.

Larry Bird has been sidelined by back problems, yet the Celtics have won their last eight games, "Bird-less," to capture the Atlantic Division title. Bird isn't talking, the Celtics won't speculate and no one really knows if or



CHICAGO BULL'S
SCOTTIE PIPPEN

when he'll be ready for the playoffs. Chuck Person and Reggie Miller have revenge on their mind after last year's first-round series loss to Boston. Detlef Schrempf, the NBA's best sixth man, emerged as Indiana's best all-around player this season and

could play a key role in this series.

The darkhorse of the Eastern Conference playoffs could very well be the #3 seed Cleveland Cavaliers. The Cavs boast the NBA's second-best record yet had to settle for the third-seed because they play in the same division as Chicago. Although Cleveland's key players Brad Daugherty and Mark Price are battling injuries, the Cavaliers may be too solid for the vulnerable New Jersey Nets. With plenty of talent to carry them far, maturity is the one thing New Jersey will lack in this series.

The most exciting series could fall on the shoulders of #4 New York and #5 Detroit. Less than two weeks ago the Knicks scored only 61 points against the Pistons and held a five-game lead over the Celtics with eight to play. New York blew the #2 seed to Boston, on the final day of the season, so Detroit may have caught the Knicks "in the 'knick' of time." If the "Bad Boys

BEAUTY AND THE CHAMP



Miss Nevada, Alisia Prentiss, joins retired boxing champ Kid Akeem Anifowoshe, in a tribute by fans, friend and peers to the boxer's contribution to the sport. Photos By Savoy/LVS-Voice

of Motown" keep their cool and maintain Bill Laimbeer's temper, the Pistons could face Chicago in the second-round. Who knows, Laimbeer may square off with Patrick Ewing.

Western Conference

Top-seeded Portland should be facing the Houston Rockets but since they blew the final playoff berth, the 'Blazers will warm up for the second-round with the LA Lakers. Behind Clyde Drexler, Buck Williams, Jerome Kersey, Terry Porter along with the resurgence of center Kevin Duckworth, Portland will be dangerous.

(See NBA, Page 15)



AARON AT BAT

The 1992 Outlook

The 1992 baseball season will have to be a great one in order to match the excitement of last year. In 1991, both the National League and American League pennant winners, the Atlanta Braves and the Minnesota Twins, made the long journey from last place to the World Series in one season — a first in baseball.

One of the key reasons such an improvement was possible is the free-agency system. A baseball club can go out and pick up one player, who then can carry the team right to a championship. Without pitcher Jack Morris, for example, the Twins would not have won the American League pennant last year. Likewise, the Braves would not have won the National League pennant without Terry Pendleton and some of the other free agents on the team.

So, with one key player possibly making a difference, it is not hard to imagine a surprise team winning a division championship. Baseball prognosticators have never had it so tough.

Because of my job with the Braves, I am most familiar with the National League West. I see Atlanta as the team to beat in this division. Only complacency and overconfidence could stand in the Braves' way of repeating last year's success.

The competition is going to be tougher this year in the National League West. Houston has a lot of good young players, but I do not think the team is ready to compete for the championship. Cincinnati, however, has made some very good moves. They picked up two excellent pitchers, Greg Swindell and Tim Belcher, and I expect them to be very strong. The Los Angeles Dodgers lost some good pitching, and I don't expect them to be as good as they were in 1991 unless Orel Hershiser comes back with a great season.

In the National League East, I don't see the Pittsburgh Pirates winning again. They just don't impress me as being that strong. On the other hand, the New York Mets really helped themselves in the off-season by acquiring one of the best pitchers from the American League — Bret Saberhagen. Eddie Murray and Bobby Bonilla also will help the Mets, and if Dwight Gooden comes back to pitch the way he is capable of pitching, New York is going to be very tough.

In the American League East, I think Toronto finally has a ballclub that is going to do a lot of damage. The Blue Jays are a very solid team.

In the American League West, I don't know who Minnesota will find to pick up the slack left by Jack Morris's departure, but they always seem to come up with somebody. The Twins have a good organization, and it is a tribute to their management that the team is able to make the changes needed to stay a winner.

The only thing that appears certain about the new baseball season is that we can expect a few surprises between now and October. That's just baseball. ■

Hank Aaron is the top home-run hitter of all time with 755 homers. A member of baseball's Hall of Fame, Hank is senior vice president of the Atlanta Braves.

© 1992, PM Editorial Services

EDWARD M. BERNSTEIN & ASSOCIATES Attorneys At Law

Practicing Primarily In

ACCIDENTS AND INJURIES

Se Habla Español
Offices in Las Vegas,
Reno and Laughlin

500 So. 4th St., Las Vegas

384-4000

"Notice to the Public: Neither the State Bar of Nevada nor any agency of the State Bar has certified any lawyer identified here as a specialist or as an expert. Anyone considering a lawyer should independently investigate the lawyer's credentials and ability."