

SPORTS WIRE

Torre finds fire still burning

By Ronald Blum
The Associated Press

BOSTON— For months, Joe Torre didn't know if he cared enough to keep managing.

Cancer will do that.

Then, last month in Toronto's SkyDome, with the Yankees' division lead dwindling, he learned something about himself.

"All of a sudden, my stomach started hurting and I realized the passion was there," he said early Tuesday after leading New York past Boston and into the World Series for the third time in his four seasons.

He is only the fifth Yankees' manager to win three pennants, joining Casey Stengel (10), Joe McCarthy (eight), Miller Huggins (six) and Ralph Houk (three).

And now the 59-year-old New Yorker will face a World Series opponent that fired him, Atlanta or New York Mets.

But for a while, he wasn't sure he belonged.

He was diagnosed with cancer during spring training and left the team March 10. He had surgery eight days later and didn't rejoin the Yankees until May 18.

"When that whole thing started with the prostate cancer in spring training, you really didn't care about baseball," he said under the Fenway Park stands, trying to put his team's season and his life in perspective.

"You go through that — and

when you're going through your recovery, you're not sure if you're going to care when you get back. Then, once I got back, it was sort of like, let me study myself."

When Torre rejoined the team, he kind of drifted along, as his team did for much of the 1999 season.

"I know a lot of my players had said I was a little bit different because I sort of had this philosophy or perspective that it's only a game of baseball," Torre said.

New York opened a comfortable lead and wasn't really pressed until the Red Sox swept a three-game series at Yankee Stadium from Sept. 10-12. David Wells beat them the next night, and the Yankees were losing 5-1 — knowing Boston was ahead and could close to 2 1/2 games — before Bernie Williams and Paul O'Neill hit grand slams.

"That," Torre said, "probably was an emotional turnaround for me and I realized how important this was for me."

In 1996, his brother, Frank, had a heart transplant. The story of the Torres riveted New York, with Joe finally making the World Series for the first time since joining the major leagues in 1960.

Last year, Torre felt tremendous pressure to win the Series after the team went 114-48 during the regular season, setting an AL record for wins.

But since that night in Toronto,

Torre has felt he belonged.

"In the postseason, it's identical to last year, maybe even a little more so," he said. "I'm all the way back as far as the emotion of what I'm doing. But it's been a wild year."

Even George Steinbrenner, who spent the 1970s and '80s changing managers as often as some teams changed their starting rotations, praises Torre. Of course, it's easy for The Boss. Torre wins.

"When your manager comes through like that, he inspires them," Steinbrenner said early Tuesday. "He's definitely been an inspiration."

Players agree. Torre has a knack to say exactly the right thing, all the time.

"He knows how to handle every player individually," Derek Jeter said. "But he also knows how to handle people collectively."

Torre knew the year would be difficult before he went to Florida in February, but he was thinking only about the baseball part. New York has spent the better part of the last year being measured against the 1998 Yankees, a contest they can't win.

"I tried to warn the club in spring training that we cannot compete against ourselves because that's a once-in-a-lifetime-type thing," he said.

If judge accepts deal, Warrick could play

By Brent Kallestad
The Associated Press

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.— Florida State's Peter Warrick could play Saturday against Clemson in a deal that would send him to jail for a month early next year, the star receiver's lawyer said Tuesday.

Warrick was considered the leading candidate for the Heisman Trophy when he was suspended Oct. 7 following his arrest on a felony grand theft charge. He has missed the top-ranked Florida States last two games.

That could change Wednesday if Circuit Court Judge John Crusoe accepts a plea agreement reached by Warrick lawyer John Kenny and the Leon County state attorney to reduce the charge to petty theft — a misdemeanor.

Florida State athletic director Dave Hart Jr. wouldn't comment Tuesday, preferring to wait until Crusoe acts on the agreement.

Warrick and former teammate Laveranues Coles were charged with buying more than \$400 of designer clothes Sept. 29 for \$21.40 from a store clerk, who is also charged. A security camera recorded the transaction.

The agreement would require Warrick spend 30 days in jail, donate to charity clothing he ac-

quired in three trips to a Dillard's store, pay \$295 in court costs, stay away from the department store

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John Kenny
Warrick lawyer

and serve a year's probation.

"They wanted the 30 days to offer a misdemeanor," Kenny said Tuesday. "That's pretty standard when looking at felony cases. They worked very hard to look at Mr. Warrick not as a football player."

Warrick could have avoided jail time, but not if he wanted to have a shot at playing again this season.

"He looked at the options of going to trial to prove it was a petty theft, but those are not viable options when Peter wants to make himself available to the university as quickly as possible," Kenny said.

Warrick caught 36 passes for 508 yards and four touchdowns in Florida State's first five games. He also threw a touchdown pass, ran back a punt for another and ran from scrimmage for a TD.

Lion defense braces for mighty Brees

By David Kinney
The Associated Press

STATE COLLEGE, Pa.— Maybe Penn State has Purdue's Drew Brees all figured out: Give him his astronomical passing stats — just don't let his receivers dash for the end zone after the catch.

The strategy worked for the Nittany Lions in 1998, when they didn't allow Brees to complete a pass for more than 19 yards on the way to a 31-13 victory.

It worked for Michigan and Ohio State this month. And it could work again Saturday when

the No. 2 Lions (7-0, 3-0 Big Ten) visit the No. 16 Boilermakers.

"He did complete a lot of passes and he did have a lot of yards, but they were a lot of passes that didn't really contribute to the game. That's the big key: Shutting down the big play," said linebacker Mac Morrison, who sustained a concussion during Saturday's victory over Ohio State.

"Last year we also had a great pass rush, and I think we're going to have to do that again," he said.

Brees finished 39-of-58 for 361 yards in that defeat at Penn State, but threw an interception, was

sacked six times and only threw one touchdown.

Same story this month against the Wolverines and the Buckeyes: Brees threw one TD in two games. Purdue lost both.

But the junior is coming off yet another spectacular showing, completing 40 passes for 506 yards and five TDs in the Boilermakers' (5-2, 2-2 Big Ten) 52-28 upset of No. 11 Michigan State Saturday.

And Penn State's Joe Paterno thinks this is a different Purdue offense from the one he saw last year.

Sports brief

USC will open drive to build basketball arena

LOS ANGELES— The University of Southern California plans to build a new arena across the street from campus.

The Trojans' basketball teams have played their home games at the Los Angeles Sports Arena since the facility was built 40 years ago.

The proposed arena, which would be just a few blocks from the new Staples Center, would have a 12,000-seat capacity and

cost up to \$75 million.

Staples Center, new home of the Los Angeles Lakers and Clippers of the NBA and the NHL's Los Angeles Kings, cost \$375 million.

There is no timetable set for completion of USC's new arena, since fund-raising will be necessary to pay for it.

A Thursday news conference with USC president Steven Sample has been called to formally announce the plans.

The school's volleyball teams would also use the facility.

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