



**e-Zine
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by Mel Greenberg

***INSIDE SCOOP*™ ... Surprises: Swoopes and Portland, College Hoops & Your Call – Best Athlete, Most Important Moments.**

In the last several years in presenting our monthly look at the world of women's basketball; there have been times when breaking news has occurred either within a few days or right at the moment of our visit to the computer keyboard to offer observations and commentary.

Such has been the situation in the last week.

Seven days ago or so, we were thinking of an opening paragraph on the scale of "What will the women's collegiate game do for an encore this season after the competitive parity that existed the last time around?"

That said, hold the thought and let's move on to the news.

"October Surprise" is a phrase that was once coined in a presidential election year about the ability of the administration in power in the White House to spring some sort of action that would bring favor to its incumbency against the challenger from the opposition political party.

In recent times, activity involving the WNBA, not always entirely by the league's control, has become an October surprise of a different sort soon after the playoffs have ended.

In 2002, the word filtered out that the league was going to change its business plan and in the process, two teams closed shop and two others moved to new cities under different ownership.

In 2003, the Cleveland Rockers began the quick road to extinction when the NBA parent Cavaliers determined assumed increased revenues from the addition of a certain **Mr. James need not be spent on the WNBA sister squad.**

A year ago, **Val Ackerman decided it was time to step down from the WNBA presidency after guiding the league through its first eight seasons.**

For once, following the Sacramento Monarchs' rise to the championship, it seemed the scene would be quite and peaceful this fall.

But forces were already at work to belie that assumption.

By now, the news has already roared across the sports pages and internet sites of America with the public revelation by Houston Comets superstar **Sheryl Swoopes**, the reigning and three-time MVP of the league, that she was gay and that she was in a relationship with **Alisa Scott**, a former Mississippi star who had been an assistant to coach **Van Chancellor** with the Comets for seven seasons until her departure last winter.

As we write this, it is interesting to note how life evolves. When the league launched, three persons were chosen and given extra endorsements as marquee players: **Sheryl Swoopes**, **Lisa Leslie** of the Los Angeles Sparks, and **Rebecca Lobo**.

Leslie is about to marry sometime in the next week or so. Lobo, who retired two winters ago, married Sports Illustrated columnist **Steve Rushin** and has since given birth to a child.

Swoopes, the former Texas Tech star, was pregnant and missed most of the first season in 1997 and two years later she and her

high school sweetheart **Eric Jackson** divorced.

It was during the fallout from the divorce that Swoopes looked to Scott for emotional support and the relationship grew from there.

Chancellor, one of the most entertaining individuals with a high degree of integrity that one could ever meet, was not informed of the relationship, according to Swoopes.

Since the announcement, reaction has been either favorable or muted about Swoopes, a future Hall of Famer who helped grow the collegiate game when she set a Women's Final Four scoring record in 1993 as part of Texas Tech's national championship. The native of West Texas is relieved to "stop living a secret life."

The only aspect of her announcement that hasn't been touched on in most places that published interviews was the financial implications surrounding the announcement, one exception being an interview in the New York Times.

It has been reported everywhere that Swoopes is getting a six-figure



Sheryl Swoopes signs a reported six-figure deal with Olivia and is already fulfilling appearances by joining the company on their Mexican Riviera Cruise.

e-Zine
Page 3

deal from Olivia, a vacation company, headquartered in San Francisco that serves the lesbian market.

What hasn't been said is that Swoopes is deeply in debt, having filed for bankruptcy because of mishandling of money by both an accountant and herself, which she attributed to a change in lifestyle from modest surroundings in her formative years.

Furthermore, the announcement was well-orchestrated by a West Coast public relations firm. When the firm contacted me to make Swoopes available, I was told it wasn't for exclusivity because many prominent media organizations were being contacted.

However, *ESPN The Magazine* already had an interview in-hand set to hit the newsstand within days after the crush of interview availabilities were presented on Oct. 26.

I mention all this inside basketball to say that the Times interview did broach the financial implication, but Swoopes forthrightly said the deal was not a motivating force, that she and Scott had been trying

to figure out the best way to go public without regard to the Olivia offer to Swoopes.

Fouling the waters on the topic, somewhat, was another news item that reared out of nowhere two weeks earlier when it was revealed that former Penn State player **Jennifer Harris** was dismissed from the program by veteran coach **Rene Portland** for being perceived as a lesbian, which Harris says is false.

Penn State is currently investigating the charges. Thus, commentary at this end will be withheld until a finding and, if necessary, an action occurs regarding the charges.

College Hoops

So now back to our original premise prior to all this, can things be much better than the free-for-all that existed a year ago for the national title won for the first time by **Baylor** over **Michigan State** after both pulled tremendous rallies against favored **Louisiana State** and **Tennessee** in the semifinals.

Well, if Tennessee's youthful talent that was sidelined by injuries does return the Vols to dominance, yes, it will be exciting.

Right off the opening tap, we're looking at a slew of national contenders. **Seimone Augustus** is still around at LSU and **Cappie Pondexter** has returned for a fifth season at **Rutgers**, although the Scarlet Knights are currently suffering with nagging injuries. Many believe that this could be the year **Duke** overcomes past frustrations with the return of such stars as **Monique Currie**.

Stanford and **Ohio State** are other teams that are still formidable, while Baylor and Michigan State have enough veterans to chase after glory for a second consecutive year. **North Carolina** is another contender, but the team that might be the real darkhorse and maybe not even worthy of that description is **Maryland**, which has a sensational freshman class, and has three stellar veterans in senior **Shay Doron** and sophomores **Crystal Langhorne** and **Laura Harper**. One new wrinkle at the end of the season will be the move to

Selection Monday – a nighttime announcement of the Women's 64-team NCAA bracket one day later than has been the situation when the hoopla was shared with the men on the same Sunday.

This is also the 25th anniversary of the NCAA competition for women so look for special celebrations in that regard.

For you data freaks out there, the Associated Press preseason poll which will be released on Nov. 10 will be the 500th poll and begin the 30th year of weekly voting.

If the news warrants, we'll catch you between now and after Thanksgiving.

Who Should We Select as the 2005 Athlete of the Year?

What Were the Most Important Moments in Sports in 2005?

You Tell Us. Write to us at: team@realsportsmag.com



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