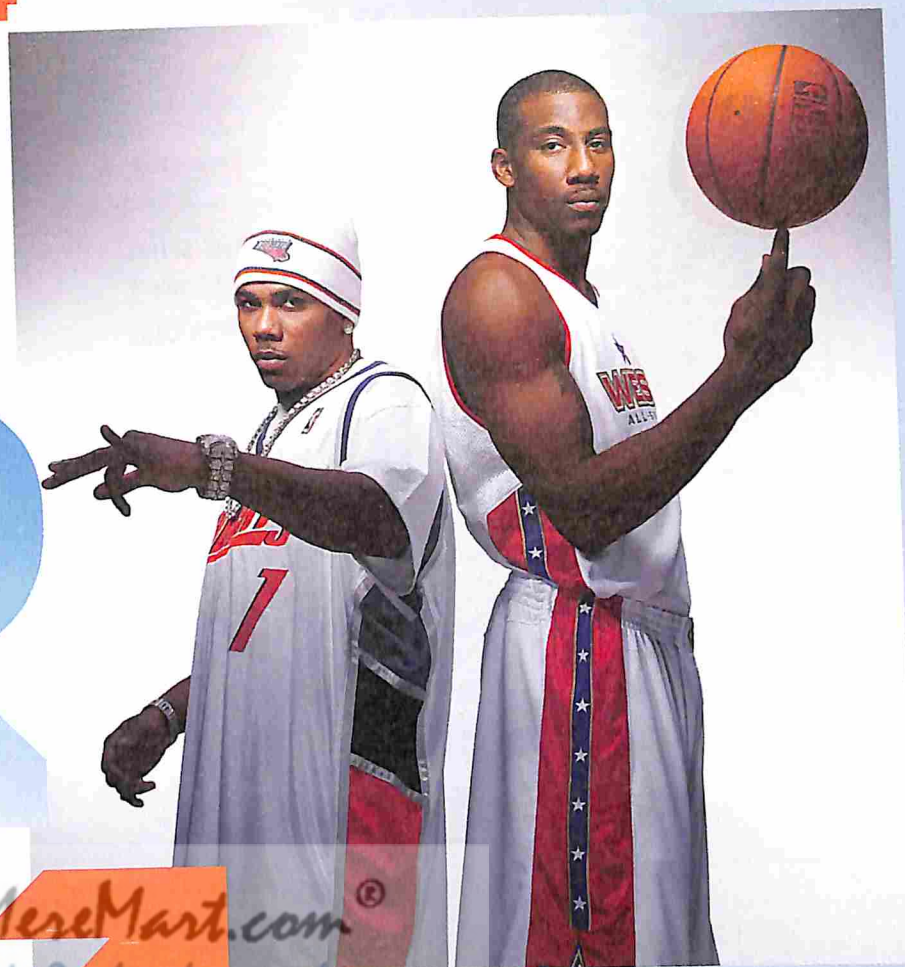


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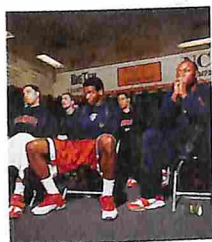
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WALK THIS WAY

Nelly owns a piece of the Bobcats. Amare Stoudamire grew up wanting to meet Tupac. Hip-hop—the stars, music and culture—mixes with pro hoops more easily than any other sport. And while the NBA doesn't like to admit it, that's a good thing.

BY CHRIS BROUSSARD



54 FIGHT SCENES

How does a team with a bull's-eye on its back keep a perfect season alive? To find out, we were given total access by No. 1 Illinois for back-to-back Big Ten games.



60 KISS HIM GOODBYE

Sammy Sosa was king of the Cubs for 12 seasons. But in Year 13, his reign ended in a walk-off.
BY GENE
WOJCIECHOWSKI



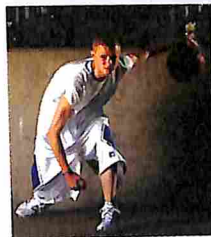
66 LOST IN TIME

The 1925 Pottsville Maroons dodged bullets en route to the NFL title. So why won't the league call them champs?
BY DAVID FLEMING



75 THE ULTIMATE STANDINGS

The Pistons came out on top of our franchise rankings, but the body politic of SportsNation is getting restless.
BY PETER KEATING



88 STREET SMART

Grayson Boucher doesn't look like a playground baller. But the kid known as The Professor is giving lessons on the And1 tour.
BY BEN CRAMER



94 STAT FACTORY

No football. No baseball. No hockey. No problem. We've got the numbers that prove February is no time to stop paying attention to the sports calendar.

