



e-Zine
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Inside Scoop™

by Mel Greenberg

For The Hoops Connoisseur

We'll, we're at the first of the month, the time for our usual opus on matters in women's hoops, except we've been feeding you an ongoing menu of WNBA items to keep you from going hungry over a 30-day stretch or so. Thus, the question arises, what can we say so quickly after discussing the logjam in the Eastern Conference earlier this week?

A Duke Rebuke

We'll it just so happens that the collegiate powerhouse named Connecticut in the Nutmeg State is back in the headlines at the same time that the WNBA-Connecticut Sun has been riding a nifty four-game win streak.

The Hartford Courant reported in Tuesday's editions that one Brittany Hunter, who recently decided to leave Duke after a season, has chosen the Huskies to continue her collegiate career.

The announcement by the 6-foot-3 forward, who will sit out a season, continues a reversal of fortune to the positive for the three-time defending

NCAA champions who had lost a few early battles in the recruiting wars and also had a few bench players leave after the season for other destinations.

Hunter, who is still recovering from knee and foot injuries during her freshman season with the Blue Devils, will have three years of eligibility.

There's a touch of irony to how this episode has evolved following two seasons ago when Hunter, the No. 1 target of Connecticut coach Geno Auriemma and his staff, declared for Duke because the North Carolina school located in the heart of the Research Triangle might benefit her more later in life.

The decision had come just before the major showdown when Connecticut, then -ranked No. 2, was about to travel to Durham and face coach Gail Goestenkors squad, which was ranked No. 1.

During a teleconference call the week leading up to the game, the matter of Hunter's comments entered the discussion.



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Auriemma's reaction was something to the point that there were as many Duke graduates out there (in the workforce) waiting on tables in restaurants as there were Connecticut graduates.

Whatever, it now appears that Hunter's basketball hunger will be better fed above the Mason-Dixon Line.

Spirit of '76

The way the New York Liberty is getting battered and bruised, the team may soon be able to model for a modern day depiction of that famous 'Spirit of '76' revolutionary war painting by A.M. Willard depicting the drummers and fife player marching forward amid battle with the American Flag in the background.

First, shooting guard Crystal Robinson was lost for several weeks with a fractured pinkie finger suffered in last week's home loss to Los Angeles. Now center Tari Phillips will be sidelined at least a month with a fractured right hand suffered in Monday's practice in Los Angeles.

The only positive on the Liberty road trip West has been on Saturday night when New York upset Seattle to give Richie Adubato his 100th victory.

Van's Views

Houston Comets coach Van Chancellor has a month remaining before his thoughts turn to the Red, White, and Blue sector of the WNBA - namely those 12 pros who will play for him on the USA Olympic team that will compete in Athens.

At the moment, the focus is to keep in contention in the West with the Comets, who have had to play several games while Olympian Tina Thompson is sidelined with an injury.

"Anytime we can win a game without Tina Thompson in the lineup, we ought to consider ourselves fortunate," Chancellor said after his team grabbed two such victories last weekend.

As for competing against teams the Comets dominated the first four seasons with titles through 2000, Chancellor stated the obvious.

"Everyone has gotten better, no matter what the standings say," Chancellor commented. "That's because of the rookie class that came into the league and then everyone helped themselves in the dispersal draft of the Cleveland Rockets roster."



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Dish to a Swish

The last time a rookie led the league in assists, her name was Ticha Penicheiro when she arrived in the WNBA in 1998 to the Sacramento Monarchs from Old Dominion and finished with a 7.5 average. She continued to stay at the top through last season when she was still No. 1, although her average dipped below 7.0 for the first time at 6.7.

The native of Portugal's assist dynasty is being threatened, however, by another rookie – Connecticut's Lindsay Whalen, the fourth overall pick in the draft from Minnesota, whose average is 5.5

Washington honor

At halftime Thursday night when the Washington Mystics host the Indiana

Fever at the MCI Center, former Notre Dame star Danielle Green, who recently lost a hand while serving in Iraq, will be paid tribute.

Now she makes them

A few months ago, then-Stanford senior Nicole Powell missed a long shot at the buzzer that would have beaten Tennessee in a sub-regional final.

As a rookie, the third overall pick for the Charlotte Sting, Powell currently leads the WNBA in making three-pointers with a 60.0 average.

The only other rookie to crack the top ten in this category in the history of the league by season's end was when Jackie Stiles (remember her?) arrived in Portland in 2001 from Southwest Missouri State and finished with a 43.1 percentage, good enough for sixth place.



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Olympic Preview Rhythmic Gymnastics and Trampoline

Olympic Previews –
Fifth in a seven-part series

For most casual gymnastic fans, whether young or old, Nadia Comeneci's perfect 10 score at the 1976 Montreal Games, the first ever awarded, remains the image people have of the event and of the sport's female competitors.

The image of Nadia and the Perfect 10 is so strong that REAL SPORTS magazine chose her as one of five to be honored as Athletes of the Century in the magazine's Winter 1999 issue.

Gymnastics has changed since then. As we prepare for Athens, the U.S. team for Artistic Gymnastics is still being determined, but our Olympic representatives for Rhythmic Gymnastics and Trampoline have been decided.

Where Sport Meets Art there is...Beauty – Rhythmic Gymnastics

While relatively unknown in the U.S., Rhythmic gymnastics is widely followed throughout the world. A key distinction for Rhythmic gymnastics is that it is performed with an apparatus and is

strictly a women's competition. The competition involves incorporating a rope, hoop, ball, clubs and ribbon, while being performed to music on a 13-metre-square floor area. In the individual event, the athletes perform different routines with four of the five apparatus. In the team competition, teams of five perform together once using clubs and once with two using hoops and three using ribbons

Even less well known in the U.S. is Trampoline. This sport, added to the Olympic games as of January 1, 1999, with a debut at the 2000 Games in Sydney, Australia, features both men and women events.

At the U.S. Olympic Team Trials held on June 19, 2004, Mary Sanders earned herself a trip to Athens, Greece by securing a 105.175 All-around total. Olga Kramansky of Brooklyn, N.Y. and Lisa Wang of Buffalo Grove, Il followed respectively with 95.525 and 88.500. Sanders, who holds dual American and Canadian citizenship, was heavily favored.



Olympic Preview

Trampoline

Jennifer Parilla of Newport Beach, Calif., came from behind to claim her spot as the USA representative for trampoline.

The San Jose Sports Authority reported that Parilla trailed rival Kim Poling of Eden Prairie, Minn., 26.8-26.5 after the trampoline compulsories, the first of three rounds of competition in that discipline. But she took the lead in the optional round and never looked back.

“I don’t pay attention to anybody else’s scores or routines,” said Parilla, a five-time national trampoline champion who also represented the United States four years ago in the Sydney Olympics. “As long as I do that, I’ll probably be first – in this country.”

Parilla, finished with a total of 101.70, followed by Jaime Strandmark of Webster, Texas with 96.60 and Amanda Bailey, Sundown, Texas at 95.70.

Parilla finished ninth in Sydney, trampoline’s first appearance in the Olympics, and hopes for a substantial improvement in Athens. I “think I’m going to Athens with a different level of focus than Sydney. Sydney, I was just excited to go. It was the first Olympics as a sport for trampoline. The man who invented the trampoline was there. And the first world champion was there. In my second Olympics, I’m more looking forward to the competition and going home with a medal.” [RS]

Jody Meacham contributed to this report.

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