

Bulls victory gathering time for celebration, boos

By Nancy Armour
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHICAGO — It's practically a Chicago summer tradition now, the celebration bash at Grant Park for the NBA champion Bulls. Only this year, it seemed part gala, part goodbye.

"It's been a great run," Scottie Pippen said Tuesday. "Thank you for our last dance."

All year, the Bulls have been saying this was it for the dynasty that's now won six championships in eight years. Of the 12-man playoff roster, nine are free agents. Coach Phil Jackson and Pippen swore they were finished in Chicago when the season was over, and Michael Jordan said he just might join them.

Now the speeches are done, the trophies are back in their case

and the bandshell at Grant Park is empty again. The season is over, and it's decision time.

The first to go was assistant coach Jimmy Rodgers, who announced his resignation after the rally. Rodgers, a 27-year NBA veteran, spent four seasons with the Bulls.

"My heart, my soul and my love has always gone to the city of Chicago," Jordan said. "And no matter what happens, my heart, my soul and my love will still be in the city of Chicago."

"I just hope and pray that we can have the opportunity once again to share this type of enjoyment in the city of Chicago."

The fans at the rally hope so, too. There were signs touting a seventh championship, and more than a few begging Jordan and Pippen to come back. Grant Park

was a sea of red and black — one fan even shaved his head and wrote the championship years on his scalp in black mascara and red lipstick.

And while they were there to celebrate, many fans said they also came to get one last look at everyone just in case this really was it.

"I just wanted them to see Michael in what might be his final hurrah," said Bonnie Johnson of Chicago, who brought his 7-year-old son James and 6-year-old daughter Jasmine. "So my kids can know that they've been part of something big."

The Bulls were introduced one by one, with Jackson, Jordan, Pippen, Dennis Rodman, Ron Harper and Toni Kukoc carrying in the six NBA trophies. Everyone on the playoff roster

spoke except Randy Brown and Dickey Simpkins.

In a departure from past rallies, Bulls chairman Jerry Reinsdorf and general manager Jerry Krause stayed out of sight. That didn't stop fans from booing the men they blame for a breakup that's been three years in the making.

"About a year ago this last month, Jerry Reinsdorf called me and asked me did I think we could do it again. I said yes. ... I thank him for that opportunity. Thank you, Jerry. And I want to thank Jerry Krause for giving us the opportunity to do it," Jackson said, prompting a loud chorus of

boos.

But fans also booed Jackson and Pippen when they said what sounded like their goodbyes.

"This WAS our last dance, and it was a wonderful waltz," Jackson said. "Thank you all."

So leave it to Rodman to lighten the mood.

"I've always said I'm never, ever getting married again. I'll never have another wife," he said, grinning and then pausing as if he was about to make some big announcement. Or say something provocative.

"If I had to marry anybody, it'd be these 12 guys right here!"

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The
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Olympic team was one for ages

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the 1,600-meter relay team that set a world record of 2:56.16 and who won the Olympic 400 gold medal in 1972, differs with Beamon.

Matthews, a Johnson C. Smith graduate, knew it was going to happen. The men's team had met about possible protests and it was left to each person to determine what he would do if on the medals stand.

"Tommie and John were very strong about their feelings," Matthews said.

Smith said the raised fists were not a "malignant gesture."

"It was meant to get a respectful response," he said.

Instead, the gesture backfired. Smith and Carlos were denounced as "ugly Americans," and their lives were tainted for years.

The demonstration was first

proposed before the games by Harry Edwards, a sociologist and sports activist at San Jose State, where Smith, Evans and sprinter Ronnie Ray Smith were students.

"We hoped the boycott would not occur because we needed to send our best athletes to the games," Fosbury said. "Even Jesse Owens encouraged them not to boycott. When Smith and Carlos did their demonstration, all hell broke loose. After that, we were inundated by journalists and photographers ... and there was much debate over the severity of the penalty."

Stan Wright, a men's assistant coach, contends the athletes were manipulated by Edwards.

Wright did not speak up for 30 years because he did not want to bring "undue pain and suffering to my wife, Hazel, and to my marriage." With his wife's death last

October, Wright says he now feels free to speak.

He called Edwards' proposed boycott a "hoax" and "fraud," and said it was forced upon the team. He said the "fear and hostility that the athletes and I had to operate under through the Los Angeles trials was unbearable."

Wright added that Evans, whom he had coached in 1966, wrote to him before the trials, asking him not to go to Los Angeles because "my name had been put on a hit list to be shot there."

He also contends that neither Smith nor Carlos received a hearing before being sent home from Mexico City, and "even several athletes who did not carry out protests of any kind have been unfairly treated" over the years.

Smith and Carlos were both invited to the reunion and Smith is expected to attend.

Williams sisters may face off again

Wimbledon draw could pair siblings when tournament fortnight starts

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Wednesday, faces Jana Nejedly of Canada in the first round and then it's a relatively easy path to the fourth round for last season's U.S. Open runner-up.

Not so for Serena.

She begins with Laura Golarsa, would probably face Lucie in the second round and, if she

advances, could play Kournikova in the third.

Another teen-ager, 17-year-old defending champion and top seed Martina Hingis, drew capable American Lisa Raymond in the first round. No. 2 Lindsay Davenport will play Florencia Labat.

Hingis could face No. 3 Jana

Novotna, the woman she beat in last year's final, in the semis. Davenport would meet No. 4 Steffi Graf in the other semifinal if the seedings hold.

The 29-year-old Graf — winner of 21 Grand Slams — is continuing her comeback from surgery and a year's worth of injuries. She opens against Gala Leon Garcia.

No. 6 Monica Seles, in Graf's half of the draw, opens with another Spaniard — Maria Antonia Sanchez Lorenzo.

Sting should be ready to regroup Thursday

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half. Cooper is a tough player and she showed why she was MVP. I have to look at my mistakes and learn from them for the next game. It was difficult matching up with them, we have to look at this game and learn from it. We play them again and I'm looking forward to it.

Q: Talk about Cynthia Cooper's performance.

A: She's a great player. She's just a hard player to defend because they run a lot of on-the-ball screens and if you go under that screen she can bury the three and if you try to go over top, her first step is so quick, she can get by you. So, I think I learned a lot from playing her and I think that will help me on a lot of different players in this league and we have to play them again so, I know what to expect.

Q: You were matched up with Sheryl Swoopes a lot, and she was held to only 13 points, while in the Comets first game this season, she had 28. How were you defending her?

A: Swoopes is also a great player, and she also has a quick first step. I noticed that she loved to go to her left a lot, and pull up for the jumper, so, when playing her I kind of stepped into her shot, unlike Cooper, who likes to take it all the way to the hole, so it wasn't easy defending her either, I think she just missed a lot of her shots. But, she is definitely a tough player to defend.

Q: You had 14 points in the sec-

ond half, including a stretch of three and a half minutes where you scored 10 points. What were you feeling throughout that stretch?

A: I just tried to be aggressive and go out there and get some things going. I felt like we shot a lot of outside shots and we weren't taking it to them and when I got the ball, I wanted to take the ball to the hole and hopefully draw some fouls on their players or take it to the hole for a lay-up. So, I just tried to be more aggressive coming into the second half.

Q: Detroit is coming in, again, on Thursday, you're going to be

Detroit could be tonic Charlotte needs after first loss of season

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Meadors said. "We did a great job of defending their ball screen and it seemed like in the first half we started going behind instead of going over the top of the screens and they hit five threes that set us back on our heels."

After limiting Houston to 36.7 percent shooting in the first half, Charlotte's defense was undone by 54 percent Comets accuracy in the second. Also, the Sting couldn't convert on offense, making only 35.3 percent for the game, nor could it force Houston out of its rhythm.

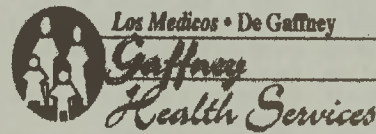
"We just didn't play well," center Rhonda Mapp said. "We slowed down on the defense. That's what created our a lot of our transition offense. In order to score on transition, we need to play defense."

Despite the loss, Reid sees a positive side. Charlotte was outplayed, but not outthusted. Besides, the season's early.

"We have a ways to go and I think we will be in the playoffs," she said. "We'll learn from (Monday's) game and take it on."



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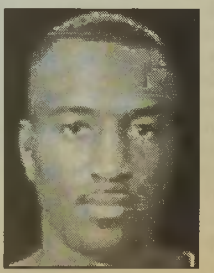
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