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The Hartford Courant

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SUNDAY
APRIL 5, 1987

Ueberroth steps in, unsigned Clemens comes back

By STEVE FAINARU
Courant Staff Writer

WINTER HAVEN, Fla. — With a lot of prodding from Commissioner Peter Ueberroth, Roger Clemens walked back in Saturday. He didn't have a contract, but his agent said one will be signed within two weeks. Clemens said he was ready to pitch. And he did.

One month to the day that negotiations started, Clemens ended his 29-day holdout,

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returned to the Red Sox and pitched in a minor league exhibition game against Harvard University. He was coaxed back by Ueberroth, who intervened in negotiations last week in an effort to get Clemens back in uniform by Opening Day.

Randy Hendricks, who represents Clemens with his brother, Alan, said he has

reached "an agreement to agree" with Sox owner Haywood Sullivan on a two-year contract. The tentative terms of the contract guarantee that the Red Sox pay Clemens \$500,000 this year and \$1.2 million in 1988.

Clemens also can receive an additional \$150,000 this year and a bonus of \$150,000 next season if he makes the American League All-Star team in 1987. The total package is worth \$2 million, but it still is possible Clemens eventually will settle on a one-year contract.

"We've got a guarantee, kind of," Clemens said. "All I wanted them to do was be fair with me. They had to recognize what I did last year. And I think they're willing to do that now, in some way, shape or form."

Until the new contract is settled, Clemens will be playing under a contract renewed by the Red Sox on March 6, the day he left camp. That contract calls for the Sox to pay Clemens \$400,000 this season. The Sox have been fining Clemens \$1,000 for each day of his holdout, but General Manager Lou Gor-

man called the fine "insignificant."

Clemens, after pitching six innings (no hits, 10 strikeouts) against Harvard at Chain O'Lakes Park, flew with the Sox to Milwaukee for Opening Day Monday against the Brewers.

The team has not decided how it will make room for Clemens on its 24-man roster. Clemens may take the place of Oil Can Boyd, who flew to Boston Thursday to have his

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Whalers clinch first Adams title

The long wait comes to an end

By JEFF JACOBS
Courant Staff Writer

The Whalers waited until 15,126 of their followers jammed into the Civic Center Saturday night before clinching their first Adams Division title in their eight-year NHL history.

The last time the Whalers finished first in anything was 1975, when they won the East Division title in the World Hockey Association.

So they really didn't mind waiting six more nights and enduring two different scenarios before whipping the New York Rangers 5-3 and finishing first again.

It would have been poetic justice had hockey fate reserved Wednesday night's scenario in Montreal for the clinching. From 1979 until March 10, 1986, the Whalers went 0-20-5 and built a monument to futility that they fortified with defeat after seemingly endless defeat at the fabled Montreal Forum. They have gone 4-5 in Montreal since and played an outstanding game Wednesday and almost beat the Stanley Cup champs, almost eliminated their nemesis and almost turned the house of horrors into their own Adams Division penthouse.

But Bob Gainey pushed a rebound past Mike Liut with less than 2 minutes to play for a 3-2 victory that postponed the clinching party.

Because of a 90-minute delay caused by the closed-circuit broadcast of Wrestlemania III in Pittsburgh's Civic Arena, the circumstances surrounding the Whalers first potential clinching last Sunday night were a little bizarre. After Hulk Hogan and Andre The Giant had wrestled for the world championship, they waited until near midnight before seeing their first chance postponed when the Canadiens beat the Penguins, 4-1.



Richard Mel / The Hartford Courant

Ulf Samuelsson, Joel Quenneville and Mike Liut celebrate the Whalers' 5-3 victory over the Rangers Saturday night and the club's first

Adams Division title. Liut won his 62nd game as the Whalers' goalie, tying Greg Millen for most career victories with the team.

After losing out to the Flying Frenchmen twice (Hulk threw Andre to the mat Sunday), the Whalers finally ended the pressure by whipping the Rangers.

With the victory, the Whalers are 43-29-7 and have 93 points. The Canadiens, who clinched second place with a 3-1 win over the Bruins Saturday night, are 40-29-10 and have 90-

points. First place in the Adams Division for 1986-87 belongs to the Whalers. For keeps. And a lion's share of credit also belongs to the Emile Francis regime, which assumed hockey power in Hartford following a disastrous 19-54-7 season in 1982-83.

"This year is like a dream come true," Whalers Assistant General

Manager Bob Crocker said. "In each of our four years under Emile Francis, we've improved steadily.

"It's a great thrill. I'm happy for people like Howard Baldwin, who has lived through many tough years. I'm happy for Jack Evans, who has lived through several tough years. And I'm happy for Emile. He's worked so damn hard. This is the

fruits of all his labor."

Francis has spent 25 years in NHL management with the New York Rangers, the St. Louis Blues and the Whalers without winning the Stanley Cup. But his team did finish in first place for the first time since the 1980-81 Blues, who had 107 points.

See Emile Francis, Page E4

Late spurt flattens Rangers

By JEFF JACOBS
Courant Staff Writer

It took the Whalers eight long years to approach first place, but only 3 minutes, 20 seconds to clinch it.

No champagne flowed in the Whalers locker room Saturday night after the team had secured its first NHL divisional title with a 5-3 victory over the New York Rangers, but Jack Evans and all his players certainly were bubbly with relief.

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The Whalers had found themselves behind 3-2 and in a fair amount of trouble early in the third period. Visions of having to go to Buffalo and trying to clinch first place in Game 80 were starting to dance in their heads.

But they reached back and delivered their best home-run punch. Sylvain Turgeon, John Anderson and Paul MacDermid scored rapid-fire goals in a 3:20 span and, suddenly, the Adams Division title was in their grasp. They earned it.

The sellout crowd of 15,126 began standing and cheering with 1:12 remaining and continued its applause through the three star selections. The players were more reserved. They know the playoffs begin Wednesday night and a first-round defeat to Quebec would ruin everything they accomplished.

At 43-29-7 and with only tonight's meaningless game in Buffalo remaining, however, the Whalers don't

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Flight surgeon

Operating in a land of his own, Doctor J was a cut above the rest

By PETER MAY
Courant Staff Writer

PHILADELPHIA — Professionally speaking, the legend was born here.

Not in the Spectrum, where it grew to monumental proportions over the last decade. Not in Convention Hall, the previous home of the Sixers. Not in the Palestra, that fabled forum for college hoops.

It was born in a motel room near the airport.

That is where Julius Erving, college phenom, became Julius Erving, fledgling legend, college dropout and six-figure wage earner, by signing a professional contract.

The Price: \$500,000.
The Cause: The American Basketball Association's Virginia Squires.

The Eventual Impact: The survival of the league and eventual merger with the NBA.

Erving flew to Philadelphia 16 years ago tomorrow, ostensibly to listen to the overtures of these free-spending Virginians. By the time

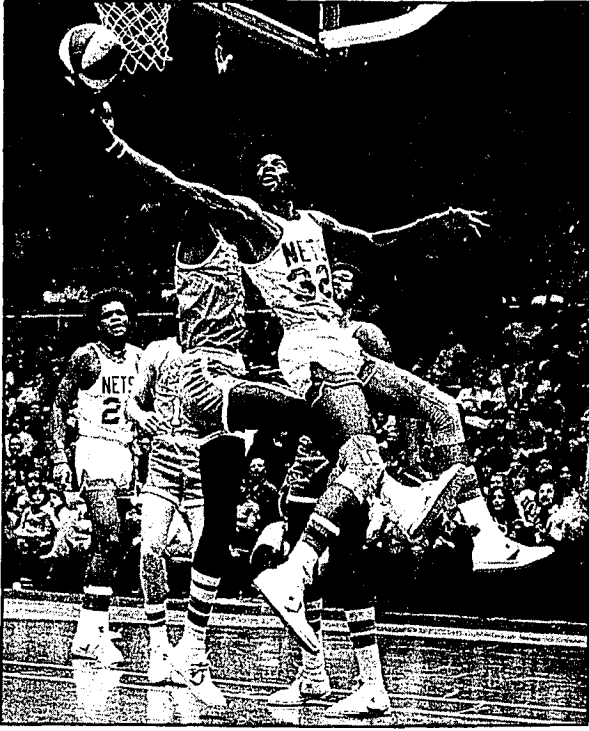
the day ended, he had heard all he needed to hear.

As has been his trademark, he chose the unconventional over the routine. He left college a year ahead of schedule at a time when such a move was considered potentially ruinous and risqué, to play basketball in a league generally regarded as second best on a list of two.

On that April day, Erving met agent Bob Woolf at Hartford for the flight to Philadelphia. Woolf was serving in an advisory capacity at the request of Erving's college coach, Jack Leaman of UMass. On the way down, Erving told Woolf there was little left for him to prove against the Vermonts and New Hampshire's that dominated Massachusetts' schedule.

Still, Woolf advised Erving to wait. Two leagues would be after him in another year, considerably upping the stakes. When they got to the motel, the Squires talked inevitable merger and pressured Erving to sign. Woolf hooked the Doc

See Up, Page E7



Associated Press

Julius Erving scores for the Nets in the 1975-76 season, the ABA's last. "That last year in the ABA he played as well as anyone can play the game," says Kevin Loughery, who coached the Nets to the title.

Hagler can ease pain of years of injustice

LAS VEGAS — He arrived for his last pre-fight press conference wearing a bright red French Foreign Legion-style cap. You know, the kind with flaps that come down in back like a flowing curtain, to keep the desert sun off your neck. Or in this case, the turquoise neon of Caesars Palace.

"How does my hair look?" Marvin Hagler wanted to know.

Mah-velous. Marvelous. Of course, Hagler, he of the shaved pate, was kidding. He's been kidding a lot this week. Longtime observers say they've never seen him more relaxed, more confident, more at peace with himself.

Why? Wouldn't you like to be able to neatly tie up your career, your life's mission, as if with one big red bow, and get paid \$12 million for it?

That's what's happening to Marvelous Marvin Hagler Monday night.

Ali had Frazier, Astaire had Rogers, and Monday night, Marvin Hagler gets Sugar Ray Leonard. After spending much of his career slugging and shuffling for small purses with lesser men because the bigger names avoided him, Marvelous Marvin finally gets the equal dance partner he's been desperately seeking all these years.

"This is everything I've worked for in my life," Hagler said. "It gives



Alan Greenberg

me peace of mind. I can walk away knowing I defeated Sugar Ray Leonard. And that I brought him back before the public for the fight of the century."

Hagler, of course, wants to bring Leonard back to knock him off their shared pedestal. So Hagler, who was still fighting for peanuts on undercards when Leonard, two years younger, was a millionaire main attraction, can end any and all debate and go down in history as the greatest mid-size fighter of his generation. And in a generation that includes Roberto Duran, Thomas Hearns and Leonard, that's saying something.

Maybe you were there at the Civic Center in 1977, when Leonard and Hagler fought on the same card. Each scored a quick knockout, but there the similarity ended.

It was Leonard's third pro fight. He earned \$40,000.

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