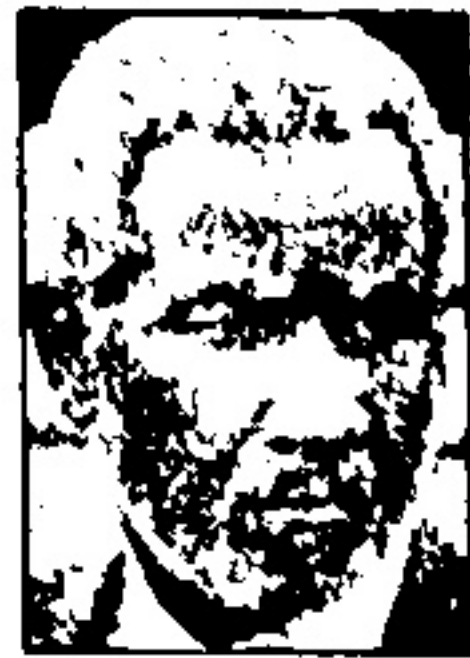


# Box: Tickets were just a gift



■ "If there was any expectation of favoritism, they didn't get any."  
— Mayor Charles Box



■ "If they invited me, I would assume they hadn't stolen the tickets — that they owned them properly — and I would jump at the chance."  
— School superintendent Ronald Epps



■ "I was invited to the game by the mayor. If somebody asks you to a Bulls game, do you ask where the tickets came from?"  
— Airport commissioner Cyrus Oates

## Others question officials' ethics

By **SCOTT WILLIAMS**  
Rockford Register Star

ROCKFORD — It was one of those magical nights with the Chicago Bulls: A heroic performance from Michael Jordan and a dramatic victory in the playoffs.

Enjoying all the action May 17 from courtside at the United Center were Mayor Charles Box and other public officials, in seats provided by a top executive at one of Rockford's high-profile companies.

Box was accompanied to the game — the opener in a best-of-seven series against the Indiana Pacers — by School Superintendent Ron Epps and Cyrus Oates, a Greater Rockford Airport commissioner.

They attended the sold-out game courtesy of Gary Marzorati, executive vice president of William Charles Ltd., parent company of Rockford Blacktop Construction Co.

To the mayor and his companions, it was a simple night of fun among friends. But to government watchdogs, it raises ethical questions because of Rockford Blacktop's business dealings

### What do you think?

Should the mayor, school superintendent and airport commissioner have accepted free Bulls tickets from a prominent business executive?

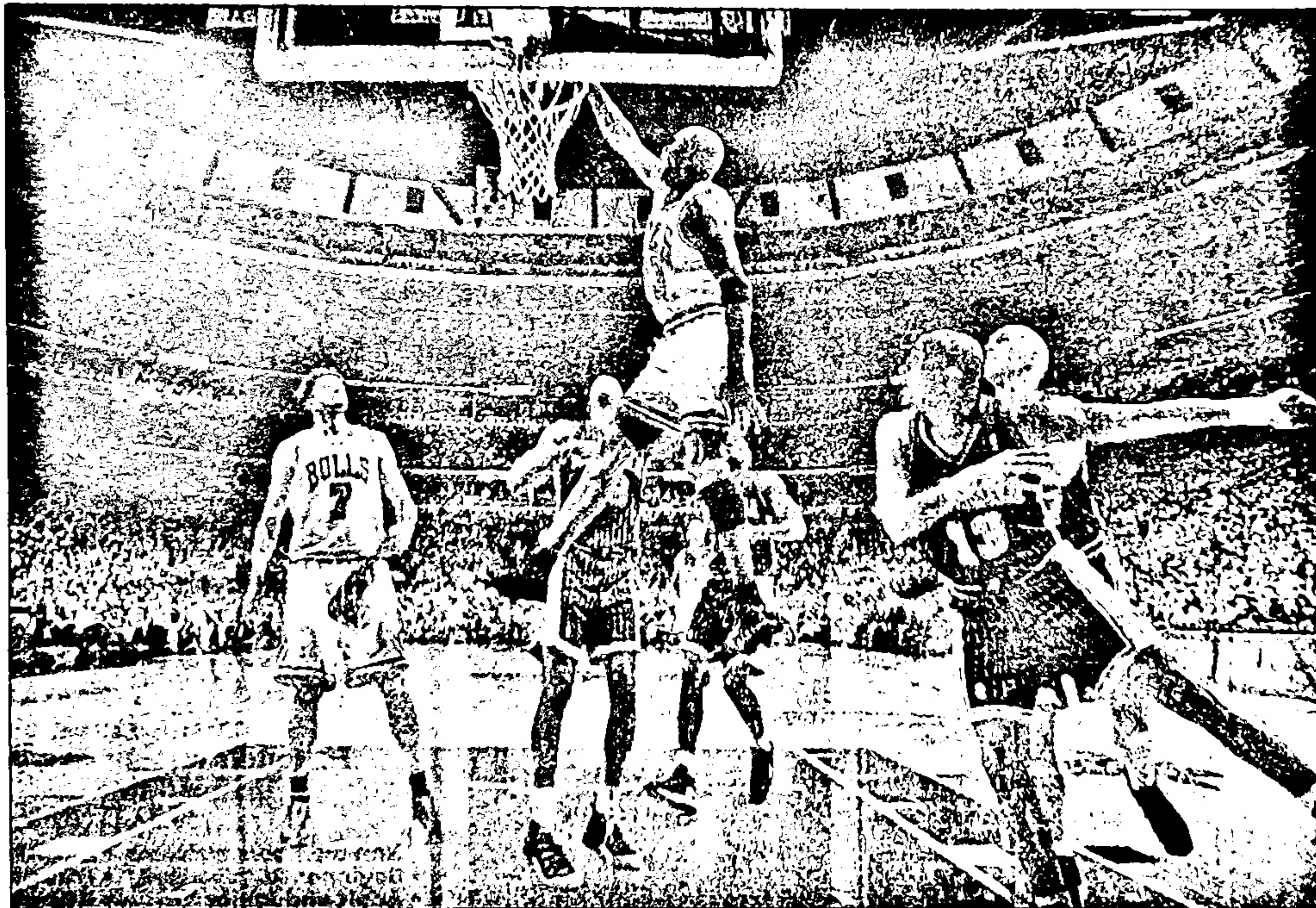
To tell us your opinion, call the Rockford Register Star comment line, 962-9369, or send us a fax, 987-1365. Please include your full name, the city where you live and a daytime number so we may verify your message. Your phone number will not be published.

### Inside

■ Some officials see nothing wrong with accepting a gift like NBA tickets; others disagree.

■ What are the ethics rules in Rockford?

Both on 5A



Associated Press file photo

Chicago Bulls' Michael Jordan slam dunks against the Indiana Pacers during the NBA playoffs May 17, 1998, in Chicago. Three local officials attended the game using tickets from a Rockford Blacktop Construction Co. executive.

in the public sector the past few years, including:

■ Dozens of city road contracts worth \$11 million since 1995.

Please see **Tickets**, 4A ➤