

Bulls ready for one last run

Continued from 1B

that time, I've ceased talking about it and I just hope that everybody else can cease talking about it - Mr. Reinsdorf, too."

So is this it for the Bulls? Is this the last hurrah?

"We don't know that, but it might be," said Jordan, who averaged 37 points in the three-game sweep of Washington. "I like to think that it won't be, but you never really know. So let's just go out and live for the moment."

Jordan restated in an interview that was aired Sunday on ESPN the same thing he said last week: He'll quit if Jackson isn't around to coach him.

"To start over again, it's like getting divorced and getting remarried," he said. "It's going to take some time to build that trust up. At my age, I don't want

to go through that again."

If the Bulls win and Jordan retires, he'll go out on top for the second time in four years.

He left in 1993 after the Bulls captured their third straight title and after he led the league in scoring for the seventh time. He returned in 1995, topped the NBA in scoring for two more seasons and carried the club to the championship last year.

Jordan fully expects to win another title and his team is heavily favored to beat Atlanta. While the Bulls have been off since last Wednesday, the Hawks just finished a grueling series against Detroit on Sunday.

"Either way, you can look at it positive or negative," Atlanta's Steve Smith said. "They might have been off for so long and they come out sluggish, or we

might be tired. But it's still the second round and I think people are going to ...let emotion take over."

Emotion might have to carry the Hawks, because their legs figure to be weary. Their five starters - guards Smith and Mookie Blaylock, forwards Christian Laettner and Tyrone Corbin and center Dikembe Mutombo - played almost every minute of every game against Detroit.

The Bulls, meanwhile, used their time off to heal injuries to Rodman and Toni Kukoc. And they have a rested bench that includes Kukoc, Steve Kerr, Brian Williams and Jason Caffey.

"Looking at the fact that they just went through a five-game series, we feel pretty good about our chances," Pippen said.

Knicks battle younger Heat

Continued from 1B

heated season series, the Knicks winning the final three games after losing by 24 points in the 15th game of the season.

Van Gundy called that home loss the low point of the season, and the Knicks went on to win 38 of their next 48 games - including two against the Heat.

The resurgence began with a 103-85 victory at Miami on Dec. 6 in which Van Gundy challenged his team to get even for the loss to the Heat three days earlier.

New York followed its 38-10 period with a stretch of eight

losses in 14 games. Again, though, the Knicks used the Heat as a motivating factor and ended their final slump of the regular season by beating Miami 100-99 to start a stretch in which they won four of their final five games.

Van Gundy was quick to dismiss the season series.

"A first-round series have nothing to do with the second round, the regular season has nothing to do with the second round," he said. "If anyone knows that it's our team, because the last two years we won in first-round sweeps

against teams that beat us in the regular season. Nothing matters until you play."

Still, New York's final victory in the season series featured a skirmish between Charles Oakley and Jamal Mashburn, the ejections of Buck Williams and Alonzo Mourning and plenty of trash talking between point guards Chris Childs and Tim Hardaway.

"High entertainment," Hardaway said. "They don't like us. We don't like them."

"Nobody backed down," Mashburn said. "I don't think anybody is scared of anybody."

Trojans win MCBL opener

Heavy rain forced the cancellation of opening day for the new Mecklenburg County Semi-Pro Baseball League Saturday, but a couple of rivals got the league off to a good start.

Perennial power Hoskins battled the rival Charlotte Trojans Sunday, with the Trojans win-

ning the first game in MCBL history, 10-6. James Carrothers pitched a complete game victory.

The Trojans' offense was powered by Kevin "Weasel" Williams and center fielder James "Popcorn" Murphy. Williams drove in four runs in a 2-for-5 effort at the plate. Murphy went 3-for-5 and drove in three runs.

Asheboro was admitted into the league after Carolina failed to meet entry deadlines.



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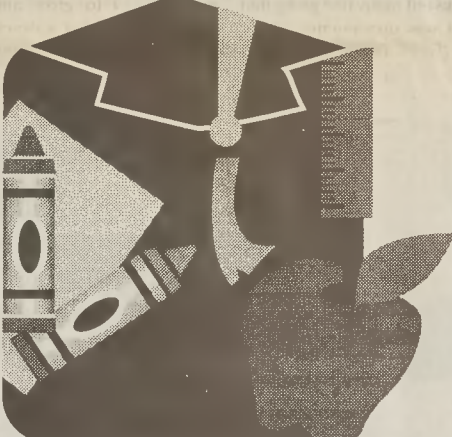
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