

Yankees, Giuliani deny reports of leaving Bronx

NEW YORK (AP) — Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and the New York Yankees on Monday denied a report that team owner George Steinbrenner has told the mayor the club will leave the Bronx.

"I wasn't formally notified, I wasn't informally notified," Giuliani said Monday night. "It wasn't hinted or suggested."

The *New York Observer*, a weekly newspaper that concentrates on local real estate and the arts, on Monday released a copy of a story it will publish Wednesday.

The paper said Steinbrenner faxed a letter to City Hall on Jan. 12 formally notifying Giuliani the Yankees "will definitely abandon the Bronx

for a new home, possibly in New Jersey."

The team's lease at Yankee Stadium, which is owned by New York City, runs through 2002.

"The *Observer* story is absolutely false," said Howard Rubenstein, a spokesman for Steinbrenner.

Both Giuliani and Yankees representatives confirmed the mayor and Steinbrenner met Monday, but they said there was no talk of the team leaving.

"They met this morning and discussed plans for Yankee Stadium in the Bronx," Yankees spokesman Rob Butcher said. "There was no discussion of the team moving out of the Bronx."

MONDAY'S TRANSACTIONS

BASEBALL

INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE
■ SYRACUSE CHIEFS—Named John Eberl business manager and Tom Van Schaack director of the ticket office.

BASKETBALL

■ USA BASKETBALL—Named Carol Gailan senior women's national team director and Sean Ford manager of basketball operations.

FOOTBALL

NFL

■ CAROLINA PANTHERS—Named Dom Capers head coach.
■ CHICAGO BEARS—Named Willie Peete running backs coach.
■ NEW ORLEANS SAINTS—Named Steve Trimble assistant coach.
■ TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS—Named Rusty Tillman defensive coordinator.
■ MILWAUKEE MUSTANGS—Signed Alvin Rettig, fullback-linebacker.

COLLEGE

■ BARRY—Promoted Mike Covone to associate athletic director. Named Brian Dooley football coach.
■ BUCKNELL—Named Norries Wilson and David Kotulski assistant football coaches.
■ C.W. POST—Announced men's basketball player Eddie Cobb has been ruled academically ineligible for the second semester.
■ JAMES MADISON—Named Alex Wood football coach.
■ MANCHESTER—Named David Harms football coach.
■ MONTCLAIR STATE—Named Jose Rebinbas men's basketball coach.
■ RPI—Announced that women's ice hockey is being upgraded from club status to varsity status.
■ WESTMINSTER, PA.—Named Joe Onderko sports information coordinator.
■ WILLIAM PATERSON—Named Halley Cohen field hockey and softball coach.

More trouble brewing for Karl

SEATTLE (AP) — It hasn't been an easy season for Seattle SuperSonics coach George Karl. It just looks that way.

Kendall Gill's agent has asked the Sonics to trade his client because Seattle's starting shooting guard is unhappy with his playing time. Karl refused to start Gill for a Jan. 10 game at Golden State because he missed a plane flight from Chicago and was unable to make a Sonics' practice.

On Dec. 28, Vincent Askew refused to come off the bench and go into a game at home against Philadelphia. Karl suspended him for the Sonics' next contest, a road game against the Los Angeles Lakers.

All this happened after Karl bruised All-Star Shawn Kemp's ego by trying to trade him to the Chicago Bulls for Scottie Pippen. Karl also hurt All-Star Gary Payton's feelings by publicly criticizing him for the Sonics' first-round playoff exit against Denver last season.

Labeled Team Turmoil after the franchise's chaos of last spring and last summer, the Sonics — as evidenced by the Gill and Askew problems — still have internal problems.

Yet they're off to a flying 27-9 start, including a 17-1 record in the Tacoma Dome, their home away from home this season while the Seattle Coliseum is being rebuilt.

When the Sonics play Denver Tuesday night in Tacoma, they'll be shooting for their 17th consecutive home-court victory.

"This team won't collapse," Karl said. "We have too many weapons. There's too many guys. We've got too many good players. For this team to collapse, we'd have to lose four or

Troubled Sonics

■ **What:** Kendall Gill's agent has asked the Sonics to trade him.

■ **Quotable:** "This team won't collapse. We have too many weapons."

— George Karl
Seattle head coach

five guys. We'd have to have some serious injuries."

Karl, 43, was supposed to have worn out his welcome in Seattle by now. He was fired in his second seasons in Cleveland and Golden State in the 1980s. He's in his fourth season in Seattle.

Kemp and Payton haven't quit on Karl. Instead, they're playing harder than ever. Payton is having his best season and Kemp will be an All-Star again.

Gill and Askew may not like Karl, but they're playing hard for him. Gill is the team's fourth-best scorer, averaging 14 points a game, and Askew is averaging 10.4 points off the bench.

The Sonics may not all like each other, but it's working out.

Bill Cartwright, 37, has the perspective of 16 NBA seasons, nine with the New York Knicks and six in Chicago, where he was on three Bulls' league title teams.

"It doesn't matter to me that teams get along off the court or not," Cartwright said. "The only

thing that matters is that we play basketball on the court. I think if everybody got along really well, it would be kind of strange."

The Sonics are owned by one of the league's most competitive and demanding owners, Barry Ackerley.

Ackerley wants to win a championship and he thinks he's spent more than enough money to get that done.

Seattle had a league and franchise-best 63 victories last season before being upset by No. 8 seed Denver in the opening round of the playoffs. It was a playoff defeat that caused general manager Bob Whitsitt, last season's NBA Executive of the Year, to leave the Sonics.

Whitsitt, Karl's good friend, was the buffer between Karl and Ackerley.

When popular Sonics assistant Tim Grgurich left before the season to become UNLV's head coach, Karl lost a buffer between himself and his players.

And when the Sonics got off to a 3-4 start, a lot of people were wondering if Karl would follow Whitsitt out of town.

In retrospect, Karl said he wasn't worried with the way his team played the first two weeks of the season.

"I've never felt as negative as the scrutiny of the press has been," Karl said. "It's like everybody has been pushing us over the cliff. I don't even think we're close to the cliff."

Cartwright likes the talent that he's seen in Seattle. The Denver playoff defeat may turn out to be good for the Sonics in the long run, he said.

"Sure, everybody remembers what happened last year," he said. "So nobody wants that to happen again."

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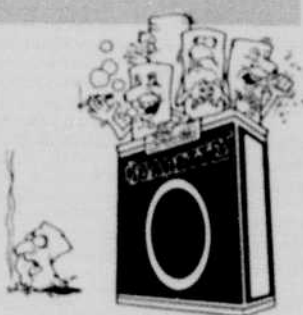
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PANTHERS

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statistic," he said. "If you can get your offense not turning the ball over and you can get your defense (forcing turnovers), then I think your chances of winning increase tremendously."

The 44-year-old Capers became the center of attention for the Panthers after former Washington Redskins coach Joe Gibbs turned down Charlotte's overtures. As assistants from other NFL teams began departing for other jobs, the Panthers went to the Steelers for permission to talk to Capers.

Although the Steelers granted permission, the league fined both teams for allowing those talks to occur in the midst of the season. The Panthers received a \$150,000 fine and lost two draft picks for their actions.

But they felt their mission was accomplished.

"That's behind us," said Carolina president Mike McCormack. "We got the man we wanted and we're pleased with that. We think he fits our organization so well, so we're just going on from here."

The next step will be for Capers, McCormack and general

manager Bill Polian to assess the talent available from the veteran allocation draft on Feb. 15. There's also scouting and the free-agent market. The idea is to help the Panthers break the mold of previous expansion franchises, which have found victories hard to achieve in the inaugural year.

"There's no timetable set as far as winning, and I don't think there's any secret formula to winning," Capers said. "But I do believe this. There are certain principles that you work under and there are principles that you probably could apply to almost any business."

Capers said success should be based on having a sound plan, paying attention to minute details and staying committed to doing whatever it takes to succeed. That work ethic has brought Capers' 20-year coaching career — nine in the NFL — to a pinnacle.

"It's been awhile coming, but I'm certainly excited about being here. I feel kind of like a sprinter in the starting blocks," Capers said. "I can't wait to get started. We have an awful lot of work to do. We'll certainly hit the ground running here starting tomorrow."

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