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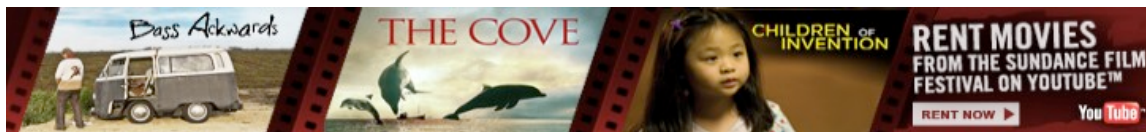
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PRO BASKETBALL

PRO BASKETBALL; Longtime Knicks Fan Gives Nets an Edge

By STEVE POPPER
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William Goldman, the novelist and screenwriter who has sat courtside at the Garden for 20 years, can hardly watch the Knicks these days. Not because they are down, 3-0, to the Nets in their first-round playoff series, but because for all Goldman knows, it is his fault.

About a month ago, Goldman told his friend Jeff Schwartz, Jason Kidd's agent, about Ming Chew, saying Chew might be able to help Kidd with his lingering knee problem. Ready to try anything except surgery, Kidd made his way to the Ansonia Hotel on the Upper West Side, where Chew has a small office.

Now, Kidd -- as well as Kenyon Martin, Kerry Kittles, Jason Collins, Brian Scalabrine and Lucious Harris, all of whom have become Chew's clients -- could complete a sweep of the Knicks tonight at Madison Square Garden.

Knicks fans, Goldman said, "are going to strangle me."

While the focus of the crossriver rivalry was on the action on the court, the proximity to Chew's Manhattan office has been important, too.

"I would do this for free because I love doing this. So I'm actually in heaven because I'm a big fan of basketball. I only wish Allan Houston called me up because I'm actually -- you might find this funny -- I have a serious moral issue here, a moral dilemma, in that I'm a Knicks fan and I'm called by Jason Kidd to work on Jason, and now the Nets are absolutely destroying the Knicks."

Houston is not playing, nursing an injury that has lingered since off-season knee surgery. Kidd shrugs at the situation, saying: "Yeah, he told me he's a big Knicks fan. But that has nothing to do with it. This is a business and you want to get better."

The how and why of it are still a bit of a mystery to Kidd and to his teammates. All they know is what they see on the court, which the 19,763 in attendance -- including Goldman and Chew -- watched on Thursday night.

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"Ultimately I think Kidd's such a great player," Goldman said with a sigh. "It's wonderful watching him play. I think they could go all the way. I wish it was us."

Perhaps it was an open mind or maybe desperation that took Kidd to Chew, who describes himself as, well, it is hard to describe. With a chemistry degree from Columbia and a physical therapy degree from New York University, Chew, a former bodybuilder, has created somewhat he calls the Ming Technique, something that began with his physical therapist's license and added many forms of soft-tissue massage -- most of it beginning when he injured his own shoulder while training in jujitsu.

"It was damaged for at least seven, eight months, couldn't get it better," he said. "Considering I was a physical therapist, I figured I should be able to fix my own shoulder and I couldn't, so I realized the stuff I was doing was not effective. I was having issues about charging people for my services if I couldn't do it on myself. So a friend of mine told me about one of the soft-tissue techniques that I currently employ called A.R.T., which is active release technique."

After research and coursework, he developed his method.

"I can't even call it A.R.T. anymore," he said. "It's a blend, an amalgam, of many varieties of soft-tissue techniques and it's all based on sound scientific theories."

"The theory behind what we're trying to do is break up scar tissue and adhesions that are blocking nerves or muscles that previously were sliding and gliding with respect to one another and are now essentially glued together or welded together. What I do is I simply break up the adhesions that allow the muscles to function the way it was intended."

Simple perhaps, but not without its skeptics. He has tried and failed to make inroads with the Knicks, much to the chagrin of fans like Goldman. But the Nets were open to the idea, overcoming their doubts. Kidd took his wife, Joumana, for his second visit, saying jokingly, "I wanted a witness" for the painful session. On his next trip, Rich Dalatri, the Nets' strength and conditioning coach, accompanied Kidd.

"There are a lot of changes going on in treatments all across the country," Rod Thorn, the Nets' chief executive, said. "To me anything that can help you, you take a look at."

Chew said: "Very few people do what I do. I don't want to make it sound like I'm conceited, but it's an art form. To have this you would have to take at least 20 different seminars to get what I know. Then you would have to go into the gym and train for 20 years and understand what I've done with my bodybuilding career. And then you have to go on the jujitsu mat for six years and train."

REBOUNDS

Knicks forward TIM THOMAS, who missed the past two games of the playoff series with the Nets because of back spasms and a sore left ankle, will probably not play in Game 4 tonight at Madison Square Garden. He did not practice yesterday.

Photo: Ming Chew, a former bodybuilder, has developed a massage therapy technique and is now treating several Nets, including Jason Kidd. (Photo by Keith Bedford for The New York Times)

A version of this article appeared in print on April 25, 2004, on page 87 of the New York edition.

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