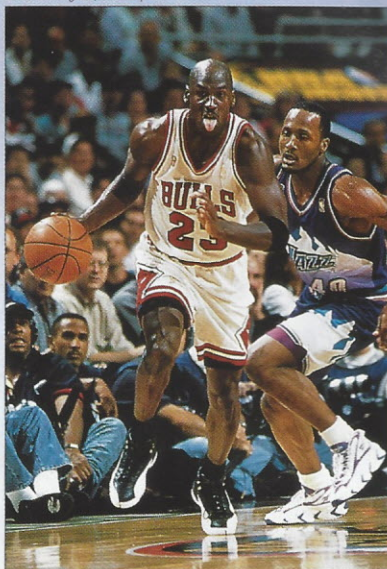


▶ Jeff Gordon, at 26, wins the 1997 NASCAR Winston Cup, his second Winston Cup point title in three years. Gordon's 1997 points total 4,710.

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Scott Cunningham, NBA/Allsport



▶ The Chicago Bulls beat the Utah Jazz in June 1997 for their fifth NBA championship in seven years. Michael Jordan is chosen Finals MVP a record fifth time.



AP/Wide World



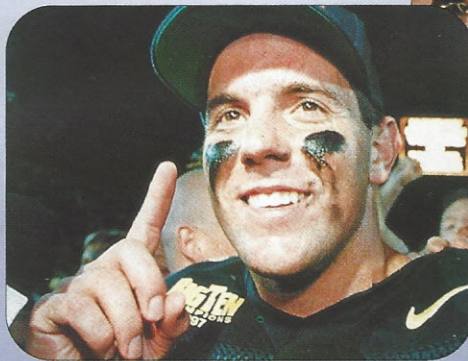
▶ When the college football season ends, two teams share the national championship. Michigan (12-0) is named No. 1 by the sports writers' poll, and Nebraska (13-0) by the coaches' poll.

▶ Nagano, Japan, hosts the 1998 Winter Olympic Games during February. Three new medal sports make their Olympic debut: curling, snowboarding and women's ice hockey.



Detroit Red Wings captain Steve Yzerman powers his team to the 1997 Stanley Cup championship, its first in 42 years, by sweeping the Philadelphia Flyers in four games.

©Doug Densinger, Allsport



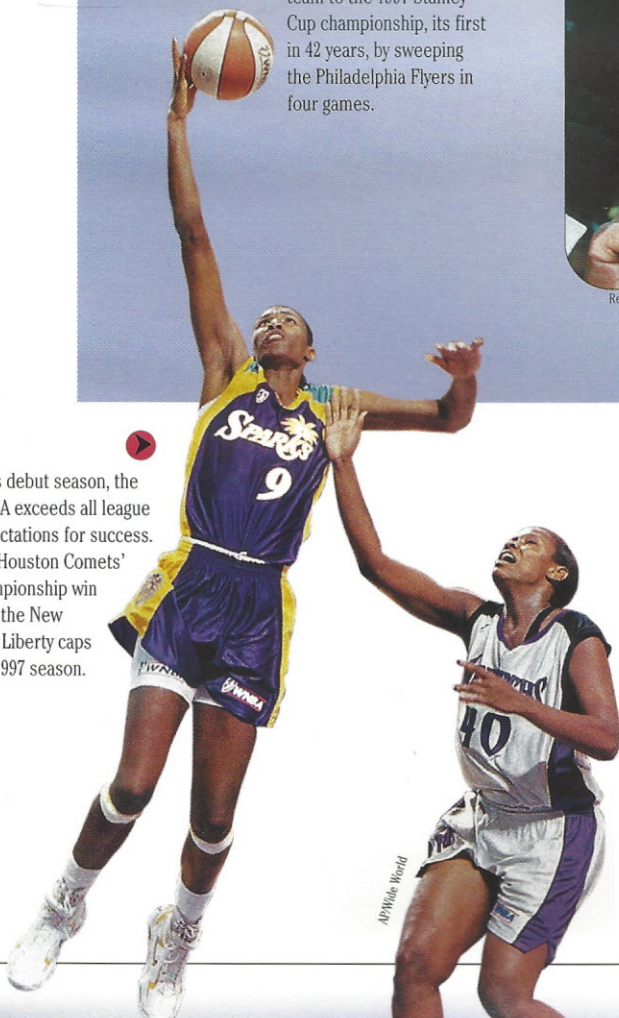
Reuters/Archive Photos

flash

Women officiate in an all-male professional sports league for the first time. The pioneers, Dee Kanter and Violet Palmer, are referees in the NBA.

Mark McGwire, of the St. Louis Cardinals, slams 52 homers in 1996 and 58 in 1997. McGwire becomes only the second player in baseball history with back-to-back, 50-home-run seasons, the other being Babe Ruth.

▶ In its debut season, the WNBA exceeds all league expectations for success. The Houston Comets' championship win over the New York Liberty caps the 1997 season.



AP/Wide World



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▶ Dean Smith, winningest coach in college basketball history, retires in October after 36 seasons at North Carolina. *Sports Illustrated* names him 1997 Sportsman of the Year.

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