

SPORTS

NBA Report: Can Raptors Make Playoffs? (Does Anyone Care?)

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Contributor



I know, you're all thinking "Who cares about basketball?" A valid question. But come on, there's no hockey and you can't underestimate the strange things caused by its absence. Canadians were occupied for a while by the CFL and NFL playoffs, but that's all over now and all we have left to turn to is the NBA.

The NBA in Canada, unfortunately, means the Toronto Raptors. Yes, the team that for years held on to the biggest wanker on the face of the planet, the guy with no knees, yes the guy who drove defending NBA scoring champion Tracy McGrady (his own damn cousin!) out of Toronto.

This year GM Rob Babcock finally got his head out of his rear end and traded Vince Carter to New Jersey. Now, you'd think trading the best statistical player on your team for a guy with cancer and two fire hydrants named Williams would make your team worse. It just shows you how much of a distraction VC was. Always whining about being traded and that's when he wasn't writhing on the court clutching his knee. Can you blame T-Mac for taking off to Orlando?

Since the all-star break the Raptors have been consistently getting better and better. Sophomore PF Chris Bosh has been playing like a seasoned veteran and Jalen Rose has carried the team, receiving NBA player of the week honors in early March. Honestly, Babcock deserves to be shot for even thinking about trading this guy. The first

time Toronto played the Nets after Carter's trade you could see it in Rose's eyes how badly he wanted to beat VC (the huggy thing after the game was just to throw a bone to the media). If the Raps are going to make the playoffs, it will be on the backs of JR and CB4.

Will Toronto make the playoffs though? They dug themselves into a huge hole early and still have a losing record. And they've seen more controversy than the National Enquirer, with Rose, Rafer Alston and Eric Williams all having run-ins with Coach Sam Mitchell. They are however in the weakest division in recent memory (even worse than the Southeast with Carolina, Florida, Atlanta and Washington remember that?). As of March 4 only one team in the Atlantic Division (Boston) had a winning record, and they were only two games over 500. The Raptors stood 4 games back of a playoff spot.

Other teams in the Atlantic made big moves at the trade deadline: Philly landed Chris Webber, Boston got Antoine Walker back and the Nets of course had Carter. It was rumored that several Raptors were on the trading block, but no moves were made. One deal would have seen Donyell Marshall and Alston go to New Orleans for Baron Davis. Babcock opted instead to keep the team's chemistry intact; whether the move succeeds remains to be seen. One thing's for sure though, if Toronto ends up on the outside looking in, the fingers will be pointed squarely at Babcock.

The Week That Nothing Happened

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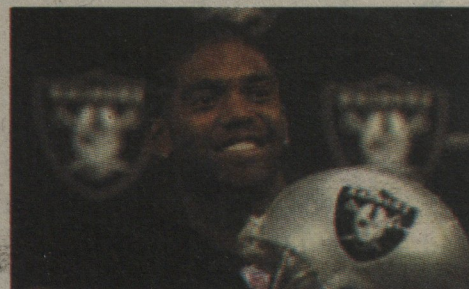
I sat back this week with nothing to write about. With the NHL lockout done, baseball season not quite started, football season over, and basketball season fairly quiet, I would ask people what they wanted me to write about. The general consensus was that nothing had happened over the past week in pro sport.

I was in disbelief. Nothing? Uncle John's Bathroom reader states that there are an average of about five days per year in which no professional sports are played. Naturally, something must have happened. The following headlines were conjured in my mind, an argument against those who said "nothing happened":

WEBBER TRADED, NO LONGER SAC KING!

Chris Webber was traded from the Sacramento Kings of professional basketball to the Philadelphia 76ers. Official details for the original deal were somewhat obscure, but sources say Webber was traded for what appeared to be "a bag of rocks, and four Cheetos." Five other players I've never heard of were involved in the deal. I need to watch more basketball.

NO MORE MOSS ON MINNESOTA FIELD!



Randy Moss was signed by the Oakland Raiders, who should most certainly be transformed into a contender following a dismal season.

The Vikings, who are confident they can perform without Moss, actually held a press conference to convince the media they were going to pull through. Let's hope they can convince themselves, too.

HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL IN SPORTSCENTRE!

That's correct, right next door there is bountiful high school basketball in the form of a playoff tournament. The final games are held Tuesday, cheer on your favorite team, catch some great basketball, and hear the pubescent announcer's voice crack!

WAR!!!

Okay, this headline may deliver the wrong message to some. I am, of course referring to the board of governor's meeting that happened to be on the same day as the meeting for the NHLPA. The NHL hates itself. Throw in the billionaires who are looking to buy out the league, and it's a mix that Saddam Hussein would envy.

BONDS: STEROIDS ARE DELICIOUS!

Barry Bonds, who will challenge the all time home run record this year, actually quoted that steroids were "no big deal." He continued to say, though, that if his son used steroids he would "bust him up." No further comment is necessary.

MARK RECCHI, AMERICAN GLADIATOR!

That's right. For fans of the show *American Gladiators*, you can rest assured that a new hero is in town. Mark Recchi, the Philadelphia Flyers winger, has found a new occupation for the duration of the lockout: winning *American Gladiators*. Although it may no longer be televised it still happens ... upon defeating "Nitro" and "Blaze" for the title, Recchi quoted "I always hated Nitro.... what a jerk."