

Indians' relief pitcher indicted on rape charges

■ **MLB:** Jose Mesa and a friend allegedly fondled two women back in December

By Ken Berger
The Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Jose Mesa, the Cleveland Indians' record-setting relief pitcher, was indicted Thursday on a charge of raping a 26-year-old woman he met at a nightclub.

Mesa, 30, also was indicted on two counts of gross sexual imposition, one count of felonious assault and one count each of theft

and carrying a concealed weapon related to a complaint by two women Dec. 22, said Cuyahoga County Prosecutor Stephanie Tubbs Jones.

The county grand jury also indicted Mesa's friend, David F. Blanco, 34, of Solon, Ohio, on one count of gross sexual imposition and one count of carrying a concealed weapon.

Gerald Messerman, Mesa's lawyer, said the pitcher would plead innocent.

"We have ample evidence that he is what he always has been — an innocent man," Messerman

said.

Blanco also plans to plead innocent, said his lawyer, Niki Schwartz.

Mesa and Blanco were arrested Dec. 27 on charges they fondled two women at a hotel in suburban Lakewood. The women told police they had met Mesa, who is married, and Blanco at a downtown nightclub. Police said they found 9mm handguns in each man's car when they arrested them.

Mesa and Blanco pleaded innocent to gross sexual imposition Jan. 8. A new arraignment has

been scheduled Jan. 31.

Messerman accused the prosecution of seeking a grand jury indictment to avoid a public hearing that was scheduled Friday and because of Mesa's status as a pro athlete.

"One of the problems when you achieve success is that anything that happens to you is big publicity," Messerman said.

Messerman said he did not know why the rape indictment was added to the original charges against Mesa.

Kathleen Craig, grand jury supervisor, said only that "the evi-

dence came out to support that." She would not say whether the women testified before the grand jury.

Rape, a felony, carries a possible penalty of 3-10 years in prison, Craig said. Felonious assault is punishable by 2-8 years, and the weapons charge, also a felony, carries a penalty of 6-18 months upon conviction.

The theft charge, a misdemeanor, was related to accusations that Mesa stole a purse from one of the women, Craig said.

Indians spokesman Bart Swain said the team had no comment.

Rodman may face assault charges for kicking incident

■ **NBA:** The Bulls' star kicked a photographer at a game against Minnesota Wednesday night

By Ron Lesko
The Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — This time, Dennis Rodman might be facing more than a suspension.

Prosecutors were considering assault charges Thursday against the Chicago Bulls player for kicking a court-side cameraman in the groin during a game at Min-

nesota the previous night.

"He wants to say that it's not OK for [Rodman] to do that," said Gale Pearson, the lawyer for cameraman Eugene Amos. "If we were on the streets, it would not be OK. You've got to call it what it is, and that's an assault."

The NBA said Thursday it is reviewing the incident and considering a suspension, which would be the second of the season for Rodman.

Although the extent of Amos' injuries wasn't known, they were not believed to be serious. He was treated and released at

the hospital Wednesday night.

Minneapolis police spokeswoman Penny Parrish said no charges would be filed Thursday. Pearson said she and Amos planned to meet with prosecutors Friday.

The investigating officer, Sgt. Pete Jackson, was off Thursday and Parrish said the process will take several days, including attempts to contact Rodman. Clair Cole of the Minneapolis city attorney's office said charges wouldn't be filed before next week.

Rodman said he didn't intend to hurt Amos, but doubted the severity of the in-

juries.

"I thought I hit him in the thigh, then all of a sudden he went back," he said. "I said, 'What's wrong with you? I'm sorry I hit you.' Then all of a sudden he says, 'Get away from me.' All of a sudden he passed out. I'm like, 'Yeah, right.'"

The incident was the latest in a growing list of transgressions and erratic behavior by Rodman. Pearson said she was receiving calls from media nationwide Thursday, including representatives of Geraldo Rivera.

Oregon tennis set to beat Huskies

■ **MEN:** Today's match is the first of three straight at home this weekend

By Joel Hood
Freelance Sports Reporter

The last time Oregon beat Washington in men's tennis, the New York Jets had pulled off the biggest upset in the brief history of the Super Bowl and the U.S. had just landed a man on the moon.

This season the Ducks will try to snap Washington's 20-year stranglehold on the Pacific-10 Northern Division title. They host the Huskies today at the Eugene Swim and Tennis Club in their first home match of season.

"Last year was a chance for us to test the waters in the Pac-10," said head coach Chris Russell. "Our goal this season is to raise

the level of expectations for this team."

This veteran squad returns seven players from an Oregon team that went 28-9 last season, highlighted by victories over Hawaii and Idaho and a second-place spot behind Washington in the Pac-10 Northern Division.

For 1997, Oregon's co-captains are seniors Dougal Williams and John DeVorss. Last year, Williams broke the singles' record for victories in a season with 24. DeVorss finished the year with 21 and now those two men rank one and two on Oregon's list.

Russell is in his second year as Oregon's director of tennis. As the head coach of both the men's and women's programs at UC Santa Barbara, Russell earned five straight Big West Coach of

the Year honors. He led the women's team to a top 15 national ranking only a few seasons ago.

"We aren't far behind some of the big schools in the conference," Russell said. "We have more talent and depth this year, but without the right mentality it doesn't mean much."

The Pac-10 is annually one of the toughest conferences in the nation, and this season is no different. Stanford and UCLA currently rank one and two in the country with USC and Arizona lurking in the top 15.

Today's match will be one of three straight at home for the Ducks. Saturday Oregon faces Idaho at the Eugene Swim and Tennis Club and Sunday they battle Cal Poly at the Willow Creek Racquet Club.

Wrestling: Perkins to face Whisenhunt in key matchup

■ **Continued from Page 11**

an All-American in Kevin Roberts and John Taylor, who was really tough in the Pac-10 and nationally last year, and also Jeremy Ensrud," Perkins said.

Ensrud, who is second in the Pacific-10 Conference at 134 pounds, will face the number one wrestler, Oscar Wood, in another key, lower-weight matchup. Wood came out on top 4-1 in their last meeting, but the two have seen each other plenty in recent years and Ensrud feels he's getting closer.

"I had a really close match with him a couple of weeks ago at Reno, and I'm trying to figure out what I need to do to beat him," Ensrud said. "I'm there, I just need to get lucky."

At 18-1 and first in the Pac-10, Scott Norton is the nucleus of the Ducks' lineup. Norton has been wrestling at 158 all of this season, but needs to get down to his NCAA provisional weight of 150 by next week. He plans to wrestle against Oregon State at a light 158 before coming down the following week at Stanford.

"It would be a better

matchup for us, having [Norton] down there at 150, but I don't really know if that's going to happen or not," Oregon head coach Ron Finley said. "If we bring Norton down, we're weaker at 158. If we leave him at 158, we're weaker at 150. It's hard to say which way to go."

The Ducks' strength this season has been in the upper weights with Kevin Keeney at 167, Chael Sonnen at 177 and heavyweight Rich Polkinghorn. Sonnen has recorded six pins already this season and pinned three out of his last four opponents, including Chris Renzullo of Oregon State. Keeney has split his matches against Oregon State wrestlers this year, winning his last match. Polkinghorn lost to the Beavers' Matt Orndorff two weeks ago.

"[Polkinghorn] beat Orndorff last year," Finley said. "Orndorff made some great gains over the summer. He went from a gangly freshman to a better athlete as a sophomore. Polkinghorn made his great gains a year ago and his gain has slowed down a bit, but he's very capable of winning."

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