

# Jordan returns to NBA as head of basketball operations with Wizards

by Sam Smith  
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CHICAGO - It would be the kind of movie Frank Capra would have made, titled something like "Mr. Jordan Goes to Washington," or "Here Comes Mr. Jordan."

Guys are failing and desperate, in need of help. Hero comes to the rescue. Everyone goes home happy. It's heavenly.

Though Michael Jordan wants no part of Hollywood, he is confident of a happy ending as he takes his basketball acumen and reputation out of Chicago. Jordan on Wednesday was named head of basketball operations for the NBA Washington Wizards.

"I was drafted by Chicago," Jordan said during a news conference in Washington, D.C. "We were at the bottom of the totem pole to some degree, and it took us some work to get to the top. My efforts to try to make this team a successful one, quite naturally, are going to take some time. But I look forward to the challenge. I look forward to turning this thing around, to see if I can help this franchise back to where (it once was) with a championship."

"Basketball has been my life. It always has been," Jordan continued. "I know it. I know it inside and out because I have experienced it. This is an easy transition for me, to be involved with a team, have input on the talent on the team and the way that talent performs. Doing movies is not."

And with that one of the nation's great stars returned to the NBA, just over a year after he announced his retirement as a player. But for the first time since 1984, not as a member of the Chicago Bulls.

Jordan accepted what co-owner Ted Leonsis said was "significant equity ownership" to become chief of basketball operations for the Wizards. Leonsis, who recently acquired 44 percent of the team from majority owner Abe Pollin, gave Jordan an ownership share worth an estimated \$50 million, according to a source involved in the negotiations.

Though rumors of Jordan joining another team have circulated around the NBA since Jordan negotiated for a stake in the Charlotte Hornets last year, it still comes as a shock for Jordan to be associated with a franchise other than the Bulls, whom he led to six NBA championships.

Even Jordan seemed a little embarrassed about going on a different NBA payroll when he opened a jammed press conference about one hour late, seated with the Wizards' owners and Washington, D.C., Mayor Anthony Williams.

"This is new to me," Jordan said. "Not you people watching me and every move I make, but just being in a city to give my support to another team. Normally I'm in support of the Chicago Bulls, which has been a great situation for me."

But Jordan said he never had a similar opportunity with the Bulls.

"Quite honestly I never was offered this situation in Chicago. That's not to blame Jerry (Reinsdorf). When I retired I wasn't looking for this platform. It just evolved."

"When the Charlotte situation didn't happen, and Ted came to me with the concept that I felt was acceptable, (it) provided a lot of opportunities for me and gave me a great challenge to come in and utilize my knowledge of the game and have an imprint on the game I don't play anymore."

"Chicago is taking a different direction," Jordan said. "I'm not faulting them. I'm not doing this as a retaliation to them. This is an opportunity for me. I haven't had an opportunity to tell Jerry about it. But I'm pretty sure he can read. For the last year I've been involved in some ownership opportunities."

Reinsdorf released a statement saying: "I want to wish Michael nothing but success and good fortune in his new



Retired basketball star Michael Jordan announces that he will head operations of the NBA Washington Wizards at a news conference on Jan. 19 at MCI Center, the downtown sports arena that is the Wizards' home.

role with the Washington Wizards. Michael will forever be a special part of the Bulls' family. He has always thrived on challenges and opportunities. I expect nothing less from him now. I wish him all the best and look forward to discussing this new challenge with him when next we speak."

Though Jordan has had nothing to do with the Bulls since his retirement, he insisted there were no hard feelings.

"I don't have any regrets or any animosity toward (Reinsdorf) for not offering me an opportunity to be with the Bulls," Jordan said. "The best way for them to start over is probably to start over fresh. That's the direction they chose, but my energy is here and I'm going to try to do the best here I can in Washington."

It's not likely to be easy even for Jordan. The Wizards, 12-28 and ahead of only the Bulls after a 104-86 loss to Dallas Wednesday, won't have Michael Jordan as a player. NBA rules prevent players from being involved in team ownership and Jordan reiterated that he would not play, though he intends to practice with the team.

Jordan did reveal some of his immediate plans. He said he would spend considerable time evaluating, and he will not fire General Manager Wes Unseld and hopes to work in tandem with him. "Wes and I will be collaborating on every issue pertaining to basketball," Jordan said.

He will retain his family residence in Chicago and commute to Washington. "My roots are Chicago, my kids are in school, (but) I will be here in Washington for as much time as it takes to turn this team around."

He will be independent from his agent, David Falk, a Washington-area resident who has been a powerful force in placing his players with certain teams. "I know people are going to try to make it seem David Falk is running the team," Jordan said. "I've read some of that. David works for me instead of me working for David. When the decisions are made, it's always been my decision. He certainly can be a pain, but he's a great pain to have on your side. I've read it can be an issue, but we will address that."

He will have the final say, under the auspices of majority owner Abe Pollin, on all decisions, such as trades, the draft and signings.

He will scout colleges and perform other duties normally associated with basketball operations executives. "I will

find ways to do that," Jordan said.

He will be hands-on in all phases of basketball operations. "Will I practice with the team? I may," Jordan said. "The best evaluation of a player I can ever give is to look in his eyes and see how scared he may be. I'm a player two years removed. I know a lot of the talent and a lot of the signs and I'm looking forward to seeing that."

Jordan's presence is viewed as a coup for the Wizards, who haven't won a playoff game since 1988 and have been regarded as one of the worst run franchises in the NBA over the last decade. Jordan's presence gives them instant credibility, and, they hope, an entree to the top free agents. That could take time, though; the Wizards have financial commitments that keep them above the league salary cap at least through the 2001-2002 season.

Plus, Jordan is a beginner in team management. Playing came naturally to him. Will scouting, negotiating and making deals?

"My efforts to try and make this team a successful one is going to take some time," Jordan said. "A lot of people probably say just by Michael Jordan being in charge and making decisions, he's never had an opportunity to do that and maybe that's not the ingredient that may turn this team around. But then again it may be."

"That's the beauty of trying and going out and seeing what happens. It's different. I don't get to play. I don't get to wear the Wizards uniform. But hopefully I can influence the players who wear those uniforms."

"I have an attitude about the way I played, and my job is to see if I can pass that on to the players in those uniforms," Jordan said. "We have a lot of problems with the cap room. Those are issues we'll have to deal with and I'm sure you guys are going to try to test my brains and see what changes may happen. It's going to take some time to come in and evaluate what is going to stay here and what is going to leave. You have some good things here, a good team. Do we have a championship quality team? I don't know."

"Even though they may not be going through a great time now, it's my job to try to make sure they put out the effort on the basketball court. I'm going to try to have my imprints and footprints all over this organization. My energy now is here and I'm going to try to do the best I can in Washington."

# South Carolina students lose seats after derogatory chants at assistant coach

by Nat Newell  
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Knight-Ridder Tribune

COLUMBIA, S.C. - The University of South Carolina athletic department Monday eliminated block seating for Student Gamecock Club members for the remainder of the men's basketball season following an incident at last Saturday's game against Kentucky at the Carolina Coliseum.

The school took the action after members of the club directed chants of "al-co-holic, al-co-holic" on Saturday toward Kentucky assistant coach George Felton, a former head coach at USC, as he returned to the court after halftime.

"We're just not going to tolerate that in our arena, when you have something that's highly inappropriate and takes on a personal nature," said South Carolina Assistant Athletics Director Kerry Tharp.

Tharp said that USC Athletics Director Mike McGee telephoned the University of Kentucky and spoke to Felton on Monday to express his regrets about the situation.

Felton could not be reached on Monday for comment. On Saturday, Felton said he was not aware of what the students were chanting.

At halftime of Saturday's game, USC coach Eddie Fogler approached the SGC section and shouted to the students to discontinue the chant.

"I thought there was a very, very inappropriate comment coming out of the area on the right side of the basket," Fogler said following Saturday's game. "I didn't appreciate it. I went over there and told somebody if I heard him say it again I was going to have his personal body removed from the arena."

"When it becomes extremely personal I don't want our fans doing it, I don't want other fans doing it."

The approximately 500 members of the of the SGC pay \$20 annually for a T-shirt, newsletter and a block of approximately 50 seats called the Cock Pit. The seats are located in the end zone nearest the visiting team's bench.

Members also earn priority points that can be used if they join the Gamecock Club, the university's official booster club, after leaving the school. The SGC is under the guidance of the Gamecock Club.

The block of seats now will be distributed with the remainder of student tickets, and SGC members can still get a seat through that process.

Monday's decision will be discussed at the regularly scheduled Gamecock Club meeting Wednesday.

"We're disappointed, but some things were said that should not have been said," said Niko Kruger, president of the SGC. "We made some mistakes. We have to apologize for that. It's a matter between us and the athletic department, since we are part of the athletic department."

"A regular student might be able to say more than we should: We should support the team and not talk to any of the other players and referees."

According to Rick Johnston, the member of the SGC board in charge of the "Cock Pit" and one who admitted to doing the chanting, Felton laughed on Saturday and said, "What's up y'all?" when he walked by.

Felton, who was USC's head coach from 1986-87 through 1990-91, was found not guilty after being arrested for driving under the influence in North Litchfield Beach on June 22, 1991.

Gamecock Club Executive Director Jeff Barber said members of the regular club, who pay a minimum membership fee of \$50 a year, previously have been reprimanded for poor behavior.

"There have been times that we have actually (taken) tickets back from fans who are excessively cursing or causing problems for other people," he said. "You look on the back of a football ticket and it says, 'The University reserves the right to (take) the ticket back.'"

Tharp said this was the second time this season that the behavior of the SGC section was addressed, though Barber and Johnston said they were not aware of an earlier incident.

During USC's Jan. 5 game against Tennessee at the Coliseum, a member of the SGC held up a stuffed gorilla and pointed at Tennessee center C.J. Black. After the game, Black shook hands and laughed with the fans.

Tharp could not verify that the incident at the Tennessee game was addressed by the athletic department. Johnston said he did not regret the students' behavior for Saturday's incident with Felton.

"I'm just trying to make sure the visiting team has an unpleasant stay. That's the whole point of having a homecourt advantage," he said. "Nobody seems to mind if Duke fans get rowdy. Why are they restricting our cheering when no (other teams) are?" Barber answered.

"We want a homecourt advantage, but we want it to be done in the right sort of way," he said. "We felt like some of the things that happened were inappropriate and doesn't present the kind of program we're trying to create and have here."

# Michigan's rules go beyond that of NCAA level

by David A. Markiewicz  
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Knight-Ridder Tribune

DETROIT - The University of Michigan athletics control board Thursday approved additional guidelines aimed at preventing contact between student-athletes and banned athletic department boosters.

The action is part of U-M's strategy to avoid violations of NCAA rules.

The committee, formed by U-M in May, recommended the action after the FBI began to investigate former booster Ed Martin.

Martin, a Ford Motor Co. retiree who had dealings with men's basketball team members, is under investigation, not officially charged yet, for running a numbers operation out of Detroit area Ford plants. He allegedly paid large sums of money to several U-M basketball players.

The new guidelines supplement existing NCAA rules. They state that neither student-athletes nor athletic staff members can:

- Contact a banned booster in person.
- Accept telephone calls from a banned booster.

-- Attempt to contact a banned booster by telephone, e-mail, mail or any other mechanism.

In addition, student-athletes and staff are to report immediately to the athletic director any sighting of a banned booster on campus or at an athletics event, as well as any attempted communication or contact by a banned

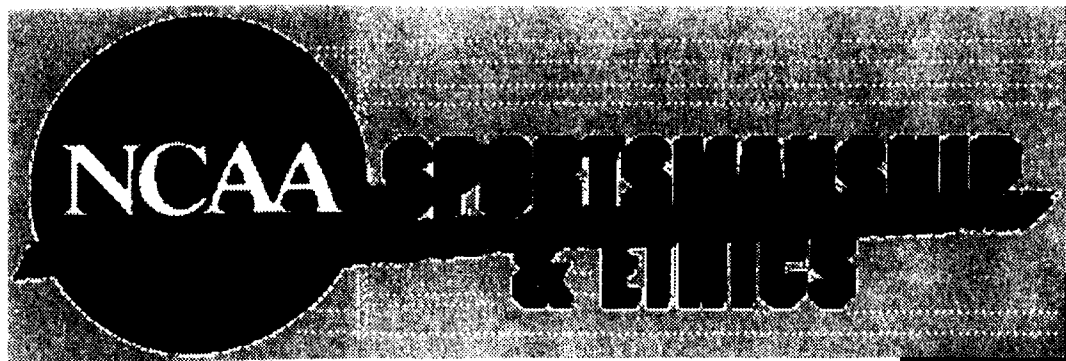
Fischer Newman said the investigation regarding Martin shows the shortcomings in NCAA rules and the need for U-M to toughen its in-house guidelines.

"The NCAA has no subpoena power," Newman said. "This situation shows what the NCAA cannot do in terms of enforcing its own regulations. If it can't get to the bottom of the story, it can't enforce its own rules."

"U-M's Board in Control of Intercollegiate Athletics also approved a compliance test given to student-athletes to help prevent them from breaking NCAA rules regarding the acceptance of gifts from boosters and others.

The test asks, among other questions, whether a student-athlete can go to the home of a booster for a meal once a week; attend a professional sporting event with a booster; borrow a coach's car; sell complimentary tickets to another student; or have a secretary type a paper.

The answer, in each case, is no.



booster. Michigan athletic director Tom Goss called the additional guidelines "an extension" of the NCAA rules.

Derrick Gragg, U-M's director of compliance for NCAA rules, said, "This is definitely different than what the NCAA has in place."

University president Lee Bollinger said, "We should have a policy of continually checking our procedures. We should not just have a policy in place and assume it's working." U-M regent Andrea