

National Sports Briefs

Police seeking Hawaii basketball standout
 DANBURY, Conn. — Anthony Harris, the leading scorer on the University of Hawaii basketball team, is being treated by Connecticut State Police as a fugitive for failing to appear in court on a reckless driving charge. State police said a charge of failure to appear had been lodged against Harris.

Maxwell gets jail term
 PHILADELPHIA — Philadelphia 76ers guard Vernon Maxwell was sentenced Monday to 90 days in jail after failing to meet court orders on a marijuana possession charge.

Maxwell's attorneys moved quickly to file an appeal, making it unlikely that the 30-year-old would see the inside of a jail cell just yet.

Last October 30, Maxwell pleaded no-contest to a misdemeanor charge of marijuana possession. He was ordered at the time to complete drug rehabilitation and submit to regular drug testing, requirements he failed to meet.

The stern 90-day sentence was three times that sought by prosecutors.

Buffalo's Copeland facing abuse charges
 HAMBURG, N.Y. — Buffalo Bills wide receiver Russell Copeland appeared in Hamburg Town Court last week on charges he broke his girlfriend's nose during a fight.

Police in this Buffalo suburb said they received a 911 call early last week from Copeland's home and arrived to find that Copeland's companion, Natasha Cook, was bruised and her nose apparently had been broken.

76ers to decide fate of Lucas after season
 PHILADELPHIA — John Lucas can rest easy — for now.

Lucas will retain his titles as coach, general manager and vice president of basketball operations for the Philadelphia 76ers, owner Harold Katz said.

Katz said Lucas would get the chance to finish the second year of his four-year contract before a decision would be made on his future.

As of Thursday, the 76ers are 8-34 and are currently in last place in the Atlantic Division.

UAB Basketball player charged in altercation
 BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — Anthony Thomas, Alabama-Birmingham's No. 2 scorer, left the team after being charged with beating his girlfriend, a former UAB women's player.

Thomas was charged after what the school termed a "domestic altercation" involving Ayanna Moore.

NCAA to investigate Oklahoma football
 AUSTIN, Texas — The NCAA is investigating whether Oklahoma coach John Blake improperly used his ties to the Dallas Cowboys to recruit players,

the Austin American Statesman reported.

Bob Oliver, director of NCAA Legislative Services, said his office has received information that Cowboys coach Barry Switzer was involved with recruiting athletes last weekend at the Oklahoma campus in Norman, and some Cowboys players allegedly have been calling prospects at their homes on behalf of Blake.

Strawberry pleads innocent to charges
 LOS ANGELES -- Darryl Strawberry pleaded innocent to charges that he ignored a court's order to make support payments for his two children.

Strawberry, who played for the New York Yankees and the Los Angeles Dodgers before becoming a free agent last fall, is charged with one count of willful failure to provide child support and two counts of failure to obey a court order.

Strawberry did not appear at the Superior Court hearing. His lawyer, Milton Grimes, entered the plea on his behalf. A March 6 date was set.

If convicted, Strawberry could serve one year in county jail.

Owners, players meet on interleague play
 WASHINGTON — Interleague play in 1997 moved a step closer to certainty when baseball owners and the players' union met for the first time to talk about the issue.

"It was a positive meeting. They want to get it done," baseball spokesman Rich Levin said. Owners unanimously voted last week in favor of teams playing 15 or 16 interleague games starting in 1997. The union still must give its approval.

Union head Donald Fehr and Randy Levine, the owners' chief negotiator, talked about a one-year agreement on interleague play. Continuing the concept past 1997 will likely be linked to a new labor agreement between the sides. Still to be resolved is what to do with the designated hitter in interleague games.

Mike Tyson's prisons privileges questioned
 DANVILLE, Ind. — Sworn testimony about special privileges supposedly granted to Mike Tyson while in prison left prison officials insisting the boxing got no special treatment.

A judge apparently understood a prison guard to say that Tyson had as many as 20 visitors at once, in violation of prison rules.

A Department of Correction spokesman said prisoners are permitted to have the names of 20 people on their lists. None, including Tyson, has permission for more than five visitors at one time.

Tyson exceeded that number when civil rights leader Jesse Jackson visited and brought as many as six people.

The old "Magic" returns to Lakers

Sentinel-Voice
 "Pray to God a lot, number one, and he will answer your prayers. Then, don't stop living...enjoy life, no matter what happens. Put that smile on your face and continue to live. No matter if you're handicapped, HIV positive, whatever it is, just keep living. Hey, God has answered my prayers. I never thought I would be back here. But here I am. Thank you Lord!" That's the advice Earvin "Magic" Johnson gave during a post-game interview to all those who have had to overcome major set-backs in life — including those who have discovered they're HIV positive. And if anyone should know, he should, because it would appear his dream has definitely been answered.

Johnson, who left the NBA after testing HIV positive,

returned to action Tuesday night in Los Angeles after a four-and-a-half year absence from the game, to aid the Los Angeles Lakers to a 128-118 win over the Golden State Warriors. More impressive than the win itself was the way he and his teammates played in his first game back.

In 27 minutes of play, Johnson nearly managed a triple-double, scoring 19 points, grabbing eight rebounds, and dishing out 10 assists. In addition to that, he seemed to energize the young Lakers — along with the fans — who scored a season high 128 points, a season-high 72 points at the half, and a NBA season best 44 assists. Adding to Johnson's heroics were Cedric Ceballos' 33 points, Nick Van Exel's 16, Elden Campbell's 14 and Vlade Divac's 12.

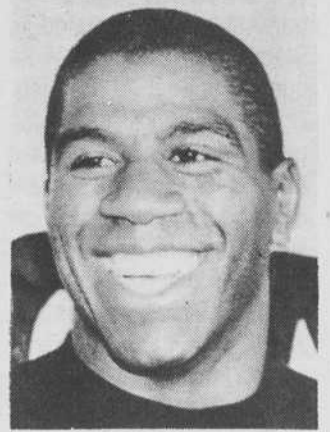
"I think the hardest thing is just learning how to play with

these guys — getting the plays — how am I gonna' fit into this team," said Johnson, who's 27-pounds heavier than when he last played a NBA game in 1991, when asked what the hardest part of his comeback would be. "See, I'm used to dominating a game, and now I have to understand that, hey, Nick Van Exel, Peeler, Ceballos, these guys are gonna' dominate. Now I have to pick and choose where I'm gonna' get mine, that's the hardest thing. And also, just playing basketball again."

Those fortunate enough to be inside the electrified Great Western Forum Tuesday gave Johnson, 36, a standing ovation as he shed his warm-ups and took to the court nearly three minutes into the game.

"When I came out onto the floor, it was like...I didn't know where I was. I was out there, but I couldn't feel the game," he said of stepping onto the court for the first time. "It wasn't until I went for a defensive rebound and Joe Smith hit me from behind and Seikaly caught me in the front — bam, bam, bam. Then I said, 'Oh, oh...I'm back now!'"

Could anything be tougher for Johnson and the Lakers than his first game back after over four years? Only one thing. The red-hot Chicago Bulls (39-3 on the season) and their terrifying super-trio of Superman (Michael



Earvin "Magic" Johnson was all smiles after his first game back with the Lakers. In his first outing he scored 19 points, grabbed 8 rebounds, and dished out 10 assists in a 128-118 win over Golden State

Jordan), Batman (Scottie Pippin), and Rod-Man (guess who), who they'll face Friday night at the Forum.

"They're the best passing team in basketball; they're the best defensive team in basketball; then their will to win is higher than everybody else's. They know how to win, and I'm trying to get this group I'm playing with now to understand that, said Johnson. "We're gonna' get it together."

And how do the other players in the league feel about Magic's return? Perhaps Reggie Miller of the Indiana Pacers put it best when he said, "I don't think he should have ever left!"

Runnin' Rebels

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Sanders, who hails from Westchester (Calif.) High School, has shown signs at the point the past couple of games, and according to Bayno, may move into the starting lineup.

Next, the Runnin' Rebels will play host to San Jose State Thursday evening at the Thomas & Mack. The Spartans (4-13

overall, 3-6 in conference play) are led by 6-7 senior forward Sam Allen (12.8 points and 5.2 rebounds per game), 6-7 senior center Roy Hammonds (11.4 points and 6.9 rebounds per game), and 6-6 sophomore forward Olivier Saint-Jean (13.7 points and 6.5 rebounds per game).

Tip-off is slated for 8:05 p.m.

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