

BYU favored, jet lag and all

By Lee Benson
Deseret News sports writer

TOKYO, Japan — Brigham Young's 50-member football team, and an accompanying party of nearly 300, landed in a new time zone Thursday night, in advance of two games scheduled against the Japanese All-Stars.

The landing is believed to be the first of many touchdowns.

After a 24-hour flight, Japanese quarantine, immigration and customs clearance, a bus ride through Tokyo traffic on the "wrong" side of the road, beds a foot too short and that famous equalizer, jet lag, the Cougars are still favored over the Japanese.

Shizuo Daigoh of the American Football Association of Japan, knowing, no doubt, a quote in the Deseret News will not reach Tokyo newsstands by game time, picked the final score of Saturday's contest at National Stadium.

"Probably it should be something

like 100-0," said Daigoh, who ought to know.

Maybe Wayne Howard would bet on it. But most, and 20,000 are expected for the game, are looking for a more merciful contest, with Coach LaVell Edwards' team acting as on the field instructors for a football hungry nation.

"Football is just getting started in Japan," says Daigoh. "We are most excited to have our first highly ranked team here for opposition."

Ranked 14th in the final UPI regular season poll with a 9-2 record and WAC co-title, BYU is the first top 20 team to ever play in Japan.

The Cougars are the latest in an increasing line of U.S. college teams to visit Japan. Not counting a USC visit prior to World War II, modern day tours began with Utah State in 1972, followed by Wake Forest, Cornell, Hawaii and an exhibition last weekend between Grambling and Temple.

BYU's official party was greeted

enthusiastically at the airport Friday, as sports writers engulfed Edwards. "It was clear some of them knew what they were talking about," said the coach after speaking through an interpreter to answer a long list of technical football questions.

Despite his early season knee injury, Gifford Nielsen, BYU's quarterback, who made the trip but won't play, was the focal point of Japanese interest. Ticket sales have been drummed up on the premise he may play if his leg feels okay (BYU insists he won't play, but has not told that to the Japanese in strong black and white).

Newsmen at the airport asked Nielsen to display evidence of surgery on his left knee. His five-inch scar showed up front page Friday morning in a Tokyo daily sports newspaper.

Marc Wilson, Nielsen's heralded successor at QB, was also photographed and questioned and will play. At 6-5, 205, he will tower over a Japanese squad, whose largest

player is Yoshi Aikawa at 6-0, 187-pounds.

Shinji Mizuta, at 5-9, and 150 pounds, will start at quarterback for Japan. "I think we never can win tomorrow," Mizuta added. "I will gear our offense toward a running attack, and try to rely on quick and short gains."

BYU players worked out Friday morning at Nippon University, while Clayne Jensen, of the PE department, BYU student body president Martin Reeder and BYU vice president Ben Lewis met with an official of the Tokyo municipal government to exchange greetings and gifts.

That atmosphere prevailed at an official greeting reception sponsored by the football association in the evening at a downtown, rooftop night spot — where the BYU and Japanese teams got their first glimpses of each other.

It was not hard to tell the teams apart, a situation that should prevail through the weekend.

HACK MILLER SPORTS EDITOR



Johnny's in limelight

Golf Digest, the sport's largest publication, features Johnny Miller in its cover story.

Good story it is!

Writer Nick Seitz says Miller will have a good season in 1978.

In 1974 Johnny Miller was a monument in his game. He won eight PGA tournaments, three of them in a row to start the season. He opened with 23 rounds of sub-par golf and picked golf's purses for \$353,000 that year. No one has topped that take.

No one that year was as tall on the golf turf as Johnny Miller. And that is what brought Seitz to sift through all the facts to determine if Miller is due to come out of "retirement."

John didn't win a tournament last year. He talked of tossing the towel. He said he had made a mark and now was enjoying the good life. He is a fine family man and liked to spend time with his kids and Linda, his wife, on their new Napa, Calif., farm.

Besides little Johnny was in school and Linda could not be with Johnny as much as he would like.

Johnny told Seitz he had worked harder in 1977 than ever before. He confessed that after the good years of 1974 and 1975 he burned himself out. He "hit the quits" just after he won the British Open.

More weight and less swing

Johnny has been searching for reasons. He gained weight — tips the scales at 190 pounds. He lifted weights, ran, swam. He was in excellent condition but fears the "growing up" brought him to rush his backswing. He found himself lunging at the ball.

Johnny remembers when Jack Nicklaus was slowing down and the drabs caught Arnie Palmer, Billy Casper, Gary Player, Art Wall, Gene Littler — all of them. Even youngsters like Benny Crenshaw and Lanny Wadkins had their days with the "dulls."

In Salt Lake City recently Johnny told some friends he was not only lengthening his stride but slowing his golf swing. He predicted he would return to the winner's circle.

He's been spending time with his old teacher, John Geertser of the San Francisco Country Club — the guy who got Johnny grooved in the latter's young years.

Writer Seitz concludes "if Johnny can strike a meaningful balance between his professional life and his personal life that could enable him to play with confounding brilliance for years and years to come. Some of the time, anyway."

Seitz is right. Maybe Johnny will have to spend more time in front of the mirrors working on his golf swing instead of being tailored according to the day's trouser cut.

He might have to get back to "living" on the golf course and leave pruning of grape vines to another husbandman.

Manicuring and hair dressing might have to take less of his golfing time.



Certainly what he did last year didn't pay.

John is the victim of his own success. No one had done what he did at such an early age. Demands on his time and attention were overwhelmingly important to his new employers — and his manager.

Instant millionaire! Lifetime earnings were guaranteed! And so young! Who could better sell a Sears suit? Hart and Schaffner were for older folk like Jack Nicklaus.

Frank Merriwell and Horatio Alger were no match for Miller. Miller wrote a new book about success in life.

Most others, in this game of golf, have come back. Some were given up for gone. How about the Art Walls, the Gene Littlers, Billy Casper just won the Mexican Open and picked up the coveted purse in pesos. And that's one of the prestige tournaments outside our own majors.

Bet on it, Johnny Miller will be on the green grass early in 1978. So he's promised.

Like Nick Seitz, Johnny has a lot of fans who believe he can win again!

Tanner beats Dibley

SYDNEY, Australia (UPI) — Roscoe Tanner of the United States beat Australia's Colin Dibley, 7-6, 6-2, Friday in a quarter-final match of the \$17,000 New South Wales Open Tennis Championships at White City.

Tanner's victory guaranteed him a paycheck of \$7,800 for the week, but more importantly, won him 70 grand prize points, which puts him into eighth spot on the masters list and a chance at the \$500,000 Grand Prix Masters Tournament to be played in New York next week.

Americans dominated the play Friday, with Brian Teacher thrashing countryman Bill Scanlon, 6-1, 6-0, in their quarter-final for a semifinal meeting Saturday with Vitas Gerulaitis.

Skyline trims unbeaten East

By Linda Hamilton
Deseret News sports writer

An outstanding second-half display of marksmanship by East High School junior Brad Boyle was not enough to keep the Skyline Eagles from yet another tournament win Thursday night.

Skyline slapped unbeaten East 77-68 to enter tonight's Salt Lake Valley Holiday Basketball Tournament championship game against the host team, Highland, at 8.

East plays the other semifinal loser, West, in a 6 p.m. battle for third and fourth, and Jordan met Granger at 4 p.m. in the consolation finals.

Granger Thursday downed scrappy Kearns 61-58 in the early game. Both teams threatened to walk away with the contest only to see the opponent roar back and swipe the lead. Granger led three times, Kearns twice and it was tied five times.

Victorious Skyline coach Paul Jeppesen proclaimed Thursday's exercise "The best game we've played. I thought East battled hard, but we played well, too."

He thought junior forward Paul Rasmussen played well, and he was dead right. The 6-foot-2 Rasmussen made his first five field goals and finished with 8-for-12 accuracy and two points from the free throw line for 18 total. He added six rebounds.

Senior playmaker Eric Slaymaker led Eagle scoring with 21, and senior center Steve Clark added 13 on 50 percent shooting. Brandon Bennett had just five points but added six rebounds, a blocked shot and three first-half assists. Dave England, 6-4 senior reserve, tied for the game rebounding lead with 14.

East's Boyle also had 14 rebounds and was the top scorer with 24 on 50 percent shooting. Boyle took a while to get untracked, but midway through the second period he made two shots and added five without a miss to open the second half.

East senior Chris Furgis also played well with 5-for-7 shooting from the field and at the line and 10 rebounds.

East led only once — 6-4 on a Doug Milne layup. Skyline countered with consecutive baskets by Clark, Bennett, Slaymaker and Greg Snyder and ran off to a 21-8 lead. The Eagles held at least an eight-point lead from then on.

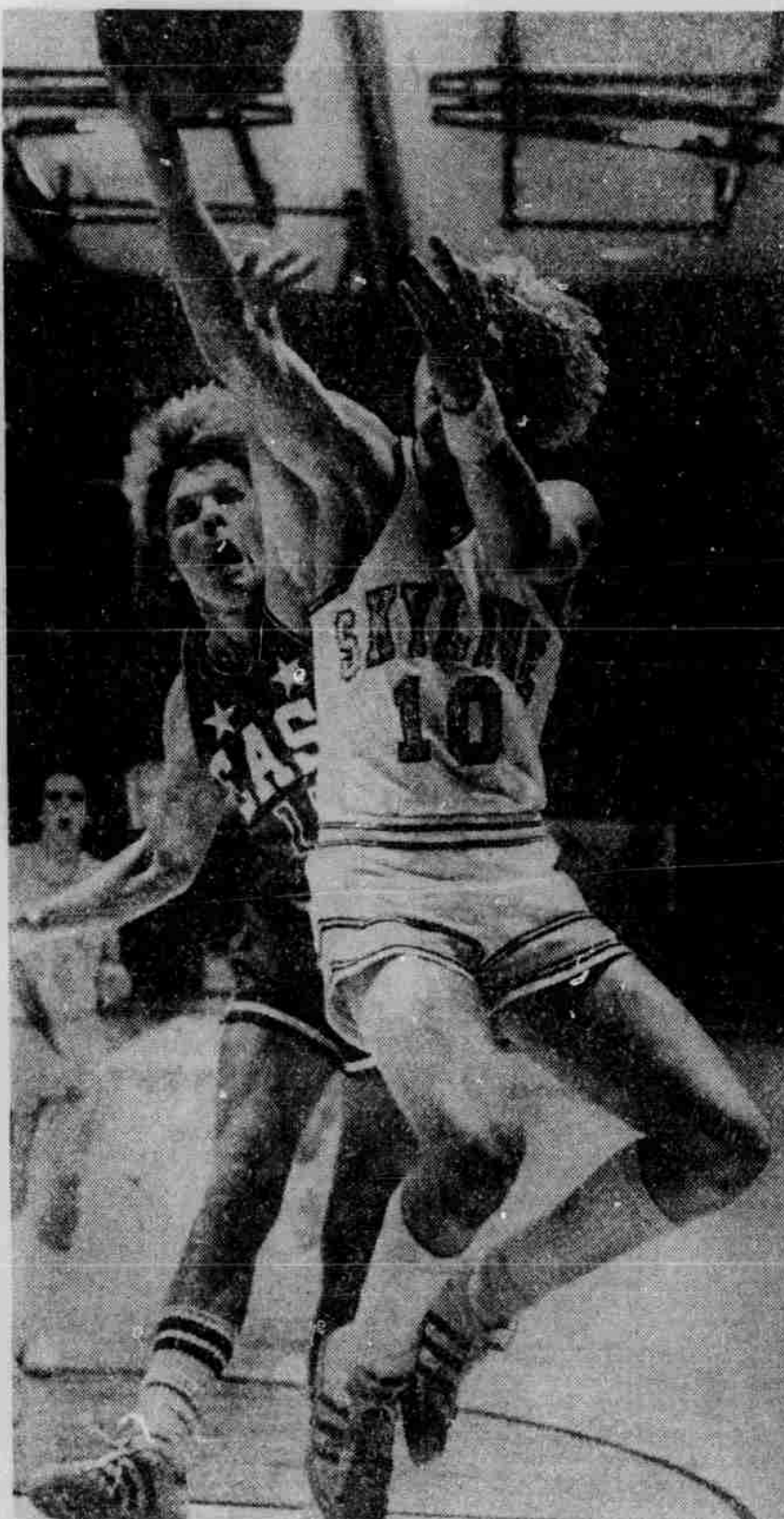
Jeppesen praised his guards for stealing the ball numerous times and getting the fast break going.

The win brought Skyline's record to 3-2 — it lost to Brighton and Viewmont — and dropped East to 5-1.

In the first game, Granger got good shooting from Richard Black (12-for-20) and Clay Clasy and adequate rebounding from Matt Almond and Lee Giles (nine each) in topping Kearns.

The Cougars were led by Brett Monson with 14 points and 13 rebounds and Brad Staker with 18 points and 10 rebounds. But each had cold shooting streaks — missing four or five close-in shots consecutively — and Granger took good advantage.

The Lancers used six points by Clasy and four by Black while Kearns repeatedly missed underneath to build a 14-2 lead. The Cougars got it back to 16-13 when Staker, Monson and Chad Mantle found the range.



Deseret News photo by W. Claudell Johnson

Shrugging off Jeff Davis' protest, Skyline guard Eric Slaymaker goes in for one of his five layups in Thursday's Eagle victory.

Utes seek return to hoop glory

By Bill Ewer
Deseret News sports writer

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. — Playing its first road game of the season after a 3-1 start at home, the University of Utah basketball team battles undefeated Texas Tech tonight (5 p.m. MST) in the opening round of the Volunteer Classic.

It was in just such a road tournament last year that the Utes first gained national attention by defeating unbeaten and nationally ranked Kentucky to win the Kentucky Invitational.

At the time Utah was 3-3 and unnoticed. Using the Kentucky upset as a springboard, the Utes went on to finish 22-7 and win the Western Athletic Conference title and a No. 10 national ranking.

Coach Jerry Pimm hopes this tournament serves the same purpose.

"The Volunteer Classic is every bit as big as and prestigious as the Kentucky Tournament," Pimm said Thursday night prior to a team workout on the Tartan floor of 12,700-seat Stokely Center. "This is a class tournament with high national recognition and a reputation for top quality teams."

"This is a good way for us to start our road season. We want to play the best competition we can, and this tournament certainly has that."

The Utes couldn't have asked for better competition than they'll get from Texas Tech. The Red Raiders are off to a 5-0 start this year and are seeking national recognition of their own.

Host Tennessee (4-1) plays Dartmouth (0-3) in tonight's second game. Winners meet Saturday at 7 p.m. MST for the Classic title with losers going at each other in a 5 p.m. prelim.

Utah and Texas Tech had an unscheduled meeting Thursday when both teams boarded the same plane in Dallas for the two-hour flight to Knoxville. While the players cautiously sized each other up, Pimm and Tech coach Gerald Myers amicably exchanged basketball talk.

"Texas Tech is an excellent team," said Pimm, "and we'll have to play our best game to beat them. Myers is an outstanding coach, and his teams are always well disciplined. Tech is like us in a lot of ways. They rely almost exclusively on a tenacious man-to-man defense, and they like to run on offense when they can. Otherwise they'll take their time and work for the good percentage shot."

Tech has three starters and seven lettermen back from last year's team, which went 20-9 and finished third in the Southwest Conference. In winning their first five games this season, the Raiders have averaged 74.6 points a game while

holding opponents to only 60.8.

The game will offer an interesting matchup between two all-America candidates, both of whom are playing new positions this year.

Texas Tech's Mike Russell, a 6-7 senior, was all-SWC and all-district last year and was named on one all-America team. He was the conference leader in rebounds with 9.9 a game and was second in scoring with 22.2 points a game.

This year, Russell has been moved from center to forward and has picked up right where he left off — scoring 21.0 points and hauling off 8.0 rebounds a game.

Utah's Jeff Judkins was all-WAC and all-district last year while leading the conference in scoring at 20.6 and averaging 6.6 boards a game. Playing guard instead of forward this year, the 6-6 senior is averaging 20.2 points and 9.2 rebounds.

Both players have received a large pre-tournament press buildup in this area.

Pimm will stick with his same starting five of Judkins and Earl Williams at guard, and Danny Vranes, Greg Deane and Buster Matheny inside. It is unlikely Pimm will go more than nine or 10 players deep for this game, and the starting five will probably see more playing time than in the last couple games, when early Utah leads evaporated in a hurry.

Ali eyes Norton title bout

NEW YORK (AP) — Muhammad Ali, who has "announced" his retirement as world heavyweight boxing champion several times, apparently will be around quite a while longer.

At a news conference Thursday to promote a title bout against young Leon Spinks in Las Vegas, Nev., Feb. 15, Ali suddenly disclosed that he has signed for still another defense next September against Ken Norton, a three-time rival.

The Norton fight, for which Ali reportedly will receive a whopping \$12 million, will be held in a foreign country, according to Bob Arum of Top Rank, Inc., who also is promoting the Spinks bout.

At the Ali-Spinks news conference, the champion was asked if he was ducking Norton. That's when he disclosed his latest plans.

The contract needs only Norton's signature. Arum has deposited \$125,000 in a bank to serve as part of the purse. The money goes to Ali if Norton fails to sign by May 1.

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