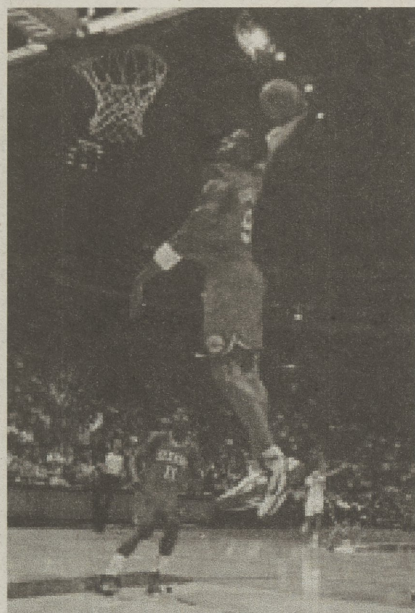


Professional Sports

76ers Approach All-Star Break

By Kieran Mason - Lion's Eye Sports-Editor - kdm5066@psu.edu



Andre Iguodala slam dunks on a breakaway earlier this season in Miami.

(Photo Courtesy of BleacherReport.com)

For the first time since the 2002 season, the Philadelphia 76ers will have a representative at the NBA All-Star game this coming weekend. Andre Iguodala was announced as a member of the East squad Feb. 9, which fills a ten-year gap without an all-star since both Allen Iverson and Dikembe Mutombo were selected to the game in Philadelphia in 2002. Although Iguodala does not lead the team in scoring or his statistical numbers are not as impressive as most of the players selected, it has been his shutdown defense this season that catches the attention across the league. The eighth-year man from Arizona will be making the trip to Orlando this weekend alongside teammate Evan Turner, who will be participating in the Rising Stars Challenge. With one game to go until the All-Star break, the Philadelphia 76ers still

hold the rights to first place in the Atlantic Conference but the team has hit their first bump in the road in this shortened season. Since starting off the season 20-9, the Sixers have now lost 3 straight games dating back to last Wednesday, when they lost to the Orlando Magic 103-87. Sunday night's loss to the Timberwolves was especially tough to sink in for Sixers fans, as they lost on a questionable foul call with .1 seconds left which resulted in Timberwolves forward, Kevin Love making two free throws to end the game in a heartbreaker for the Sixers.

With the losses, comes a division in which is tightening as we hit the mid-way point in the season. Since the emergence of Knicks new sensation at point guard, Jeremy Lin, New York is now 8-2 in their last 10 games and fans in New York can thank "Lin-Sanity" for their recent success. With the injuries to stars Carmelo Anthony and Amare Stoudemire, Lin got the chance to start and he took complete advantage of it. The new phenomenon in the Big Apple has been making headlines across the sports world because of the fact that he was about to be cut from the Knicks roster but that has quickly changed. The Knicks and Celtics both sit tied for second place below the 76ers in the Atlantic Division, just four games back. The break is coming at the perfect time for the Sixers, as they need a much needed rest before having to face the Thunder, Warriors, Bulls and Celtics to start the second half of the season. Coach Doug Collins must have his team focused to start after the break if they want to hold onto their third place spot in the Eastern Conference and if they want to make a serious run in the playoffs this year.

Phillies Spring Training Preview

By Robert Ripson - Lion's Eye Staff Writer -rlr283@psu.edu

This offseason has brought the Phillies some changes that appear on the surface to be good moves for their run at the National League East Title they hope to capture once again. It can be said that you don't tinker with success. However, that is exactly what Ruben Amaro, Jr., the General Manager of the Phillies, and the rest of his office has done. Gone are the bats of Raúl Ibáñez, Wilson Valdez, Ben Francisco and a few others, while keeping aging stars like Jimmy Rollins, Placido Polanco, and signing over the hill veterans such as Jim Thome, Ty Wigginton and others, this spring training could very well look like a convalescent center for the aged.

With Ryan Howard out with a blown Achilles tendon, I might understand Jim Thome's signing for first base, however, one wrong twist and he could be out and that leaves who to cover first base? Ty Wigginton? He is on the downslope of a slight above average career. Regular season .242(ba) 15(hr) 47 (rbi) for the Rockies last year. One also needs to consider why he has played for seven teams since his arrival to the Major Leagues in 1998, the Phillies being number seven. Wigginton's overall career number aren't that impressive either: .265(ba) 158 (hr) 548 (rbi). Averaging 40 RBI's a season?

I think the Phillies have lost the eye

on the prize. Scoring more runs than your opponent wins games. Stellar defense helps too. Pitching keeps you in the game. I just don't see how the long ball, i.e. Thome is going to help this team get back the title and compete for the World Series. While adding to the bullpen and starting rotation, they have fallen in love with the 1-0 game, maybe hoping for that 5 run home run to excite the fans.

The addition by subtraction and then beefing up the pitching is not the method for winning the division, as unpopular as this will be to you the reader, Rollins should have been traded two years ago and Wilson Valdez groomed to take over at short. Rollins, if you haven't noticed has added to the geriatric flavor of the team being injured for parts of the last two seasons. Not just a few days, but for months. Valdez substituted admirably.

This season will be an interesting one to watch. Could Amaro's moves be the magic that continues the winning ways? I certainly hope so. I just don't get the feeling that this is going to be as good a year as we have seen in the past. The Braves are improving, the Marlins hot on their heels, the Nats are going to be trouble and the Mets, well, are going to be also-rans for the foreseeable future. I am pulling for Amaro to prove me wrong. Just don't be surprised when we finish second and out of the playoff hunt.

(photo Courtesy of phillysportsblogs.com)



Flyers Woes Continue

By Kieran Mason - Lion's Eye Sports-Editor -kdm5066@psu.edu

As the Flyers went into the All-Star break on a winning note defeating the Florida Panthers 3-2, the Flyers have looked far from a Stanley Cup contender. Fans would think that a week-long break would be something that the team needed, both for some down time with family and to rest and regroup for the remainder of the season. That went for everyone except All-Stars Claude Giroux, Scott Hartnell and Kimmo Timonen, as well

as rookies Matt Read and Sean Couturier who made the trip to Ottawa for the weekend's festivities.

Since that time, the Flyers have won just three out of ten since the break and the New York Rangers, who sit atop the Flyers in the Atlantic Conference, continue to win with the play of their all-star goalie, Henrik Lundquist.

With the emergence of the Rangers, other teams are starting to no-

tice the Flyers slumping ways as of late. With Sidney Crosby's injury status still uncertain, the Pittsburgh Penguins are being led by their other superstar, and NHL point leader, Evgeni Malkin in trying to catch the Flyers in the playoff hunt.

With just about a month and a half left to go in the regular season, the Flyers must look to both their young and older players to catch the Rangers at the top of the standings. They must do this with veteran players Jaromir Jagr and Danny Briere, as well as their young talent who consists of Brayden Shenn, Jakub Voracek and Wayne Simmonds.

Claude Giroux continues to turn heads around the league for his play on the ice. The Canadian, who is third in the league in points behind Malkin and Steven Stamkos of the Tampa Bay Lightning, gives the Flyers a chance to win night in and night out whether scoring himself or dumping the puck off to teammates, such as Scott Hartnell.

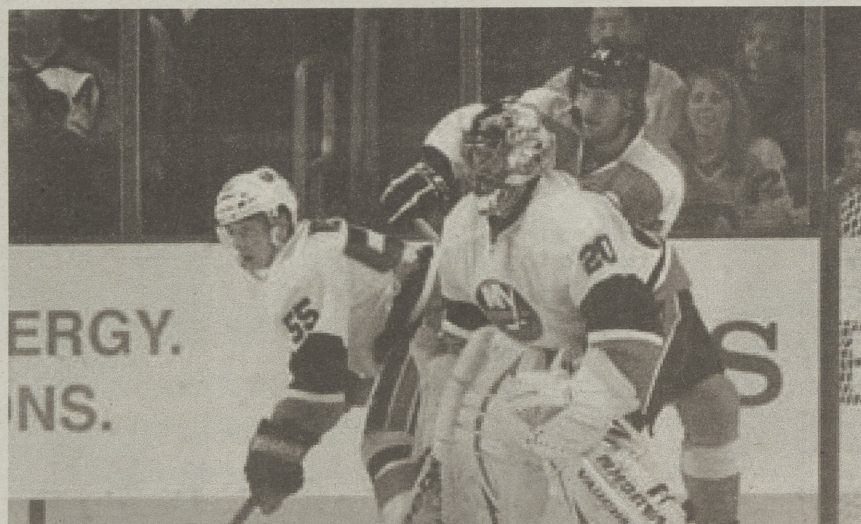
Hartnell, who is having a career

year in the statistical department because of his different role this season. His sensational play, which made him an all-star this season, must continue if the Flyers want to make a run in the playoffs come April.

As the Flyers continue to search for ways to win, their goalie situation is something that must be addressed as the playoffs draw near. Goaltender Ilya Bryzgalov has not lived up to the hype this season thus far, especially after receiving \$5.67 million on June 23.

So far this season, he has been splitting time with backup goalie Sergei Bobrovsky in net and the two of them both have a save percentage of .90 but when it comes to shootouts, the Flyers cannot count on the two goaltenders to help them. The Flyers are 1-5 in shootouts this season and an NHL-worst 20-39 in franchise history.

The Flyers will look to get back on track on a four-game road trip at the end of the month with games against Winnipeg, Edmonton, Calgary and San Jose.



The Flyers continue to struggle as the season presses forward. (photo courtesy google.com)