

Former NBA Player Buys Team

LOS ANGELES (AP) - Magic Johnson will become part-owner of the Los Angeles Lakers in a deal that could be finalized this week, according to a report published Sunday.

Johnson's stake in the team would probably be less than 10 percent, but he apparently would have a front-office role, the Los Angeles Times reported.

Lon Rosen, Johnson's agent, confirmed to The Associated Press that a deal was imminent but declined to name the team with which Johnson was negotiating.

"We're very close to making a deal," he said. "It's going to be announced in the very near future. Earvin will be involved in all aspects of the team, not just the basketball operations."



Magic Johnson

The Lakers are the only team Johnson played for after he left Michigan State in 1979. Johnson led the Lakers to five NBA championships, then retired in 1992 after

he was diagnosed with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

Johnson briefly returned to the team for the final 16 games of the 1993-94 season as interim head coach, and remains close to the team. Johnson has described his relationship with Lakers' owner Jerry Buss as father-son.

After his retirement, Johnson made several moves toward the front office. He was part of a group that lost a bid for an expansion franchise in Toronto, and he reportedly negotiated as part of a group to buy the Minnesota Timberwolves.

The Timberwolves were to be sold for \$152.5 million to Top Rank of Louisiana, which wanted to take them to New Orleans, but the deal was overturned by the NBA.

Family of Fighters

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"The national tournament was in Atlanta and I love Atlanta," he said, shaking his head in disappointment.

He'll get his chance to visit another America's large cities when he accompanies his sons to Chicago. The trio plans to mix pleasure with business in the Windy City.

"It is going to be fun," Lonnie III said. "I'm looking forward to it and flying there will be a good experience."

The seventh grade AG student at Mineral Springs Middle School said he didn't know anything about the Junior Olympics until recently, but now has one goal in mind. "Winning," he said emphatically.

Anthony also wants to win, but has definite ideas about how to spend his free time in Chicago.

"I want to get Michael Jordan's autograph," he said. Asked how he planned on doing that, the Moore Elementary School student said he would try to meet Jordan at the stadium. Told that the former NBA star owns a Chicago-area restaurant,

Wellman contorted his face in skepticism. Assured that Jordan owns a restaurant, Wellman glanced at his father and said, "I might get my dad to take me there."

Lonnie III and Anthony are no strangers to tournament competition. Lonnie won the Black Belt USA tournament in Raleigh last September and Anthony finished third.

"Half the battle is confidence and they have that," Lonnie Jr. said.

The seed for this family adventure was planted by Lonnie Jr. when he decided to revive a dormant dream. He encouraged his son's participation because of the discipline Tae Kwon Do teaches.

"I started in high school in karate, but hurt my knee and quit," the elder Wellman said. "That stuck in my mind, plus I've always wanted to get a black belt. I wanted to get the boys involved because of the discipline. Their confidence has grown from taking tae kwon do."

All three Wellmans have grown in others ways as well. Tae

Kwon Do preaches 10 guideposts for living called the Ten Articles of Tae Kwon Do. The ninth article states to never retreat in battle. The 10th says to finish what you start. Lonnie Jr. and Anthony live by the 10th. Lonnie III be the ninth.

"That one taught me a lot, but I obey all 10," Anthony said.

Lonnie III, who used to get picked on a great deal because of his small size, says he has learned to never retreat.

"The ninth article has special significance for me," he said. "It means you don't kill someone, but you don't back down either." Tae kwon do profoundly and mystically changed Lonnie Jr.

"I didn't know what was missing as a man, father and husband and Tae Kwon Do has helped me complete the circle and fill in the blanks," he said. "I used to be hot-headed and temperamental and say what was on my mind. Now I'm more clam and let things roll off my back. It has given me an inner peace."

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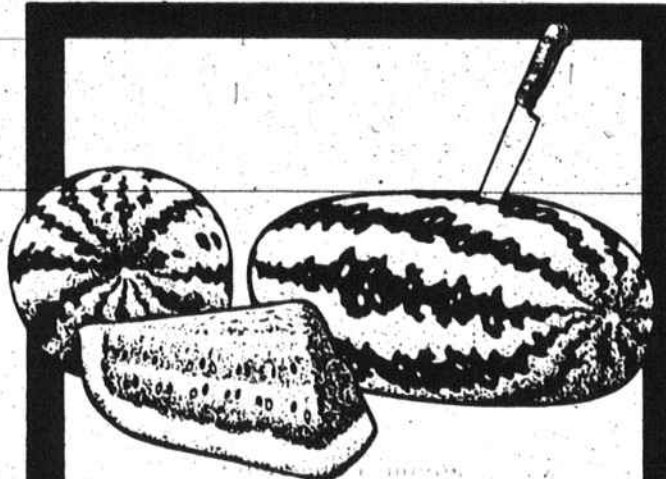
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