

# SPORTS

## A Hero That Should Influence All

BY BARI MANCE  
Pioneer Sports Editor

Throughout time people have always worshipped athletes with exceptional abilities. In the Ancient Greek times there were the Olympians and in the Roman times the Gladiators, now a days people look up to self-centered, over-paid, and over-rated athletes who aren't in it for the game, they play for the dollars.

But there are some who aren't this way and these are the athletes that deserve the title of hero. Players who take the time to talk with fans, and enjoy the feeling of playing, not for money but for the love of their

sport.

Dot Richardson is one of these athletes. She has been on the Olympic softball team in Atlanta and in Sydney. Although retired now, Richardson still has a major impact on the sport. She has softball bats with her name on it, and if you ask anyone within the sport who she is, you won't find a single person who hasn't heard of her. People say that Richardson has done as much with softball as Mia Hamm has with soccer.

Recently, Richardson was in Rochester. She was in town to help with the Special Olympics. Although she didn't have to, she spent almost two hours after the clinic hanging out with people who wanted to see her.

Girls of all ages lined up to see her, talk to her, take their pictures with her, and get her autograph. And Richardson stood there the whole time, with a smile on her face, talking to every single person there...every single person.

Towards the end of the session, as the people dwindled down, most would think that Richardson would be tired, but she just got more energetic, telling stories of Olympic glory and her trials on the team.

Richardson said to everyone, "I looked around at my team and said, 'We are not going out like this. Look at us. Look at who is on our team. I am proud to be on a team with this much talent. I am proud of every single one

of you. We are the best in the world. Now it is time to play like it.' And as I said that more and more of the girls stood up and started getting excited. I knew that we were going to win it all, and we had to win five in a row in order to win gold, and we did."

Looking around, the girls faces lit up with possibilities. Maybe I could be like Dot, they were thinking. Maybe that could be me. Maybe I could be an Olympian, or maybe I could influence someone like Dot Richardson has influence me.

That is what a hero should be, someone who has the power to let a little child dream.

## Jordan Would Ruin His Legacy With a Comeback

BY JOHN FOLLACO  
Pioneer Sports Editor

Believe it or not, all signs indicate that the greatest basketball player to ever lace up a pair of Nike's, Michael Jordan, will return to the NBA hardwood in October.

Say it ain't so!

Granted, his Airness has insisted that it isn't so, claiming repeatedly that he is 99.9% sure that he will never again return to the court.

Right- and Bill Clinton never had sexual relations with Monica Lewinsky.

If Michael Jordan wasn't planning on returning next fall, then he wouldn't be working out six hours a day, practicing with his Washington Wizards, or hiring his former coach Doug Collins to coach the Wizards next season. Instead he would be playing with his children, lowering his handicap, and

banging his head against the wall trying to turn around the woeful Wizards.

Non-believers claim Jordan won't return because he has nothing left to prove; that there couldn't be a more perfect ending to his magnificent career than the buzzer beating push off...errr... shot heard 'round the world that earned him his sixth NBA championship.

Those would be valid arguments in most cases. But then again, most people do not possess Michael Jordan's ego.

That very ego lead Jordan to abort his lame attempt to become a professional baseball player and return to the NBA several years ago. And it is that same ego, now bruised by his failures as vice president of basketball operations for the Washington Wizards, which is leading to the third coming of Michael Jordan Superstar.

More than anybody, Jordan hates

failure. And since becoming minority owner of the Wizards a year ago, Jordan has done nothing but fail. He has spent the past year trying to rid his team of the ludicrous contracts possessed by Juwan Howard, Rod Strickland, and Mitch Richmond. Strickland and Richmond still remain. Leonard Hamilton, Jordan's hand picked coach of the team, did not prove to be NBA material. And instead of jockeying for playoff position, the Wizards spent the year jockeying for draft position.

Michael Jordan has never been known for his patience, therefore the only solution he can see is dawning good old number 23 once again. Either that or admit failure: my guess is that he'll put on the jersey.

It's a shame too. We've seen this all too often, great athletes not knowing when to hang up their high tops...and keep them there!

Unfortunately, when Jordan finally does retire once and for all, our last memory of his playing career will not be sinking the game winning shot in Game 6 of the NBA Finals. Instead it will be of his single handed, unsuccessful attempt to make the Wizards into something they're not: winners. Until this circus sideshow comes to an end, Jordan fans will be force-fed highlights of a man who will only be a shadow of his former self. It just isn't right.

For once Michael, Just DON'T Do It. Please, do yourself a favor and remain in your owner's box atop MCI Arena. However, if that luxury suite isn't quite big enough to contain your massive ego, do the rest of us a favor and PLEASE don't bring Charles Barkley with you. Having to witness your un-retirement will be bad enough as it is.

## NHL Playoffs Nothing Short of Spectacular

BY JOE VENNIRO  
Pioneer Editor in Chief

As round one of the 2001 NHL Playoffs comes to end, I am reminded why the NHL has the best playoff system among the four major sports.

Every game, whether it was Buffalo vs. Philadelphia, or Colorado vs. Vancouver was an absolute dogfight. The goaltending was tremendous, action was wild, and every team played with desperation.

It seemed like every night for the past 10 days, anywhere from 3-5 pulse pounding NHL playoff games were being played and just about all of them were able to be seen on ESPN, ESPN2, or ABC.

The key why the NHL playoffs have been so amazing so far is that just about every game has been a 1-goal game. All of the games have gone down to the wire, with the exception of the Buffalo Sabres' 8-0 bombing of the

Philadelphia Flyers in game six of their series.

Thirteen games have gone in to overtime so far in the playoffs, which is a little more than halfway from the record of 28, set in the 1993 playoffs. Every time a game goes into overtime, it can end on one shot. One mistake, could be the turning point in the series. A game could last five minutes in overtime, or an extra four hours, like last year when Philadelphia beat Pittsburgh 2-1 in an epic five-overtime battle. Superstars become legends, and nobodies become some bodies in playoff overtimes.

Yes, there have been upsets. Toronto, who lost all five meetings to divisional rival to Ottawa during the regular season, and finished 18 points behind the Senators, pulled off a shocking 4-0 series sweep over Ottawa, who was the second best team in the Eastern Conference.

Los Angeles, who was fortunate to

even make the playoffs, was on the verge of coming back from a 2-0 series deficit to stun heavily favorite Detroit as this story went to press. Included in that series was a miraculous comeback by L.A. in game four. Down 3-0 with less than seven minutes to go, and many of the fans in the Staples Center filing out, Los Angeles scored three goals in the final six and a half minutes, sending the game to overtime, where they won in overtime on a goal by fourth line player Jesse Belanger.

Favorites such as New Jersey, Colorado, St. Louis advanced somewhat easily. Dallas and Buffalo, two teams that met in the Cup finals two years ago, also advanced, but both in six-game wars.

Dallas played upstart Edmonton for the fifth straight postseason. While Dallas ended Edmonton's season for the fourth straight year, four of the six games went to overtime and five of the six, were decided by a goal.

Buffalo and Philadelphia, who were separated by two points in the regular season, played five tooth-and-nail games, before Buffalo, in front of 18,690 rabid fans at HSBC Arena ended the series in shocking fashion, squashing Philly and probable Vezina trophy winner Roman Chechmanek 8-0. Buffalo hasn't scored eight goals in a game since New Year's Day 2000, and did against one of the league's most stingiest defenses no less.

As far as the rest of the playoffs go, I would have to say Buffalo and New Jersey will meet in the Eastern Conference final, while Colorado and Dallas will meet in the West final for the third straight year. I believe Colorado and Buffalo will meet in a hard fought Stanley Cup final, and Colorado will give Patrick Roy his fourth Stanley Cup in a seven game classic over the upstart Sabres