

OUR VIEW Wake-up Call

You have to go back to the days of pro basketball yore to find the last Caucasian—we're talking about skin color, not ethnicity—taken as the first overall pick in the NBA draft. On Wednesday, the Toronto Raptors selected Andrea Bargnani, a 6'11 center from Italy, as the top NBA pick. *Houston Chronicle* writer Michael Murphy describes Bargnani as such: "He's not Dirk Nowitzki, but he's not a bust like Darko Milicic, either. Like other European bigs, Bargnani is allergic to defense and rebounding, but he can shoot."

Not exactly a ringing endorsement for purportedly the best amateur hoopster in the world. (In comparison, Murphy notes that 6'6 Washington shooting guard Brandon Moy, selected sixth by Minnesota, "has been called the most-complete player in the draft, and this former part-time janitor will have to be if he's going to clean up one of the league's most up-and-down franchises.")

Bargnani's selection shouldn't come as a surprise to basketball aficionados. More pronounced than the league's former youth movement (former because the NBA has moved the age minimum from 18 to 19; U.S. players must be one year removed from high school and 19, while international ballers must turn 19 during the calendar year of that draft) has been the explosion of foreign-born players. At the beginning of the 2005-06 season, there were 55 foreign players on NBA opening-day rosters, or 12.5 percent of the NBA total. A few of these players are among the league's best: the San Antonio Spurs' nearly indefensible point guard Tony Parker is from France; Dirk Nowitzki, the Dallas Mavericks' dead-eye perimeter-shooting big man, hails from Germany; Houston Rockets' gargantuan center Yao Ming was born in China. The list goes on.

This trend of NBA teams scouring the globe for talent is particularly important to every African-American male harboring dreams of a professional career on the hardwood. The already minute chances of making the NBA are that much smaller now that the world is the recruiting ground. It's no longer enough to be the best in your city or state or conference or even in the United States. Not when there's some sweet-shooting kid in France who hits three-pointers with marksman-like proficiency; or a 6'7, mack truck of an Ethiopian teenager who rebounds like a young Charles Barkley, or a Brazilian phenom who dunks so much that the rim should be raised up two feet. In some cases, the societal desperation that birthed a pro-sports-or-bust attitude among legions of rural and inner-city Blacks is now motivation for foreigners: it's one thing to use sports to escape the 'hood, another to use it to flee civil war.

Like Major League Baseball—Latin Americans have since surpassed Blacks as the sport's dominant ethnicity—the NBA is becoming less of a Black league. Which should be a wake-up call to all aspiring Black NBAers to 1) work hard to pursue your dream and 2) not place all your eggs in the one basket. Think about what you will do for a living if you can't make the NBA. Pro hoops may still be a ticket out of desperation, but there's no guarantee that once you get there, you'll have a job.

Star is Not Born

No matter what you believe—was Star Jones Reynolds fired or did she leave "The View" on her own volition?—the whole affair is sad. What's worse, at least for Reynolds, is that her autopsy is being conducted in public and presided over by a woman the American public generally trusts—executive producer Barbara Walters.

Walters told the *San Jose Mercury News* that Jones, who'd co-hosted the show since its inception nine years ago, was a cancer. "They [ABC executives] had done a great deal of research, and her negatives were rising. Not so much because of what she did on the air. It was things she did off the air. The audience was losing trust in her. They didn't believe some of the things she said."

For her part, Jones says she was fired. Here's hoping Jones lands on her feet and rekindles her celebrity flame.



Black vote in jeopardy?

Dora LaGrande
Sentinel-Voice

Is the Black vote in jeopardy? First, let me answer the question. No, the Black vote is not in jeopardy, per se. Last week, House Republican leaders cancelled the vote to renew the Voting Rights Act and chose not to reschedule it, even though it expires in August 2007. However, 535 mere mortals don't control our right to vote, and, hopefully, Black people have finally come to that conclusion and have stopped running around saying that we can "lose the right to vote."

The three long-standing amendments in the Constitution regarding voting only say that if there is a vote, a citizen can't be denied participation based on race (15th Amendment), gender (19th Amendment) or age, provided that he or she is at least 18 years old (26th Amendment).

We have overcome being panic-stricken regarding our voting rights; however, there is still cause for great concern. Now that the misconception has subsided, I will explain what America and Black voters are in jeopardy of losing.

Equal voting rights act were fought for and secured in 1965 and serve as the very foundation of democracy with franchise being central to our individual and collective abilities to impact public policy and achieve real differences in our communities. It is clear that many



ON THE RECORD

By Dora LaGrande

people believed—then and now—that the way to fulfill the promise of our democracy was to make it work for all citizens.

The 1965 law was passed to strengthen the 15th Amendment in the face of indisputable evidence that many states had found creative ways to disqualify certain voters, mainly Blacks and Native Americans. The law was renewed in 1970, 1975 and 1982 because Congress was persuaded that discriminatory practices were continuing—by then, mainly against Black, Native American and Spanish speaking citizens.

So Congress' debate centers around the reauthorization of three key expiring provisions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. This historic Act is widely considered the most effective civil rights law in American history for its ability to protect the voting rights for all Americans. In addition to guaranteeing that no citizen can be denied the right to vote because of skin color, it outlawed poll taxes, literacy tests, Whites-only primaries and other devices that kept minorities from voting.

There are three key provisions of the Voting Rights

Act that will expire in August of 2007 unless Congress acts:

- Section 5: Preclearance and Bail Out Provision.
- Section 203: Language Assistance Provision.
- Sections 6 to 9: Federal Examiner and Observer Provisions.

Section 5, the Preclearance and Bail Out Provision, requires states and local governments with a history of significant discrimination to obtain approval from either the U.S. Justice Department or the District Court in Washington, D.C., before they can make changes in election procedures.

Section 5 prevents discrimination before it starts by making covered jurisdictions show that its proposed

changes are not discriminatory. The "bail out" portion of this provision removes a jurisdiction from the compliance requirement if it can prove that (1) it has been in full compliance with the preclearance requirements for the past 10 years, (2) no test or device has been used to discriminate on the basis of race, color, or language minority status, and (3) no lawsuits against the jurisdiction alleging voter discrimination are pending. Is this provision still needed? Absolutely.

In 2005, Georgia legislators voted to require voters to pay \$20 for a special card if they did not have photo identification. The law affected mostly poor people and people of color who either did not have ready access to legal identification or could not afford the fee. Although the Bush Justice Department approved the change, a federal judge ruled against the plan on constitutional grounds. (See LaGrande, Page 11)

NEVADA'S ONLY AFRICAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER

LAS VEGAS Sentinel Voice

GRIOT COMMUNICATIONS GROUP, INC.
THE 15TH SHALL BE YOURS

Nevada's only African-American community newspaper.
Published every Thursday by Griot Communications Group, Inc.
900 East Charleston Boulevard • Las Vegas, Nevada 89104
Telephone (702) 380-8100
Email: lvsentinelvoice@earthlink.net

Contributing Writers:
Asmeret Asghedom
Chelsi Cheatom
Debbie Hall
Tasha Pope
Lés Pierres Streater
Photographer:
Isaac Sawyer

Ramon Savoy, Publisher, Editor-in-Chief
Parker Philpot, Copy Editor
Don Snook, Graphics
Ed & Betty Brown, Founders

Member: National Newspaper Publishers Association
and West Coast Black Publishers Association