

SPORTS

RANDOM THOUGHTS on Peyton Manning's Legacy, Other Life-and-Death Matters in the World of Professional Sports

By Trevor Seibert
Decree Sports Editor

The NFL playoffs are almost over and the rest of the sports world is doing just fine, but there are plenty of things that are burning in my mind. First off, I want to begin by crowning the Speak Your Mind winner for playoff picks this season between Anthony DeGregorio and me. In the NFC, I only got two out of the six picks right. Those two being the NFC East picks I made, the Giants and Eagles. Anthony did well and picked four of six but his Super Bowl prediction, the Panthers, missed out on the playoffs (my pick, the Giants, lost in the first round).

In the AFC, the results were similar with Anthony making the better picks. He actually picked the Colts and Patriots to be playing in the AFC championship game before the season so kudos to him (his winner, the Patriots, was his Super Bowl winner pick). My pick to win it all, the Colts, are still playing so I'm feeling good about that pick as of now.

Finally, I can look at people and say that Peyton Manning is going to be the greatest quarterback of all time. Did anyone else notice that Manning single handedly led his team back from an 18-point deficit to win that game? Manning showed the world and more importantly, himself, that he can win the big game against the Patriots. This was not a matter of a Patriots let-down, but more a case of Coach Tony Dungy and the Colts offensive staff deciding that Manning was the one entity that can beat the Pats. They put the ball in Manning's hands and Manning did what Manning does best: tear up opposing defenses. He was able to throw the ball for 330 yards, a touchdown and one interception.

The game was not decided by his performance in numbers, but his ability to lead his team down the field in just under a minute to score a touchdown and take the lead. That ability proved again why Manning should be considered one of the greats in the league and definitely better than Tom Brady on the all-time greats list.

This brings me to another subject. Why is the Super Bowl the main factor for most people in a player's career? Of course, it is the main goal of every player to win at least one, but it should not hurt a player's legacy if he is never on a team good enough to win the "big game."

Some might argue that the Colts were always a very good team, but not quite good enough is what they were. Trent Dilfer has won a Super Bowl; would you place him above Manning on the all-time greats list? How about names like: Terry Bradshaw, Bart Starr, Troy Aikman? Case in point, at the end of his career, Peyton Manning will be, if not the best, one of the top three quarterbacks of all time and Tom Brady will not.

What else am I thinking about in the sports world? How about the five-year, \$250 million contract that soccer's David Beckham has signed with the Los Angeles Galaxy? This guy is getting older every second and no longer has the stamina needed for soccer; therefore, one stellar free kick a game is not worth \$250 million, but hey, it's worth a gamble in a league that is doing worse than the NHL.

Onto the NHL, a league that is in desperate need of help. First off, the young stars—Eric Staal, Alexander Ovechkin, Sidney Crosby, et al—are doing great. These young guys are helping propel a league that is in financial ruin and is in need of a future.

Their competition, the NBA, is

Profile: April Wilson 'Plays With Heart' for Bishops

By Jade Johnson
Decree Staff Writer

Two-sport athletes are rare in college athletics. And only the singular athlete can excel at two sports, but that's the case with April Wilson who has been dominating in basketball and volleyball at North Carolina Wesleyan College. And she's been a strong student as well, landing on this year's NCWC President's List.



April Wilson

Currently, the senior is in the midst of basketball season. A 5'11" forward from Staunton, Va, Wilson has started every game so far this season and leads her team in both scoring and rebounding. With 126 points and 81 rebounds in the first 13 games, it's easy to see why her teammates admire her on and off the court.

Even though she sometimes doubts her ability to guard stronger

players," Wilson plays with a level of intensity that inspires her teammates.

Freshman guard Nicole Williams pointed out that "April plays with a lot of heart and doesn't back down from any opponent." Wilson attributes that heart to motivation from her mother. But with only 4 wins in 13 games, most would find it hard to motivate themselves. "Not when you love the game" Wilson said.

In her first season as a Bishop (03-04' season), Wilson netted 251 points, averaged 10.9, made 51 out of 76 free throws and grabbed 143 rebounds, before tearing cartilage in her knee which sidelined her for most of the 04-05' season. Coach John Brackett knows that Wilson is a highly valued commodity to this women's team. "A healthy April Wilson is great for us," Brackett said.

Bouncing back from her injury in the 05-06 season, Wilson led her team with 295 points, earning a Honorable Mention in the conference as well as setting a school record for most field goals made in a single game (14).

It's hard for Coach Brackett to find a weakness in his talented star. But there was no shortness of strengths. "She has a great ability to score inside," he said. "She's going to get fouled, so it's good that she can knock in the free throws."

Wilson says she now wants to play a "more relaxed" role for her team and "get teammates involved." But with 763 career points and a new cast of teammates, will she reach the 1000 point mark?

We'll have to watch and find out.

flourishing and dying at the same time. The brawl with Carmelo Anthony was ridiculous but also generated way too much media attention. There was a cheap shot in a hockey game not to many days after the NBA brawl, yet no media attention was given the incident, except by ESPN's Michael Wilbon who aired the shot on PTI (Pardon the Interruption) not too long ago.

It's a shame that an incident like this one has overshadowed one of the better starts in NBA's history. Gilbert Arenas is playing unbelievable basketball and is on his way to an MVP season. Steve Nash is incredible, but let's face it: without Arenas the Washington Wizards are a last-place team with no hope of winning the big one.

Halfway through the season, my favorites are the same one's I picked at the beginning of the season: the Dallas

Mavericks and the Orlando Magic. The Magic have been up and down thus far, but the Mavs are the hottest team in the league, winning 18 of 19 in a recent stretch, and have avoided the injury bug that has taken names such as Tracy McGrady, Yao Ming, Chris Paul, and Rashard Lewis out of action so far this season.

Major League Baseball saw its fair share of action as new Hall of Fame inductees, Cal Ripkin Jr. and Tony Gwynn, were named. Ripken Jr. was America's last hope for a unanimous selection, and all those that didn't put a check by his name on the ballot should no longer be allowed to vote. Ripken Jr. should always be the face of baseball for a league tarnished by the steroids era.

Of course, we all knew that Barry Bonds would hit the spotlight somehow during the winter, and his positive

testing for amphetamines proves once again that this idiot should never be allowed to play again. Nor should he be inducted into the Hall of Fame. That brings me to another thing I would like to add. Why is Mark McGwire the first person to be punished for the steroids-era problem? The guy wasn't taking illegal substances during his time. It was perfectly legal and there were no laws or punishments for it. Now, players like Bonds are being celebrated and one of the great sluggers of all time is being left out. I do agree that Roger Maris should be put into the Hall as well.

That's all I have for this edition of Random Thoughts. If there are any topics or questions you would like answered, please contact me, Trevor Seibert, Sports Editor, at ts284193@mail.ncwc.edu. I will address the issues or concerns in the next issue.

Thompson Seeks Consistency from Young, Talented NCWC Hoops Team

The NCWC men's basketball team completed the first half of the conference schedule with a record of 3-3, losing two road games during the last weekend in January, 81-72 to Averett, and 83-79 to Ferrum. Last year's team was 4-2 after the first half of conference play.

So far in 2007, the top Bishops scorer has been junior guard Lenny Hall, who has averaged more than 20 points per game and garnered USA South Conference Player of the Week accolades. Another standout performer has been freshman Trey Drake, who has helped to compensate for the loss of injured guard Jarmel Arrington, who scored almost 18 points per game in 2006. Drake, a 5' 8" point guard from Emporia, Va., has scored over 13 points per game, earning three conference Rookie of the Week awards.

The Decree interviewed Head Coach John Thompson, who evaluated his team's progress:

Q: You were 5-7 in the pre-season. That would indicate that your team faced a tough schedule. What's your philosophy in scheduling pre-season games?

A: We're trying to prepare for conference play. And we make sure to schedule some pre-season tournaments, which get us ready for post-season opportunities. In a tournament, you need to play one night, win to advance, and then prepare for a different opponent in 24 hours. We schedule our pre-season games with that in mind.

We also schedule for what I consider co-curricular opportunities. We played this year in St. Augustine, Florida. During our visit, the team took a tour of the old city, where Ponce de Leon claimed to have found the fountain of youth, years before Jamestown was founded by the English. When we went to New York in the past, we visited Ground Zero. In Philadelphia, we went to Independence Hall and the Liberty Bell. We schedule in such a way that players can have an educational experience beyond the court, an experience that has value.

Q: Describe, in a few words, the type of game your team plays.

A: We're definitely a running team. We like to attack on both defense and offense.

Q: Who are the chief contenders in the conference this year?

A: Greensboro and Christopher

Newport are up there. But this season I'd say there is real parity in the conference.



John Thompson

All teams are contenders. Every team is playing close games and I don't think that there's a game in our league where you can assume one team is going to win. It's as balanced as it's ever been.

Q: Who is providing leadership for your team?

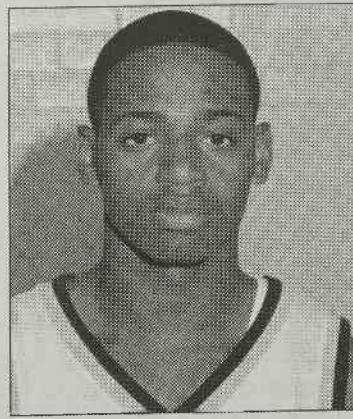
A: Lenny Hall has really done a great job. He's

made as much progress in a 12-to-18 month span as any player I've ever had here at Wesleyan. Stephen Mobley is doing a good job in that regard as well. Adam Coleman and other sophomores have gotten to the point where they're comfortable assuming leadership roles. We've grown as a team, especially in the last month. Some of it is just the natural maturation process.

Q: How have the newcomers been performing so far?

A: Trey Drake has been Rookie of the Week three times. He's done a real nice job for us. He's a very talented kid that is going through the normal ups and downs that come with being a freshman student and freshman player. He wants to get better.

We're getting a lot of help from a lot of different newcomers. Woods



Trey Drake

gives us a real boost when he comes into the game at guard. Murray, Stokes and others have provided help. We've got a very talented group of freshmen, but it takes time to adapt. Most freshmen arrive, thinking they have a concept of the college game. Then they see the intensity of practice, the level of

competition, the travel, and it takes them a while to figure out college ball. At least now they have an idea of the college game as compared to high school.

Q: How is this year's team different from last year's?

A: I think that with maturation, the players have come together as a team. In that respect, we're much father along than we were at this juncture last year.

The big difference is that we really believe that if we play the way we're capable of playing, and do so on a consistent basis, then we can win every time we step on the floor. I think we had the talent last year, but there was a little more uncertainty in the players' minds.

Q: Sum up this team in a few words.

A: Still a work in progress. Talented, not as consistent as we need to be. But we're growing and improving. Consistency is the single key to our season. The more consistency we can establish in the remaining six conference games, the better we're going to be. We know our capabilities. We just need to perform on a day-in, day-out basis.

Bishops Baseball Ranked #10 in Pre-Season National Poll

The North Carolina Wesleyan baseball team has been ranked #10 in the American Baseball Coaches Association's preseason poll.

Ranked 8th in 2006, the Bishops made it to their 12th NCAA Division III World Series after the team finished with a 31-19 record and grabbed first-place in the USA South Conference and South Regional tournaments.

Head Coach Charlie Long said his team will stress season-long consistency. "If the group is able to bring a more consistent style of play day in and day out," he said, "2007 could be a good year for NC Wesleyan baseball. The players and coaches must stay focused and continue to strive for above-average performance. Consistent pitching and solid team defense will be the key to success."

Long returns seven position starters and four starting pitchers, including All-American and USA South Pitcher of the Year Blake Rice. Other returning players include first team All-Conference performer Matt Smith, second team selections Chris Pecora, Nathan West, and Kyle Robertson, and honorable mention selections Ted Williams and Luke Williford. Rookie Pitcher of the Year Ben Moore returns for his sophomore season.

NCWC opens the 2007 season on Friday, February 9th at Bauer Field when it hosts Eastern Mennonite at 2:30 p.m. (Article courtesy of Sports Information)