

SPORTS

**RUNNING FOR RECORDS**

Dallas Cowboys running back Emmitt Smith picks up 16 yards against the San Diego Chargers in the first quarter Sunday in Irving, Texas. Smith moved into second place behind Walter Payton as the all-time rusher in NFL history.

Jordan

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the world, and in these difficult times, we can all use a little more joy in our lives."

Jordan's regular-season debut will be Oct. 30 at Madison Square Garden against the New York Knicks, and his first home game for the Wizards will be Nov. 3 against Allen Iverson and the Philadelphia 76ers.

Jordan will be in the unusual position of playing for the coach he hired, Doug Collins, who joined the Wizards in April and also coached Jordan for three seasons with the Bulls in the 1980s. Jordan will share the court with players he signed, drafted and traded for, including high school sensation Kwame Brown, selected No. 1 overall by the Wizards in June, and veteran forward Christian Laettner—a graduate of Duke, the archrival of Jordan's alma mater, North Carolina.

"We'll see how fast the No. 23 Wizards jersey becomes the No. 1 selling jersey in the NBA. That probably will start today," Collins said.

NBC said it would change its television schedule to include some Wizards games. Turner Sports will do the same, with TBS in line to air the season-opener.

Jordan said he would have no further comment on his return until Oct. 1. His first official practice with the Wizards will be the next day, when training camp opens in Wilmington, N.C.

His supporting cast will include the likes of Jahidi White, Richard Hamilton and Courtney Alexander—none of whom were in the NBA when Jordan played for the Bulls. Turning a team that won only 19 games last season into a winner might be an insurmountable challenge—even for Jordan.

Jordan suffered three physical setbacks during the summer, raising doubts about

whether his body could endure the rigors of an 82-game schedule. Back spasms and knee tendinitis curtailed his workouts, and two cracked ribs from a collision in a pickup game took him off the court for a month.

He will return without the all-star cast that he hoped would accompany him. Charles Barkley, who spoke of playing with Jordan, abandoned his comeback bid, and the Wizards were unable to sign any marquee players. But, by ridding the Wizards of the high-salaried, long-term contracts of Rod Strickland, Juwan Howard and Mitch Richmond, Jordan has given the Wizards enough salary cap flexibility to restock the roster next summer.

Jordan's first-year salary of \$1 million was confirmed by a team source, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Jordan won 10 scoring titles and is the NBA's fourth all-time leading scorer with 29,277 points. He has averaged a league-record 31.5 points per regular season game throughout his career and 33.4 in the playoffs.

Jordan's first retirement came in October 1993, after he led the Bulls to three titles. He returned to the Bulls in March 1995, and led them to three more titles, then retired again in January 1999, shortly before the start of the lockout-shortened season.

He made his final shot in a Chicago uniform, sinking a jumper over Bryon Russell of Utah in Game 6 of the 1998 NBA Finals—a play that came to be known as Jordan's "last shot"—to give the Bulls their sixth title of the decade.

"While nothing can take away from the past," Jordan said, "I am firmly focused on the future and the competitive challenge ahead of me."

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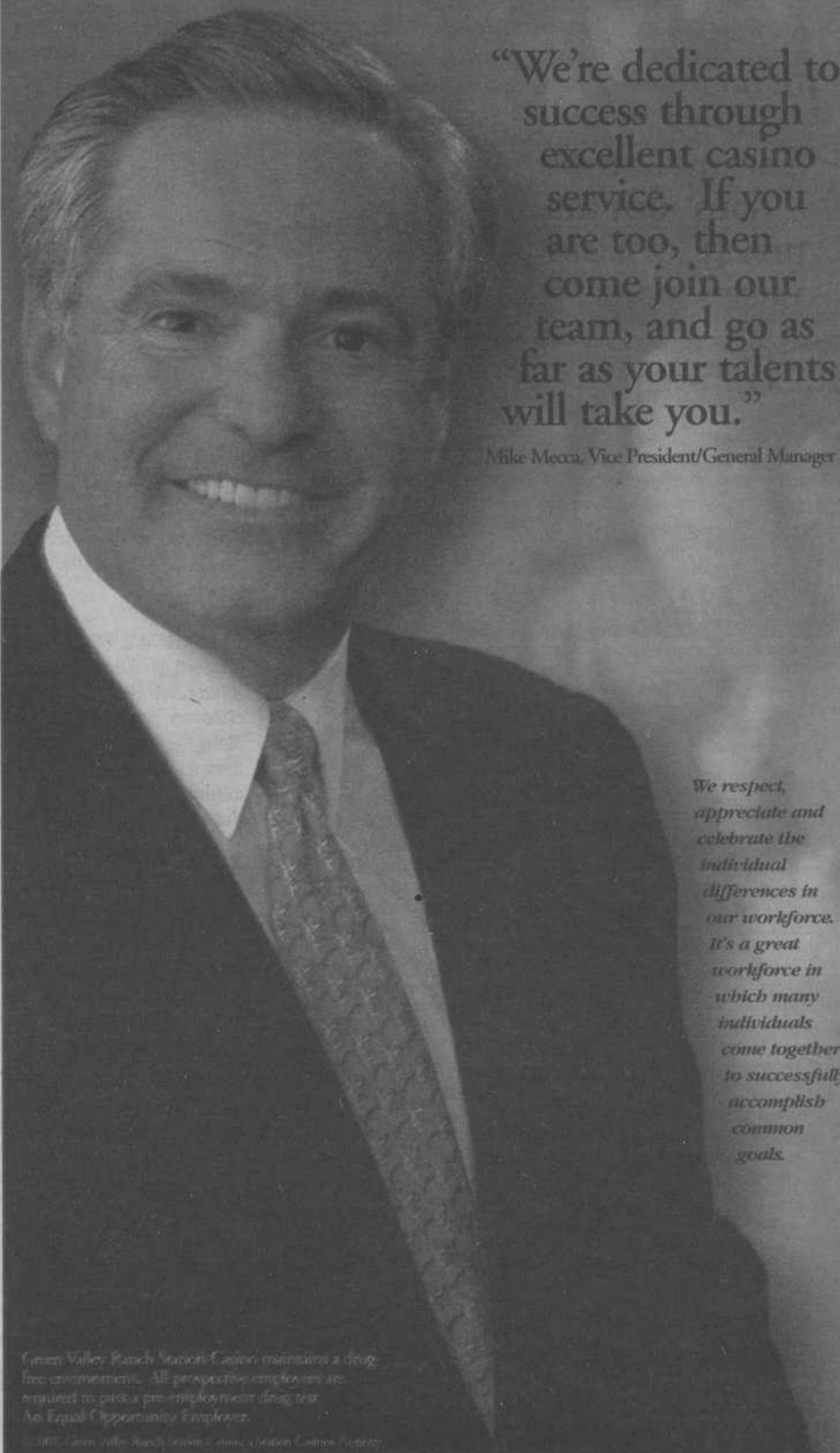
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