

# Raptors acquire Ibaka from Magic for Ross

Lori EWING *The Canadian Press*

TORONTO — The Toronto Raptors were cartwheeling down the Eastern Conference standings, and a sense of unease had seeped into the dressing room.

Team president Masai Ujiri made a big splash Tuesday to try to get the club back on track by reeling in Serge Ibaka from the Orlando Magic, acquiring a player he's long coveted and filling a void at the power forward position. The Raptors gave up Terrence Ross and a first-round pick in the 2017 draft in exchange for the pivotal big man.

"He's definitely one of a kind when it comes to rim protection, being able to score in the post, and also space the floor as well," Raptors guard DeMar DeRozan said at the team's morning shootaround in Chicago. "Sucks to see (Terrence) go, but now we've got to make this new adjustment with a great new addition."

The Raptors confirmed the deal late Tuesday afternoon. Ibaka was expected to fly to Toronto on Tuesday evening and, depending on how long his physical takes, could be in uniform Wednesday when the Raptors host Charlotte.

"Some people say parts of his game have changed, he's become a really good shooter," Ujiri said at an evening press conference. "But I've known this guy for years, he's a helluva competitor, he brings playoff experience, he's played in the NBA Finals before. Everyone knows who Serge is, he's a warrior. Every time he steps on the court he competes."

"He'll give us good rim protection, he's a good defender and I think he can play multiple positions too, which will help us."

The move came with the Raptors mired in their worst slump in two seasons. Entering Tuesday night's game against the Bulls, the Raptors had dropped 10 of their last 14 games to slip from second to fifth in the Eastern Conference standings.

A 102-101 loss to Detroit last



Orlando Magic player Serge Ibaka smiles after being called for a foul during a game in Miami in this undated file photo. The Raptors acquired the veteran power forward Ibaka on Tuesday for Terrence Ross and a 2017 first round draft pick.

Sunday prompted all-star guard Lowry to say in a funeral post-game dressing room: "Something's got to give, something's got to change."

Ujiri said the move had nothing to do with comments made in frustration by Lowry and DeRozan, and in fact "it almost hurt me when I was negotiating," the team president said, laughing.

In Ibaka, a chiselled six-foot-10 power forward, the Raptors get a versatile player who can knock down shots and provide a huge presence in the paint.

"I think he's a great addition to any team and especially to ours where we can add some shot-blocking, some outside shooting, some inside toughness, some athleticism, running up and down the floor," Lowry said in Chicago. "I think he's going to be a guy who

can take some pressure off of me and DeMar."

What's the biggest need the new big man fills?

"It's kind of hard to pick one," Lowry said. "We can use the shooting, we can use the toughness, we can use the floor running, we can use the shot-blocking, we can use all that."

Selected 24th overall by Seattle in the 2008 draft, Ibaka played seven seasons alongside Kevin Durant and Russell Westbrook in Oklahoma City before being acquired by the Magic last summer. Ibaka should provide a big boost to Toronto's defence – the Raptors rank 17th in the NBA in defensive efficiency.

Ibaka is averaging 15.1 points, 6.8 rebounds and 1.6 blocks a game this season, and fits the hole at power forward Ujiri had

hoped Jared Sullinger – who's been injured most of the season – would fill. And at just 27, Ibaka fits in nicely with Toronto's young core of Lowry, DeRozan and Jonas Valanciunas.

Ujiri first spotted Ibaka at the African junior championships. He was coaching Nigeria and Ibaka was on the Congolese team.

"That was the first time I set eyes on him, he had 20 points and 20 rebounds, and I'll never forget: I was like, how can a guy have 20 rebounds playing that level of basketball? But he did."

"And then with Basketball Without Borders and all this stuff over the years he's been a friend. He's a great kid and always admired him as a person and a basketball player and I'm glad to bring someone like that into our culture and our basketball team."

DeRozan admitted to a sense of excitement at shootaround.

"Yeah, but with that comes a new challenge of catching on quick," DeRozan said. "Which shouldn't be a problem, but it's something new. It's an adjustment for everybody, trying to make everything comfortable as quick as possible."

The Raptors will hope to re-sign Ibaka when he becomes a free agent this summer. The deal came just over a week before the Feb. 23 NBA trade deadline and is the Raptors' first trade in nearly 20 months.

Ibaka was born in the Democratic Republic of Congo, but represents Spain in international basketball. He's the third youngest of 18 kids.

Ross, who was selected by Toronto with the eighth overall pick in the 2012 draft, is in the first year of a US\$31-million, three-year contract. His departure will open up playing time for Norman Powell, who has been solid despite limited minutes.

"I think Norm is ready for the opportunity, I think he should be excited for the opportunity," Lowry said. "He's proven he can play this game and help us and now he has no excuses. He's got to come out and do his thing and help us."

Ross, who's averaging 10.4 points a game this season, will be remembered for his 51-point performance against the Los Angeles Lakers in 2014. But he was a streaky shooter who struggled in the Raptors' last three playoff series.

Ross posted on Twitter: "Toronto thank you for all the memories, thanks to the amazing fans. Couldn't of been drafted to a better city. Thanks to my team. All luv."

Lowry posted a photo of the two players on Instagram shortly after the trade news broke.

"Watched you grow from a young ROOK, to a young vet!! Keep growing T! Love you man!! #toughbusiness," Lowry said.

## B.C. Lions sign free-agent d-back Buddy Jackson to contract

The Canadian Press

VANCOUVER — The B.C. Lions were the first team to dip into free agency, signing defensive back Buddy Jackson to a one-year contract Tuesday.

Jackson played in six games last season with the Saskatchewan Roughriders, registering 21 tackles. His signing came less than an hour after the start of the free-agent period at noon ET.

"Buddy is a key veteran addition to our secondary," GM/head coach Wally Buono said. "He's a physical defender with good size and range and we expect him to be a playmaker on defence this year."

The acquisition of Jackson addresses a need for the Lions, who last week released veteran defensive back Ryan Phillips.

Jackson also spent parts of three seasons with the Calgary Stampeders before signing with the NFL's Dallas Cowboys in 2015.

The Lions also reportedly signed linebacker Tony Burnett to a one-year deal. The six-foot-one, 210-pound Burnett had 31 tackles and 19 special-teams tackles last season with the Winnipeg Blue Bombers.

B.C. also signed veteran Canadian receiver Marco Iannuzzi, defensive back Ronnie Yell and defensive lineman Michael Brooks to contract extensions. Iannuzzi and Brooks signed deals through the 2018 season while Yell's contract was for 2017.

All were eligible to become free agents at noon ET on Tuesday.

"Marco is an important and underrated part of our offence

who we can count on to give us consistent performances," Buono said. "His ability to contribute on offence and on special teams makes this signing a very important one for the club."

The Calgary native has spent seven seasons with B.C. Last year, he registered career highs in receiving yards (360), punt returns (22) and punt return yards (232).

In 98 career games with B.C., Iannuzzi has 107 catches for 1,237 yards and eight touchdowns.

Brooks has appeared in 28 games over two seasons with B.C., registering 62 tackles and four sacks.

Yell will return for his fourth season with B.C., having made 43 career starts. He has amassed 104 tackles and four interceptions, three of which have been returned for TDs.

## Fired for Venus Williams remark, ex-commentator sues ESPN

Christopher WEBER  
The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — A tennis commentator dropped by ESPN for a remark about Venus Williams during the Australian Open has sued the sports network for wrongful termination.

Former tennis pro Doug Adler maintains he was describing Williams' aggressive style last month as "guerrilla" tactics and not comparing her with a "gorilla."

He apologized for his poor word choice but was let go from ESPN mid-tournament.

Adler filed suit Tuesday in Los

Angeles Superior Court, saying he has wrongly been branded a racist and lost work because of the controversy. The suit calls for punitive financial damages, but doesn't name an amount.

ESPN spokesman Mike Soltys says the network has not seen the lawsuit and has no comment.

## Bulls beat Raptors for 11th straight time

CHICAGO (AP) — Doug McDermott scored 20 points, All-Star Jimmy Butler had 19 points and 12 assists in his return to the lineup, and the Chicago Bulls continued their mastery over the Toronto Raptors in a 105-94 victory on Tuesday night. Taj Gibson had 14 points and Rajon Rondo added 12 to help the Bulls beat the Raptors for the 11th straight time. Toronto's last win in the series was Dec. 31, 2013.

Chicago led by as many as 23 points and never trailed in the final three quarters to snap a three-game skid.

Kyle Lowry scored 22 points to lead the Raptors, who lost their third straight and fell one-half game behind idle Atlanta for the No. 4 seed in the Eastern Conference. DeMar DeRozan was limited to 18 points – 10 below his season average. He was whistled for two technical fouls with 25 seconds left and ejected from the game.

The loss came hours after the Raptors acquired forward Serge Ibaka from the Orlando Magic. The need for his physical toughness was apparent from the start.

Chicago attacked the rim with success and threw down five dunks in the second quarter alone.

At the 1:44 mark of the second

period, Butler converted two free throws to give Chicago a 56-35 lead, its largest of the first half. Gibson had all of his scoring in the first half as the Bulls shot 51 per cent from the field while taking a 58-39 lead. Chicago scored the final six points of the first quarter to take a 24-18 lead.

### Tip-ins

**Bulls:** Chicago was without F Nikola Mirotic (back spasms), G Dwyane Wade (bruised right wrist) and F Paul Zipser (left ankle tendonitis). ... Butler (bruised right heel) was back after missing four of the last five games.

**Raptors:** G Norman Powell had 13 points. ... C Jonas Valanciunas scored 12 points and nine rebounds in 21:30. He also picked up a technical foul in the first quarter.

### One step forward, one step back

Bulls F Bobby Portis scored six points on the heels of a 16-point, six-rebound effort versus the Timberwolves on in Minneapolis on Sunday.

"Bobby has got an opportunity right now, and we're confident he will take advantage of that," Holberg said.

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