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Johnson set to Return to NBA

Magic Johnson, who retired last

season from' the Los Angeles

'Lakers after learning he has the

virus that cases Aids, will return

to the team this season.

"I'm back, baby," said Johnson,

who will play 50-60 games,

avoiding back-to-back games to

safeguard his health.

"It will be 50 on, and I'll go

from there," he said here.

National Basketball Association

teams play '82 games a season.

Johnson retired last November

7 after announcing he had tested

positive for the HIV virus in a

test for health insurance. The virus

often leads to full blown Aids.

Less than three months into

his retirement, Johnson said he

might come back. He played in

the NBA All-Star game in February

and was part of the gold

medal winning US basketball

team at the Barcelona Olympics.

On Tuesday, he compare his

feelings making his comeback announcement

to his mood last

November.

"Better," he said. "It was

tougher then. Boom, you had to

say goodbye. It was rushed, that

whole thing. It's easier now."

Days after his announcement

in November, President George

Bush named Johnson to the

national commission on Aids.

Johnson resigned this week saying

Bush was ignoring the work

of the commission.

However, Johnson said that

decision had nothing to do with

his comeback, which was

prompted solely by a desire to

play the game.

"I was in a suit every other

day, taking care of businesses

that I own," he said of his time

off the court. "It was fun, but I

also I wet to work out and sweat.

You kind of miss that, not being

in there .every day, hitting

somebody."

Johnson’s 12-year career includes

five NBA titles with the

Lakers. He leads the league in

assists with 9,921 and was most

valuable player in 1987, 1989 and

1990.

The Lakers retired his number

32 in February, but he said even

then he might return. He said he

did not feel he was taking an unacceptable

risk with his health.

Meanwhile, AIDS experts say

Earvin "Magic" Johnson is

taking a step into the unknown

with his return to professional

basketball.

Doctors admit they really don't

know what effect the rough and

table of professional basketball

will have on the health of the Los

Angeles Lakers superstar, who

stunned the sports world last

year with the announcement that

he had contracted the virus that

causes Acquired Immune Deficiency

Syndrome (AIDS).