Magic of 'Earl the Pearl' deserts in series of hurts

By STEVE WILSTEIN

NEW YORK (UPI) — Once regarded as the toughest one-on-one offensive guard in the NBA, Earl Monroe's career has come down to to a series of rituals and a measure of hope that he'll again be able to perform his old magic.

At 29, Monroe must endure sound treatments every day on his damaged right ankle, a whirlpool, applications of analgesics and heavy taping before every game and icepacks afterward.

Monroe was a rare talent with some of the wildest moves ever seen on a court when he left Winston-Salem (NC) State College in 1966. But then he developed problems with bone spurs in his ankle and he now wonders sometimes, as do the fans, if he'll ever be the same.

"I was supposed to be back November 1 and I didn't get back until January 1," Monroe said Tuesday night after fashioning his best game since last year while leading the New York Knicks to a 106-90 romp over the Phoenix Suns. "It especially hurts when you realize you're in your prime as a player."

Playing in only his 16th game, Monroe was the "Pearl" once again in the first half against the Suns, hitting 9-of-12 shots, adding three assists and stealing the ball four times while leading the Knicks to a 61-35 lead.

"The moves are there," said Monroe, who had 23 points, "but the timing and the ankle shouldn't give me any more severe problems but you never know. Doctors tell you a lot of things."

For all his flamboyance on the court when he's healthy, Monroe is one of basketball's quieter people off the court. He's a sensitive person who reacts to frustration perhaps more than most.

"Sure it's frustrating," Monroe said, "knowing what you can do and not being able to do it. When I was sitting there on the bench in my street clothes, I'd see all these openings on the court and I'd be making all these cuts and shots in my mind.

"But then you look down and you see shoes on your feet instead of sneakers and you must wonder when you'll finally be back."

Earl Monroe
'...the moves are there, but...'

Preakness expects record entry in 'big horse' absence

PIMLICO, Md. — With no horse like Secretariat around to dominate the ranks of the 3-year-olds this year, Pimlico Race Course officials are expecting a record number of nominees for the 99th running of the Preakness Stakes before the nominations close at midnight next Friday (16th).

Chick Lang, Pimlico general manager, and several of his emissaries will be at all the key points coast to coast with Preakness entry blanks in hand to remind horsemen to name their Triple Crown hopefuls before the deadline.

Nominations for the Kentucky Derby and Belmont Stakes also close Feb. 15.

The largest number of nominees the Preakness ever attracted was 216 in 1972, when Meadow Stable's odds-on Riva Ridge was upset in a race won by Bee Bee Bee in the mud.

Last year the presence of mighty Secretariat, the reigning Horse of the Year, scared some of the candidates away, but Preakness power still was strong enough to draw 194 nominees, the second highest number in the race's 100-year history.

The mile and three-sixteenth classic this year is scheduled for Saturday, May 18.

Lang will leave Baltimore for Florida today (Friday) in hopes of drawing Preakness nominees in that area. He will be assisted in Florida by jockey agent Howard (Jello) Hall.

Pimlico also will be represented by jockey agent Ivan Puchich in California, assistant to the racing secretary Marshall Strickler in New York and by John Wilkie in New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

Piston coach Ray Scott blasts inept officials

Detroit Pistons' coach Ray Scott says he was the victim of a "bum rap" when reporters quoted him as charging the National Basketball Association with being "penny wise and dollar foolish."

He says that, while the basis of the story was taken out of context, he still questions the ability of some of the men officiating NBA games.

Scott said after the story appeared, that it stemmed from a conversation in which he and news reporters discussed officiating. "But, we were sitting around drinking some beers and just rapping," said the Piston coach. "Those comments (carried in a UPI story from Detroit) were made informally following the press interview after the New York game. The situation has been taken way out of perspective.

"I wouldn't knock officials at this point. Why would I do that? We're 26-19, not 19-36," he said.

Scott did say that he agreed with a lot of things said by reporters durine the conversation. He said the gist of the discussion was that the salary for a rookie official is not enough to entice some of the better collegiate officials to join the NBA.

"I'm not trying to back out of that because I'm just as critical of officials as anyone else," said the former University of Portland star. "But the whole point is that the conversation is that the conversation wasn't an interview."

Scott formerly played with the Baltimore Bullets.

Ex-fighter shot in saloon fracas

PORTLAND, Ore. (UPI) — Thad Spencer, 30, one-time contender for the heavyweight boxing title, is reported in satisfactory condition after being seriously wounded last Sunday in a shooting in a Portland bar.

Another man, Elvin L. Alexander, 34, Portland, was killed in the same incident.

Police said no charges have been filed and their investigation is continuing.

Spencer was shot three times.

He retired from boxing two years ago with a 33-12-2 record.

Ron Lyle signed to box Bonavena

DENVER — The Denver Boxing Club has signed local heavyweight Ron Lyle to meet 7th ranked Oscar Bonavena in 12 rounds, here Feb. 28.

Lyle, who is ranked fifth among heavyweights by the World Boxing Association (WBA), will be looking for his 20th career knockout, while Bonavena has recorded 79 KOs.

"Neither fighter has any love for the other and both can deliver a knockout punch with either hand," said Vince Boryla, president of the club.

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AFRO Sports

Morgan clips UMES string, renews Bears' cage dream

By Bill Rhoden

Morgan State's 72 to 70 victory over previously unbeaten University of Maryland Eastern Shore Tuesday night at the Civic Center was not just the end UMES's of 20-game win streak, it was the start of a new era of basketball at Morgan State.

For Morgan the win signaled the official "arrival" of a winning basketball program at the Northeast Baltimore campus.

More than 10,000 fans watched as Morgan, led by All-MEAC center Marvin Webster and Mike Streety, completely dominated a smaller but quicker UMES quint for most of the first half.

"No, that's not an excuse," MEC coach John Bates was to say after the game. "They just beat us. Morgan played exceptionately well on defense and that was it."

That tough defense held UMES practically scoreless for the first minutes of the second half and before anyone realized it, Webster and his cohorts had jumped out to a commanding 13-point lead with less than 10 minutes remaining in the game.

Afterwards, exuberant Bear Coach Nathaniel Frazier praised both teams and said the contest was a plus for basketball in Baltimore.

"I really think it is, especially for our team. We had an opportunity to show what we could do and the whole affair was good for the squad and basketball in Baltimore."

Morgan State's athletic director, Earl Banks echoed Frazier's sentiments and added: "The game was a winner both ways: on and off the court.

"In the last 15 years I've never packed in a basketball game the way we did Tuesday evening. I think this latest UMES-Morgan State game brought college basketball to Baltimore and the Civic Center.

Of course, a fellow named Marvin Webster had a lot to do with the attendance but his coach feels that people in the area have begun to recognize quality basketball.

"I think the world of Marvin... and most coaches in the country would love to have a Marvin Webster playing for them, but we've got some excellent ball players here and although Marvin is the big spoke of the wheel, he's got some pretty able people around him."

When asked about the attendance, Frazier smiled and said he was "thrilled."

"My whole thing is that anytime black people can have a positive experience, it's beautiful.

"I'm just glad that the people in Baltimore City were able to hold up their heads high Tuesday night."

Baltimoreans will get another look at Mid Eastern Athletic Conference basketball later this month when the Civic Center will host the MEAC championship tournament.

Hall of Fame can't quiet 'Night Train' on NFL bias

If pro football thinks it can soothe the wounds of Dick "Night Train" Lane by sending him to the Hall of Fame, it had better go back to the drawing board.

The outspoken veteran of 14 years with the Rams, Chicago Cardinals and Detroit Lions told off the National Football League on the same day that he was voted for enshrinement at Canton, Ohio.

Said Lane:

"I've never been afraid to speak my mind and I haven't changed. I've been saying for years the NFL needs a black head coach and I think the league needs it more than ever today."

A 14-year pro who played with Los Angeles, the Chicago Cardinals and Detroit, Lane just moved to Pittsburgh two weeks ago to go to work for entertainer Redd Foxx's organization.

"I'm very proud of being selected for the Hall of Fame," he said. "Really, it's the biggest honor of my life."

Then, typically, the colorful former defensive back said he had the honor coming.

"I think my record speaks for itself," Lane offered. "I don't think I'm patting myself on the back when I say I knew I eventually would be chosen. It was just a matter of time."

In his 14 NFL seasons, Lane picked off 68 interceptions and returned them for 1,207 yards. In 1952, the year he signed as a free agent with the Rams, he set a record that still stands—14 interceptions for 298 yards returned and two touchdowns. He also led the NFL in pass interceptions in 1954 with 10 thefts for Chicago.

After his career was finished, he worked as a special assistant in the Detroit organization. He left the Lions after seven years in 1972.

"I want to get back into pro football," Lane said, "but so far I haven't had any luck. Maybe my reputation for being outspoken. I don't know for sure. But I do want back in in some front office or coaching capacity.

"I think I have a lot to offer a club."

Following his departure from the Lions, he went to Baton Rouge, La., where he helped coach Southern University's football team. One of his pupils was 1972 Olympic high hurdles champion Rod Milburn.

Lane thinks it's only a matter of time before the NFL has its first black head coach.

"It has got to happen," he noted, "and it has to happen in the next five years. There are just too many talented black former players available for the owners to keep passing them up.

"But you can't put all the blame on pro football. Part of the problem has been the colleges' reluctance to hire good, young black assistants."

TV firm insures champ Foreman

NEW YORK — Word heavyweight boxing champion George Foreman has been insured by Video Techniques, Inc., which is promoting his title fight with Ken Norton, for $250,000 on a 24-hour all-risk policy — until he enters the ring against Norton March 26.

The all-risk policy, which went into effect Jan. 21, protects the interests of Video Techniques should Foreman be unable to appear because of an accident during his pre-fight training.

Foreman is covered if he is disabled and the fight is cancelled and not rescheduled during 1974.

Unbeaten Ray Seales to box in Philly

TACOMA, Wash. — Sugar Ray Seales, 1972 Olympic gold medalist boxer who is undefeated as a professional, will meet world-ranked Ronnie Harris in a welterweight bout at Philadelphia Feb. 13, George Yelton, Seales' matchmaker, announced Monday.

Seales has a 14-0 pro record, while Harris has 28 wins, two losses and a draw.

Appearing on the same card will be Seales' half-brother, Dale Grant, 1973 national amateur of the year, who also has turned professional. He will meet Robert Hoye, Kalamazoo, Mich., in a middleweight fight.

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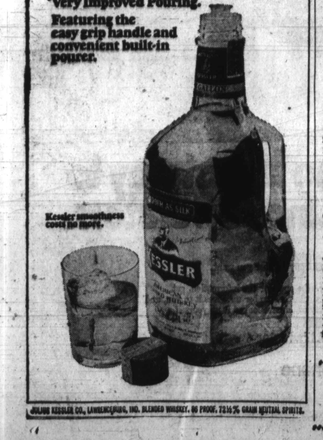

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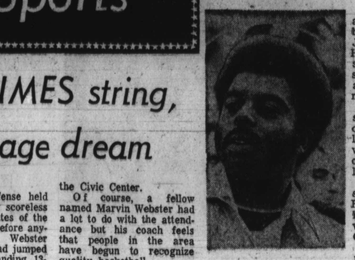

IS THIS YOU whom AFRO photographer Ben Phillips snapped at a recent Baltimore sports event? If it is, clip this picture and bring it to the AFRO Building 3rd floor. Present it, with proper identification, to Mrs. Gertrude Steele before Noon Tuesday. By so doing, you may receive $5 for being in the right place at the right time.

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O. J. breaks a drought in Hickok recognition

NEW YORK — Smashing all records in the 24-year balloting for the honor, O. J. Simpson won the S. Rae Hickok Award for 1973, symbolic of the best professional athlete of the year at a dinner here Monday night.

Although the Buffalo Bills star who set a career mark of 2,000-plus rushing yards last fall, was a landslide winner, it marked the end of a drought for black athletes in the competition.

Seven years had passed since baseball player Frank Robinson was honored for his 1966 season with the world champion Baltimore Orioles.

Since the award was set up in 1956, only five blacks have acquired it. They were Willie Mays (1954), Maury Wills (1962), Jim Brown (1964), Robinson and Simpson.

This time, however, blacks occupied three of the top five positions at the end of the voting.

Homerun star Hank Aaron was second to O. J., and heavyweight champion George Foreman was fourth.

In third place was California Angels pitcher Nolan Ryan, and fifth was golfer Tom Weiskopf.

Four other blacks were among the top 20 finishers:

World Series MVP Reggie Jackson was 9th, light-heavyweight king Bob Foster was 12th, boxer Ken Norton who broke the jaw of Muhammad Ali in beating the ex-champion, was 15th and Oakland A's shortstop Bert Campaneris was 16th.

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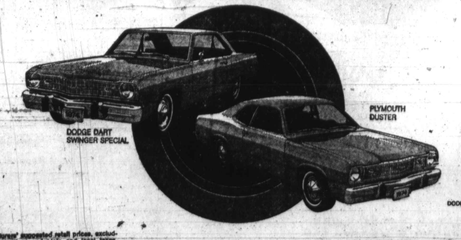

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