

PSU Basketball preview

By Christian Torres
Staff Reporter
cgt111@psu.edu

The struggles of Penn State football has led to unhappy fans in "Happy Valley." But as the month of October comes to an end and the leaves turn brown, the sounds of round orange balls slamming against a wooden floor become louder and louder. Folks, basketball season is just around the corner.

The men's team, led by second year coach Ed DeChellis, is coming off a season of improvement and promise. The record of 9-19 may not have shown it, but it was an improvement for a team that has struggled to get its program back on the winning track.

The team is returning six players from last season and has added five new players. The returns of forward Aaron Johnson and guards Ben Luber and Marlon Smith will bring enthusiasm and experience. Johnson has quickly become one of the more effective rebounders in the Big Ten averaging 6.5 rpg. Luber and Smith both had solid freshman years and Luber set a new school record with 114 assists. Luber also was among the Big Ten leaders in assists and steals. Smith, the team mvp, was the leading scorer on the team averaging 13.4 ppg and hit on 62 three pointers, best on the team.

While there are many questions still to be answered, it looks like the men's basketball team has a good foundation to build on. They play in a tough Big Ten conference with other teams such as Indiana, Michigan, and Michigan State among others. It takes time to build a strong basketball program and Penn State is realizing that right now. With talent like Aaron Johnson, Ben Luber and Marlon Smith leading the way, they will be competitive. And for a team which has struggled to get to ten wins the last three seasons, it's a step in the right direction.

The Penn State lady lions have continued a winning tradition which landed them in the NCAA tournament again last season. This year, the ladies once again have high expectations and hopefully they will finally get that elusive national championship. It doesn't hurt that they are led by the seventh winningest coach in NCAA history, Renee Portland. Portland is entering her 25th season as head coach.

On the hardwood, the lady lions have a strong recruiting class including Romana Vynuchalova from Slovakia. The 6-4 Vynuchalova brings much needed size and strength to a center position which has been weak. The main player to watch on the team, however, will be Tanisha Wright. Wright is coming off an outstanding year where she averaged 16 points and 5.4 rebounds per game. She was also named Big Ten Defensive Player of the Year for the second straight year. Wright is a preseason candidate for the Wade Trophy Player of the Year and the Women's Wooden Award.

The lady lions expect to have another solid season and expectations of another NCAA Tournament run are not out of the question. Although they are younger, the lady lions are talented. They will attempt to win their third consecutive Big Ten title this year.

While both teams come in with big expectations, the end result will probably be the same. The men's team will probably struggle while they continue to rebuild their program and the women will be good as usual; perhaps earning another trip to the NCAA tournament.

Both teams start their respective seasons on Nov. 14th.

Sports

NBA to have exciting season

Fans and players await the upcoming season with anticipation

By Herbert Smith
Staff Reporter
hjs135@psu.edu

The NBA is set to tip off its 58th season on November 2. The first game features Yao Ming and the Houston Rockets visiting the defending champion Detroit Pistons. Last season had so many twists and turns, the fans were left scratching their heads.

Last off season, the Lakers created a dream team by adding future hall of famers, Karl Malone and Gary Payton to compliment the best one - two punch in basketball, Kobe Bryant and Shaquille O'Neal. Months before the season started, they were predicted to run away with the championship and it wasn't out of the question for some teams to just not show up to play against them, take the forfeit and go home.

Unfortunately, the opposition didn't roll over and die, Malone lost half of the season to an injury and Payton struggled playing second fiddle to Bryant. It also didn't help the Lakers to have the shadow of Bryant's sexual abuse trial hanging over

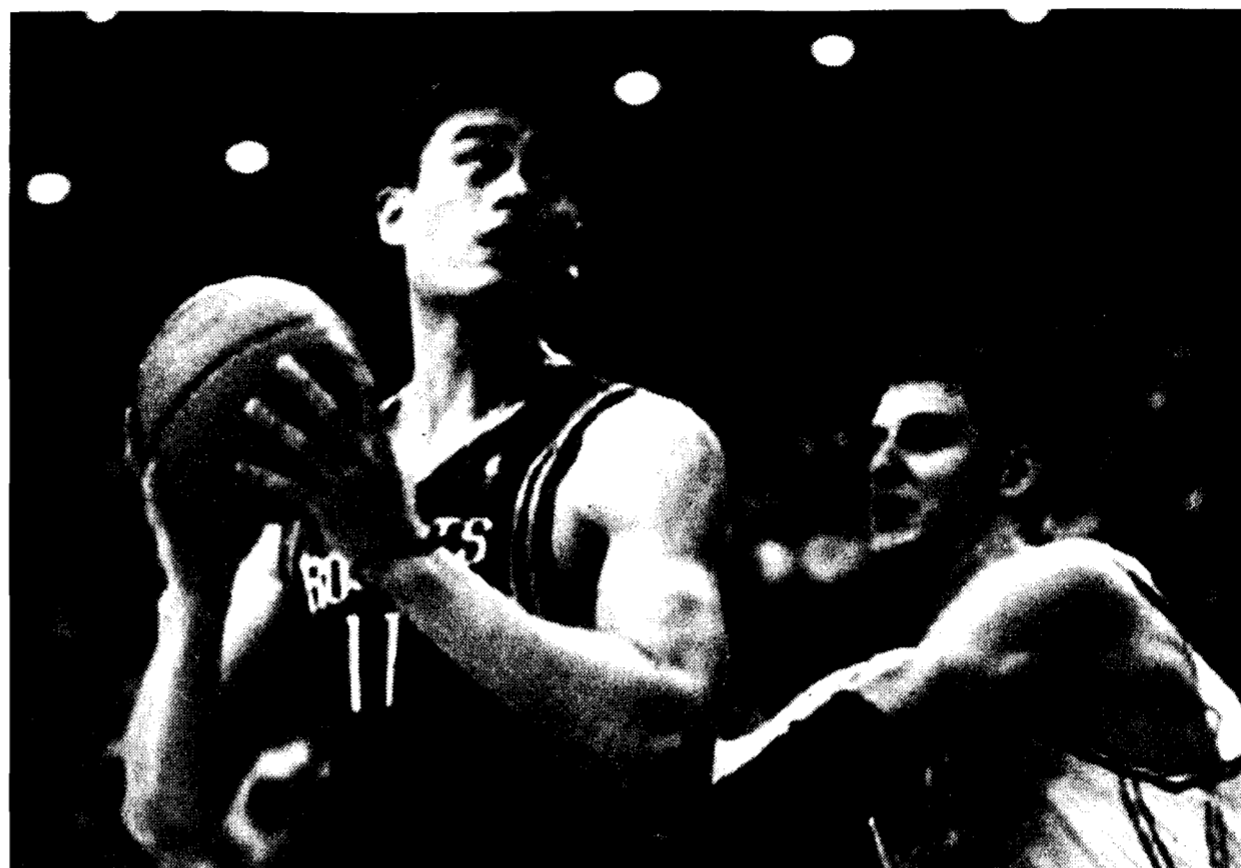


Photo courtesy of Google Images

Yao Ming and the Houston Rockets are set to play defending champions the Detroit Pistons in the first game of the 58th NBA season. The season begins on November 2.

the season. On talent alone, they made it to the Finals where they were dominated in every facet of the game by the Pistons, who walked away with the championship in rather easy fashion.

This past off season, Bryant gave the Lakers an ultimatum; either O'Neal goes or he goes.

The Lakers chose to send O'Neal packing to the Miami Heat leaving Los Angeles without much of its firepower and making the Heat an instant favorite to challenge the Pistons in the East. O'Neal's leadership and dominance in the paint should make the Heat a force to

be reckoned with.

Although Shaq's address change was the biggest off season move, it certainly wasn't the only one. The Houston Rockets and the Orlando Magic swapped star point guards with Tracy McGrady heading to Texas and Steve Francis going to the Magic. McGrady joining with Yao

Ming in Houston form a dangerous duo that resembles the matching of Bryant and O'Neal from years gone by.

The 2004-2005 season also is the first for a new expansion franchise, the Charlotte Bobcats. Yes, the town that lost the Hornets to New Orleans a few years back because the fans didn't support the team, was rewarded with a new team. Instead of the Bobcats buying up free agents and trying to compete now, they compiled their team of bench warmers from other teams and shouldn't be expected to make any noise this season.

LeBron James, the latest in a line that includes Allen Iverson, Vince Carter, Kobe Bryant and Anfernee Hardaway to be named the next Michael Jordan, is starting his second year in the league. Leading the Cavaliers back into playoff contention last season while averaging 21 points per game, exceeded the high expectations that James was saddled with last year.

The NBA, this season, will have its share of drama, storylines, and buzzer beaters. Every new season offers classic moments to be put in the archives next to Jordan's dunks and Larry Bird's game winning shots. The watch for the next classic moment begins November 2.

Boston Red Sox beat their curse

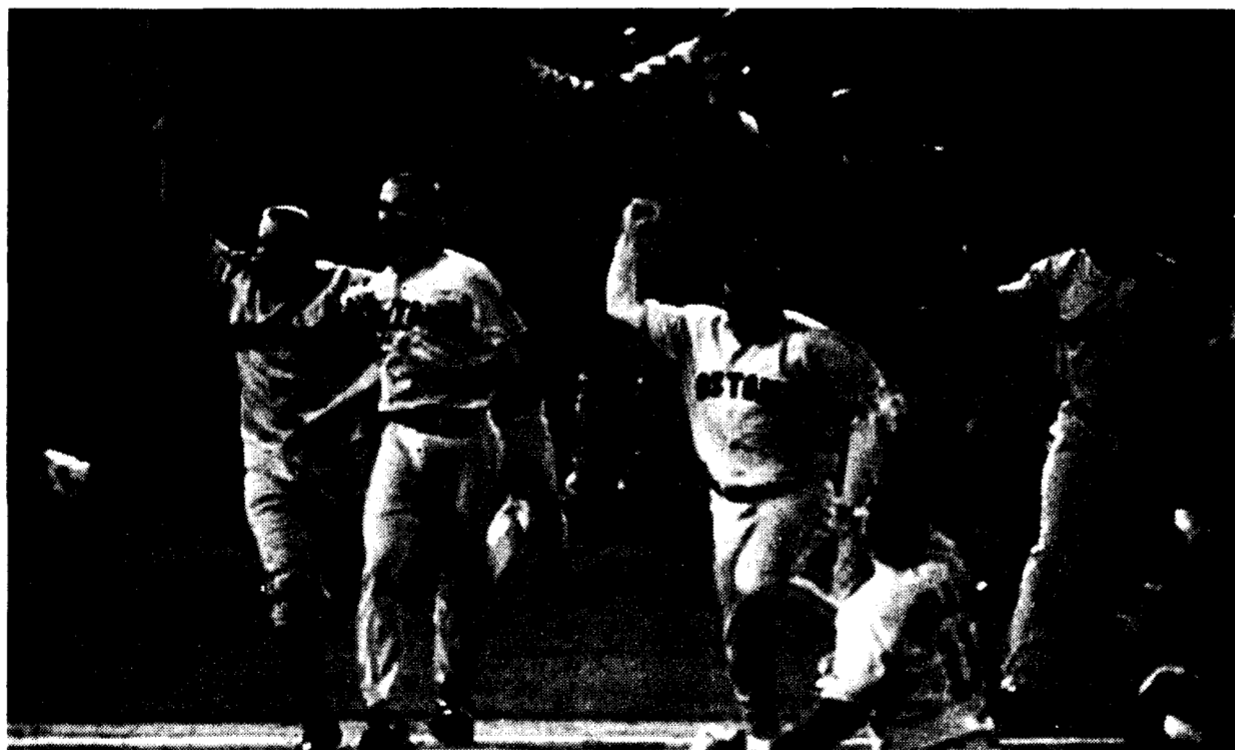


Photo courtesy of www.sportinglife.com

The Boston Red Sox rush onto the field in celebration after the victory that won them their first American League pennant since 1986.

By Herbert Smith
Staff Reporter
hjs135@psu.edu

Baseball fans, your season is over, but what a way to go out. This year's postseason was going to be hard to top last season's epic October. Last year, both the Chicago Cubs and Boston Red Sox were one step away from the World Series after a combined 180 years between the two teams without a title. However, World Series births were snatched away from the teams in thrilling game sevens of the Championship Series. This postseason would have its share of drama and the ending couldn't have been better for true base-

ball fans everywhere.

In the American League, the Angels and Twins were sacrificial lambs to the mighty Yankees and Red Sox in the Division Series. Everyone knew these two heavyweights would go at it again and the world would watch the battle.

The Yanks struck first and jumped out to a commanding 3 games to none lead over the Sox. Some late inning heroics in games 4 and 5 seemed, at the time, to be only delaying the inevitable. After all, never in the history of MLB had a team come back from a 3-0 deficit to win the series. But after a game 6 win in New York, it suddenly seemed possible. But Babe Ruth and his curse wouldn't let this happen. The Yanks were sure to let the

Sox think they were close before snapping up a victory and heading off with their 40th American League Pennant. But game 7 was a blow out victory for Boston and the Sox walked away with their first American League Pennant since 1986.

In the National League, the Cardinals, the team with the best regular season record, got past the Dodgers in 4 games while the Braves and Astros went the full five games. The teams traded wins in the first four games, including a thrilling walk-off home run victory for the Braves in game 2. The deciding game 5 was won easily by the Astros, sending Houston to the League Championship Series for the first time in their team history. In the

Championship Series, the home team won every game with the Cards winning the last two, sending St. Louis to their first World Series since 1987.

The World Series matched up two of the most storied franchises in baseball. The rich history of both teams is filled with some of baseball's greatest players. The St. Louis history has names like Bob Gibson, Dizzy Dean, Stan Musial and Ozzie Smith. Boston's history is just as impressive. Players who called Beantown home include Ted Williams, Carl Yastrzemski, Carlton Fisk and Roger Clemens. All of the players mentioned are current or future Hall of Famers, and the list of names can go on.

Both franchises have experienced success in terms of championships. The Cardinals have won the second most titles in baseball history with nine. Boston has won five championships, with the last coming in 1918. Just because the Sox hadn't won a title in 86 years, doesn't mean they didn't experience some form of success. Boston, before 2004, had been to four World Series since their last championship. To make the losses in their four appearances worse, the series went seven games every time. Four times, including twice to the Cardinals in 1946 and 1967, the Red Sox were one victory from the title only to lose in the deciding 7th game.

The 2004 World Series began in Boston with the two powerful offenses taking center stage. Mark Bellhorn hit a two-run home

run in the eighth inning to break a tie game and give Boston a 1-0 series lead. Game two saw Red Sox ace, Curt Schilling limp onto the mound with a stitches holding his ankle together. His patched up ankle held up in game 6 against the Yankees, but could the miracle be pulled off twice? The answer was a resounding yes and Schilling quieted the potent Cardinal lineup sending Boston to St. Louis up 2-0 in the series. In Game three, the Red Sox sent their other ace, Pedro Martinez to the mound. Martinez bettered the performance of Schilling from the previous game, and the Sox were now one game away from breaking the infamous curse of the Bambino. In Game four, Derek Lowe, the man who was on the hill in game seven against the Yankees a week earlier, continued the Red Sox pitching dominance and the Sox were World Champions for the first time in 86 years.

This postseason triumph had nothing to do with Boston Irish luck. The Sox won 11 of the 14 games they played this postseason, including the last 8 in a row. In the World Series, were they expected to fall after the emotional victory over the Yankees, they played their best ball of the postseason. In the four games, they never trailed the Cardinals and doubled the run output of their opponent. After Game one, the Sox pitchers allowed three runs over the last three games to one of the most feared lineups in baseball. The Cardinals lineup during the regular season had drawn com-

Please see SOX on 8