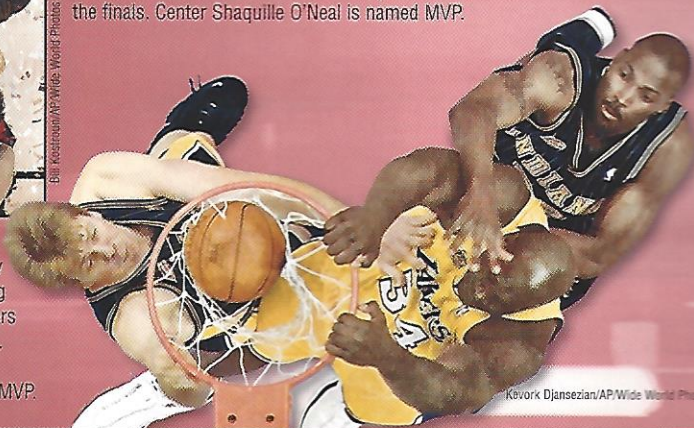


✓ The Los Angeles Lakers win the NBA championship, the franchise's first in 12 years. The Lakers beat the Indiana Pacers in game six of the finals. Center Shaquille O'Neal is named MVP.



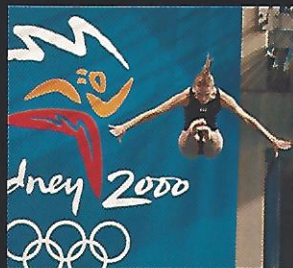
Kevork Djanserian/AP/Wide World Photos

FLASH >>>

The racing world is stunned when NASCAR legend Dale Earnhardt Sr., a seven-time Winston Cup champion, is killed on the last lap of the Daytona 500 in February 2001. NASCAR does not retire numbers, but car owner Richard Childress said he will never again race Earnhardt's black No. 3 car.

Xtreme Football debuts in February 2001. The game combines conventional football rules with some of the mayhem of professional wrestling. Eight teams play in the league's first season.

▲ In June, the New Jersey Devils win their second Stanley Cup in six seasons by defeating defending champion Dallas Stars four games to two in the finals. Scott Stevens wins the Conn Smythe Trophy for postseason MVP.



▲ Laura Wilkinson overcomes three broken toes to win the women's 10-meter platform diving competition. Wilkinson is the first American woman to earn the gold in this Olympic event since 1964.



▲ In a huge upset, American Greco-Roman wrestler Rulon Gardner defeats Russian legend Alexander Karelin for the gold in the super heavyweight class. The loss is Karelin's first in 13 years.



▲ American swimmer Misty Hyman beats out heavily favored Susie O'Neill of Australia to win the 200-meter butterfly. Hyman's winning time of 2:05.88 is an Olympic record.

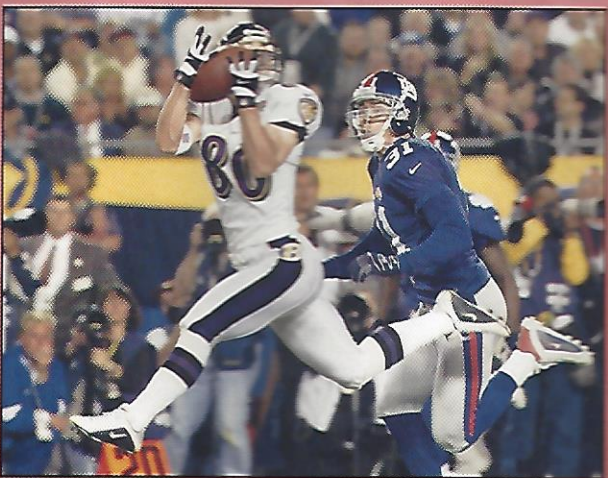


▲ American runner Michael Johnson makes history by winning the 400-meter run for an unprecedented second time in a row at the Olympics. Alvin Harrison, also from the United States, wins the silver medal.



▲ Cathy Freeman carries the Olympic torch at the opening ceremonies of the 2000 Summer Games in Sydney. Freeman goes on to win the 400-meter dash, becoming the first Aboriginal Australian to earn an individual Olympic gold medal.

✓ The Baltimore Ravens beat the New York Giants 34-7 in Super Bowl XXXV for their first NFL title. Ray Lewis of Baltimore's highly touted defense is named MVP of the game.



AP/Wide World Photos