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Another black teen-age tennis player, Alexandra Stevenson, chose to play at the Family Circle. Stevenson met with Hodges before the tournament to explain her position and, she said, to bring attention to the flag debate.

The NCAA would prefer to stay out of state politics, Jankowski said, "but there are also times when you can't avoid being involved, and this was one of those situations."

Flag supporters say it's a symbol of Southern heritage. Opponents say it symbolizes slavery and racism.

Leaders for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People are not satisfied with the Legislature's compromise and will continue the boycott. National NAACP President Kweisi Mfume he would ask the NCAA to remove the basketball tournament from Greenville in two years.

Jankowski did not know if Mfume or the NAACP had made such a request. She said the NABC, not the NAACP, prompted the NCAA to act.

Jankowski said the reaction about the flag is similar to responses they get when penalties are imposed on a member school. "A lot of times we'll hear from both sides," she said. "But on this issue we have mostly heard from people who are opposed to taking the flag down."

Pacers hunger for chance at Finals

By Hank Lowenkron
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

INDIANAPOLIS — Dale Davis and the Indiana Pacers are getting another chance to get something they've never had: a trip to the NBA Finals.

And standing in their way for the third time in a row are the New York Knicks, who upset the Pacers 4-2 in last year's conference finals.

"I'm starving," Davis said. "We've been here before, but we haven't gotten over the hump. I can't see much getting in our way this time. I think everybody is on the same page. Even though we've fallen short, we know what it takes."

The Pacers won't be looking for point production from Davis, but they'll need the muscular 252-pounder to establish himself underneath the basket. Indiana leads the series 1-0 going into tonight's game at Conseco Fieldhouse.

Rebounding has long been the Pacers' weakness. "Whoever wins the boards, usually wins the series," said Davis, who is in the playoffs for the eighth time and is averaging 11.1 rebounds this year. "Controlling the boards is definitely going to be important. So what I bring to this team is important."

With Patrick Ewing missing most of last year's series, 6-foot-11 Marcus Camby took his place and dominated Indiana inside in the last four games with 75 points and 47 rebounds while making 26 of 43 shots from the field.

"We've got to be more aware of him. We know exactly what he's going to do and how his game is. We've got to contain him, and not let him get anything easy," Davis said of Camby. "He's a guy that brings energy to that team. They feed off that. He's definitely going

to attack the boards and score when he gets the opportunity, and will play good defense. "He also runs the floor well, that's a guy we can't let get off and bring life to their team."

Reggie Miller, who struggled against New York last year in the playoffs, gets another opportunity to torment the Knicks in what has become one of the Eastern Conference's greatest rivalries.

The Pacers guard didn't try and hide his feelings about the Knicks following Monday's practice.

"I hate them!" he said. "They always think they're bigger and badder than everyone. ... We know they don't give us any respect. So why should I give respect or like someone that doesn't give us respect?"

Miller has had some of the best performances of his career against the Knicks, most of them coming at Madison Square Garden. He scored 25 points in the fourth quarter of Game 5 in 1994, eight points in 11.2 seconds to win Game 1 in 1995 and made a 3-pointer from in front of Spike Lee's courtside seat to force overtime in Game 4 in 1998 and spark Indiana to a series-turning victory.

The Pacers watched Game 7 of the Miami-New York series together on Sunday.

"Personally, I wanted to play New York, somewhat exorcise some demons," said Miller, who has been playing some of the best playoff basketball of his career during this postseason.

"We have beaten New York, but it's never been in a conference final. Detroit had to get by Boston, Chicago had to get past Detroit. So there's always that team you've got to get by to get to the next level, and New York is that team for us."

The teams split the season series 2-2, each winning twice at

home. The Pacers will have homecourt advantage in this series, with Games 1 and 2 at Conseco Fieldhouse before the series shifts to New York for games Saturday and Monday.

"The main thing is don't allow them to get anything easy. They have players who are definitely capable of hurting you. You definitely don't want to give them any kind of life," Davis said.

Last year, Indiana was coming off a one-week break after sweeping Milwaukee and Philadelphia in the first two rounds.

"Last year, I don't think we were focused to start the series and we lost the opening game, homecourt advantage, and eventually the series," Davis said.

In fact, Indiana hasn't won a playoff series when it lost the opening game, and it has won every series when it won the opening game.

"That's history, and it doesn't matter now. The thing we've got to do is go about and take care of business," Davis said. "If we do that, we will move on."

Indiana got a small break this year after ousting Philadelphia in six games, while New York needed seven games to get by Miami.

Both teams feature balanced scoring. Jalen Rose led the Pacers at 18.2 during the season, with Miller at 18.1, the first time in a decade he didn't lead the team. Allan Houston topped the Knicks at 19.7, followed by Latrell Sprewell at 18.6.

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