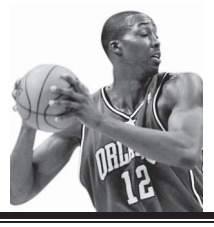
GamePlan

TODAY'S BEST BETS

Watch: SEC basketball

Kentucky (10-4, 0-0) welcomes Vanderbilt (10-2, 1-0) to Rupp Arena, where the Wildcats are 74-12 against the Commodores. ESPN has it at 6 p.m.



Go: Magic at Clippers

Looking to get healthy from their recent slump, the Clippers continue their seven-game homestand when they welcome Orlando, including Dwight Howard, left. Tipoff at Staples Center is 7:30 p.m.

TALK BACK

'With players changing teams so frequently these days, all we have left to root for is the home team. Now, our home team is not in L.A. Go Anaheim, beat L.A. (and Moreno, too).'

ROB ROHM
ORANGE

Talk to us

We want your comments on sports personalities, games and news. Please send your thoughts to sports@ocregister.com or fax to (714) 796-6765. Please keep comments to 25 words.

THE LINE

NFL playoffs

Saturday

Favorite	Open	Today	Underdog
at Seattle	9	9	Washington
at Denver	3	3	New England

Sunday

at Indianapolis	8½	9	Pittsburgh
at Chicago	3	3	Carolina

NCAA basketball

Favorite	Line	Underdog
at Boston College	4	N.C. State
North Carolina	1	at Va. Tech
Wisconsin	1	at Minnesota
at Oklahoma	15	Missouri

NBA

Favorite	Line	Underdog
at **Clippers**	5½	Orlando
at Cleveland	9½	New York
at Atlanta	3	Boston
at Charlotte	4	Houston
at Milwaukee	3	Minnesota
at Memphis	9	Sacramento
Detroit	6½	New Orleans-x
at San Antonio	9	New Jersey
Phoenix	3	at Denver

x-at Oklahoma City

5 GAMES OUT

Lakers

Wed 1-11	Thu 1-12	Sat 1-14	Mon 1-16	Thu 1-19
POR	CLE	G.S.	MIA	SAC
7:00	7:30	7:30	7:30	7:30
KCAL/9	TNT	KCAL/9	TNT	KCAL/9 TNT

Information: (310) 426-6031

Clippers

Tue 1-10	Sat 1-14	Mon 1-16	Wed 1-18	Fri 1-20
ORL	SEA	UTAH	PHX	DAL
7:30	7:30	12:30	7:30	7:30
FSN2	KTLA/5		FSN	FSN2

Information: (323) 224-1448

Mighty Ducks

Fri 1-13	Mon 1-16	Thu 1-19	Sat 1-21	Mon 1-23
WSH	BOS	OTT	FLA	L.A.
7:30	10:00	4:30	7:30	7:30
FSN2			FSN2	OLN

Information: (877) 945-3946

Kings

Thu 1-12	Sat 1-14	Tue 1-17	Thu 1-19	Sat 1-21
BOS	BUF	T.B.	ATL	S.J.
4:00	4:30	7:30	7:30	2:00
FSN	FSN	FSN	FSN	KNBC/4

Information: (888) 546-4752

CSF basketball

Sat 1-14	Thu 1-19	Sat 1-21	Wed 1-25	Sat 1-28
UCR	LB ST.	UCI	UCI	UCD
4:00	7:00	2:00	7:00 KVMD	2:00

Information: (714) 278-2783

UCI basketball

Fri 1-13	Sun 1-15	Thu 1-19	Sat 1-21	Wed 1-25
CSUN	PAC	UCR	CSF	CSF
7:00	2:00	7:00 KVMD	2:00	7:00 KVMD

Information: (949) 824-5000

UCLA basketball

Thu 1-12	Sat 1-14	Wed 1-18	Sat 1-21	Thu 1-26
WSU	WASH	USC	W. VA	ORE
7:30	1:00	7:30	12:45	7:30
FSN2	FSN	FSN2	KCBS/2	FSN

Information: (310) 825-2946

USC basketball

Thu 1-12	Sat 1-14	Wed 1-18	Thu 1-26	Sat 1-28
WASH	WSU	UCLA	OSU	ORE
7:30	5:00	7:30	5:30	5:00
FSN	FSN2	FSN2	FSN2	

Information: (213) 740-4672

Home - - Away

TOP OF THE 2ND

FILE PHOTO: PAUL E. RODRIGUEZ

FITTING IN: USC women's basketball coach Mark Trakh, right, has endeared himself at the school, especially among his players. He often runs lines with the team during practice.

Trakh has Trojans again on the rise

MARCIA C. SMITH
REGISTER COLUMNIST

LOS ANGELES • On Friday night, just two days after the USC football team lost the national title to Texas in the Rose Bowl, the urban campus could have doubled as ghost-town set from "High Noon," and Trojans sports resumed anyway.

There were no lines. No traffic. No scalpers with those cardboard "I NEED TICKETS" signs. No circus at the Lyon Center.

Just women's basketball, which means you would need to flip over your men's basketball pocket schedule to know that the USC women faced its highest-ranked opponent of the season so far, No. 9 Arizona State.

The Trojans won, 58-50, surviving 11 ties and 10 lead changes and preventing the Sun Devils from shooting anything more than blanks and free throws in their final 9 minutes, 26 seconds.

The victory — the first over a top-10 team for second-year USC and former Brea Olinda coach Mark Trakh — was remarkable for the once-champion program that has spent the better part of 12 seasons stumbling in the dark.

The upsetting part of the upset was that only 702 gathered to see it. And that attendance figure likely included the Trojans themselves, their basketball band, a dance troupe, a cheerleading squad, three reporters, the Trojans latex-faced mascot and Athletic Director Mike Garrett, who, I think, might have smiled for a whole 0.6 seconds at the final buzzer.

We know low attendance at women's college basketball games is as surprising as vacancies at the Afghanistan Hyatt. But let's not let popularity, as indicated by a crowd the size of the halftime bathroom line at the Coliseum, take away from this team's progress.

The USC women are stacking some giant Lego blocks toward reconstruction and improved to 10-5 overall (4-2 in the Pac-10, tied for third). *This is big* ... in women's hoops.

And OK, the news of the Trojans glory hasn't caused the seismic tremors of say, No. 17 UCLA eking out a 61-60 victory over ASU on Saturday in men's ba$ketball with 8,490 $pectator$ plus TV viewers.

But this progress is worth noting because it brings the Trojans back to when USC women's basketball used to be big, too — back in the days when hair was big. Like in 1983 and 1984, when the Cheryl Miller-led Trojans won NCAA titles, and in 1994, when 6-foot-5 All-America and future Sparks center Lisa Leslie took the Trojans to the Elite Eight.

USC has thrown millions of dollars into rebuilding, hiring Miller, Fred Williams then Chris Gobrecht as coaches who promised trophies but apparently were just kidding. Their Pac-10 finishes ranged from third (1997, 2004) to last (1999). Williams (33-23 in two seasons) made a 1997 NCAA Tournament run; Gobrecht, (93-108 in seven seasons) none.

After the 2003-04 season, USC fired Gobrecht and hired Trakh (pronounced Track), a masterful strategist and an eager college man.

Trakh, like football coach Pete Carroll, embraces Troy.

The first thing he did was decorate his new office in Trojans glory. Where former coaches had displayed framed pictures of their past hurrahs at other schools, Trakh put photos of USC's title teams and its All-Americans.

"It's not about me," Trakh told his new staff. "I'm here to be a part of this program."

Trakh, a Long Beach State journalism graduate, was an English teacher at Brea Olinda High in 1981 when he spotted a bulletin board posting seeking a girls basketball coach. He handwrote his letter of interest and got the job, which was easy, since he was the only one who applied.

His first building project: He took a whisper of a Ladycats program and led it to a record of 354-45 and four state titles in 13 seasons.

His second: He took over mid-major Pepperdine in 1993, guiding the Waves to a 199-123 record, six 20-victory seasons, four West Coast Conference titles, three NCAA appearances and a 100 percent graduation rate in 11 seasons.

His third: USC, where the players tap a "Bring it back" sign before practices.

This is a different program now, a cooperative rather than the dictatorship it grew to be under hard-driving Gobrecht, who had alienated even top players when her temper made her go a little "Mommie Dearest."

Trakh's approach is more open and benevolent while still being kooky enough to promise to dye his hair blond if the Trojans made the NCAA Tournament last season.

They did. And platinum Trakh, fresh from three hours in a salon chair, coached the Trojans (20-11, 12-6, second in Pac-10) into the NCAA Tournament as the No. 8 seed. They beat No. 9 Louisville before being edged by top-seeded Michigan State, 61-59, in the second round.

"That dye job was coach's rookie hazing," said junior forward Alison Jaskowiak, eyeing white granny panties for this year's freshman follies. "He doesn't forget that this is college."

At Friday's game, Trakh, this 5-foot-7 man with an accountant's haircut and a watermelon-slice smile, was first on the team to raise his fingers into a 'V' to accompany the fight song.

"He even runs lines with us, and it's really funny, because of the way his little legs go and his arms pump," Jaskowiak said.

Junior guard Jamie Hagiya jumped in: "On the bus he watches movies like 'The Longest Yard' and his favorite, 'Miracle,' and we pile in around him."

They both look at their coach warmly.

Outside the locker room, Trakh was talking with his assistant, Jody Wynn, who followed Trakh here from Brea Olinda and Pepperdine rather than take the Waves' top job.

Wynn, who is married to fellow USC assistant Derek Wynn, held her daughter, Jada. Trakh, Jada's godfather, brushed his finger against the baby's cheek and smiled.

"What'dya think of the game?" Trakh asked.

Her answer was the same as mine: Congratulations.

TODAY'S COLLEGE BASKETBALL GAMES

Top 25 men

- No. 15 Boston College vs. No. 18 N.C. State
- No. 20 North Carolina at Virginia Tech
- No. 21 Wisconsin at Minnesota
- No. 22 Oklahoma vs. Missouri

Top 25 women

- No. 7 Connecticut at Seton Hall
- No. 20 Notre Dame vs. Marquette

Area men

- Fresno Pacific at Biola, 7:30 p.m.
- Concordia at The Master's College, 7:30
- Westmont at Vanguard, 7:30
- Hope International at San Diego Christian, 5:30

Top 25 women

- No. 7 Connecticut at Seton Hall
- No. 20 Notre Dame vs. Marquette

Area women

- Fresno Pacific at Biola, 5:30 p.m.
- Concordia at The Master's, 5:30
- Westmont at Vanguard, 5:30
- Hope International at San Diego Christian, 7:30

ON THE AIR TODAY

Sport	Time	Event (D-delay; T-tape)	TV	Radio
College basketball	4 p.m.	Wisconsin at Minnesota	ESPN	
	4:30 p.m.	N. Carolina at Virginia Tech	ESPN2	
	6 p.m.	Vanderbilt at Kentucky	ESPN	
Hockey	4 p.m.	Detroit at Carolina	OLN	
Motor sports	2 p.m.	IHRA Motor City Nationals	Speed	
Pro basketball	5:30 p.m.	New Jersey at San Antonio	NBA TV	
	7:30 p.m.	Orlando at Clippers	FSN2	KTLK/1150
Soccer	5 p.m.	Boca Juniors vs. Racing	FSC	
	6 p.m.	InterLiga: Tigres vs. Cruz Azul	FoxE	KWKU/1220 KWKW/1330
	8 p.m.	InterLiga: Necaxa vs. Chivas	FoxE	KWKU/1220 KWKW/1330

For complete listings, please see TV Register.
Satellite times might differ. Check with your service provider.

Bush meets agent, closer to decision

By TODD HARMONSON
THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

LOS ANGELES • USC tailback Reggie Bush moved closer Monday to his expected announcement that he will enter the NFL draft when he interviewed agent David Dunn on campus and discussed logistics for an announcement.

Bush insisted he still was trying to make a decision but said one could come today. He talked with USC sports information director Tim Tessalone about how an announcement would be made, but Tessalone said nothing had been scheduled as of late Monday.

Fellow tailback LenDale White, who did not attend a team meeting Monday, also is considered likely to enter the draft before Sunday's deadline.

USC coach Pete Carroll met with right tackle Winston Justice to discuss his NFL decision, and Carroll said he would meet with safety Darnell Bing today.

Wide receiver Steve Smith and right guard Fred Matua said they weren't sure if they would remain at USC, though both are considered likely to return after being told they probably would not be selected in the first two rounds.

Dunn, who is based in Newport Beach, and several members of his Athletes First staff met with Bush, Carroll, Trojans running backs coach Todd McNair and Bush's cousin, former NFL cornerback Jayice Pearson.

"I've got to be a hundred percent sure what I'm going to do before I make a decision," said Bush, who said he hadn't settled on Dunn as an agent if he decides to leave USC.

USC NOTES

"He's getting closer," Carroll said. "He's just got to figure it out."

REPRESENTING

Trojans quarterback Matt Leinart constantly tried to shake his Hollywood image, but those efforts likely took a hit Monday. He picked Creative Artists Agency, which bills itself as the "world's leading talent and literary agency," to represent him off the field.

Leinart still is deciding on a football agent, but CAA will represent him for endorsement and licensing purposes.

NOTES

Carroll said two members of USC's recruiting class enrolled in school Monday: freshman safety Antwine Perez from Camden, N.J., and Chaffey College tight end Gerald Washington. The Trojans are awaiting paperwork on defensive tackle Walker Lee Ashley from Eden Prairie, Minn., who did not qualify academically to enroll at USC for last season. ...

Carroll said freshman tailback Michael Coleman (hip) will have surgery today but has not been ruled out for spring practice. He also said freshman linebacker Brian Cushing (shoulder) soon will have surgery. ...

Wide receiver Whitney Lewis said reports he might transfer were inaccurate and that he will remain at USC. ...

Linebacker Rey Maualuga was in school for the start of the semester but will return home to Eureka on Wednesday for a memorial service for his father, Talatonu, who died Jan. 2 of cancer.

Second-half rally nets Long Beach a victory

FROM REGISTER NEWS SERVICES

SAN LUIS OBISPO • Shawn Hawkins had 15 points and 11 rebounds as Long Beach State beat Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, 79-66, in a Big West game on Monday night at Mott Gym.

Hawkins went 4 of 11 from the field but hit all five of his free throws.

Aaron Nixon also scored 15, and Kejuan Johnson added 14 points for the 49ers, who outscored Cal Poly, 52-30, in the second half.

The 49ers (6-7, 1-1), trailing 36-27 at halftime, went on a key 13-4 run early in the second half when Cal Poly's leading scorer, Dawin Whiten, was forced to the bench because of his fourth foul.

Johnson scored 10 of the 49ers first 12 points in the half to keep the 49ers close. Nixon kept things going by converting three, three-point plays en route to 12 second-half points.

Whiten, who came in averaging 13 points, was held to 10 as Cal Poly (4-10, 2-2) committed 24 turnovers.

Cal Poly's Derek Stockalper led all scorers with 18 points and also had eight rebounds.

COLLEGES

LONG BEACH ST.	Min	FG M-A	FT M-A	Reb O-T	A	PF	PTS
Hawkins	31	5-12	5-5	3-11	0	2	15
Johnson	34	5-10	2-4	2-8	1	0	14
Dawson	18	4-4	0-0	3-4	0	2	8
Hodges	22	2-6	4-6	0-0	1	1	9
Nixon	25	5-10	5-6	0-2	4	3	15
Ibekwe	7	0-0	0-2	1-3	0	1	0
Darby	14	5-7	0-1	1-2	0	0	10
Henderson	7	0-1	0-0	0-1	0	1	0
Gant	2	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Houston	31	3-10	2-2	0-5	5	2	8
Ricks	9	0-0	0-2	0-0	0	1	0
Totals	200	29-60	18-28	10-36	11	13	79

Percentages: FG .483, FT .643. **3-Point Goals:** 3-14, .214 (Johnson 2-4, Hodges 1-4, Henderson 0-1, Nixon 0-1, Houston 0-2, Hawkins 0-2). **Team Rebounds:** 0. **Blocked Shots:** 3 (Houston 2, Hodges). **Turnovers:** 16 (Johnson 4, Hodges 2, Henderson 2, Nixon 2, Ibekwe, Gant, Darby, Houston, Hawkins, Dawson). **Steals:** 7 (Houston 3, Johnson 3, Nixon). **Technical Fouls:** None.

CAL POLY SLO	Min	FG M-A	FT M-A	Reb O-T	A	PF	PTS
McGinn	21	2-6	0-0	2-6	1	1	4
Stockalper	37	8-18	0-1	5-8	3	4	18
Stephenson	26	5-6	4-6	2-5	0	2	14
Whiten	29	2-6	4-4	0-7	4	5	10
Thomas	35	5-12	0-1	0-4	4	3	12
Clark	27	1-9	2-2	2-2	5	3	5
Osborn	10	0-2	0-0	0-2	0	2	0
Henry	4	0-0	0-0	0-0	1	0	0
Socci	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Shelton	10	0-2	3-4	3-5	0	5	3
Totals	200	23-61	13-18	15-40	18	25	66

Percentages: FG .377, FT .722. **3-Point Goals:** 7-24, .292 (Whiten 2-4, Thomas 2-6, Stockalper 2-7, Clark 1-5, Osborn 0-1, McGinn 0-1). **Team Rebounds:** 1. **Blocked Shots:** 0. **Turnovers:** 24 (Stockalper 5, Whiten 5, Thomas 5, Shelton 3, Stephenson 2, McGinn 2, Osborn, Clark). **Steals:** 9 (Thomas 3, Whiten 2, Osborn, Stockalper, Shelton, McGinn). **Technical Fouls:** None.

Long Beach St.	**27**	**52**	–	**79**
Cal Poly SLO	**36**	**30**	–	**66**

A–1,791. **Officials**–Milt Stowe, Newton Chelette, Bobby Pultz.