

SPORTS

SPORTS BRIEFS

NIT SEMIFINALS IN NEW YORK

Four days before the NCAA Final Four comes to the New York area, the semifinals of the National Invitation Tournament take place at Madison Square Garden. Tulane (21-9), a school that felt it was snubbed by the NCAA Tournament, makes its first ever-trip to the semifinal round of a post-season tournament when it plays Nebraska (19-14) at 7 p.m. EST Tuesday. Alabama (19-11) opposes St. Joseph's of Pennsylvania (18-12) in the second game. The championship game is Thursday night.

BARTOW RESIGNS AT UAB

University of Alabama-Birmingham coach Gene Bartow, who brought college basketball to a school stuck in the middle of football country, officially announced his retirement Tuesday and handed his job over to his son, Murry. Murry Bartow has been an assistant at UAB for the last seven years. He played at UAB from 1981-85 and was also an assistant at Indiana and William and Mary. The announcement was made at a morning news conference. Gene Bartow, the only coach and athletic director the school has ever had, will remain as athletic director.

IRVIN APPEARS BEFORE JURY

Dallas Cowboys star receiver Michael Irvin entered a Dallas Grand Jury room Tuesday to testify about his presence in a hotel room in which a drug arrest was made. Irving, Texas police responded early on March 4th to a complaint from management of a Residence Inn Motel about possible prostitution in a room. Upon arrival, police allegedly found Irvin, former Cowboys tight end Alfredo Roberts and two women in the room along with approximately three ounces of marijuana, two ounces of cocaine and drug paraphernalia.

CEBALLOS RETURNS

Cedric Ceballos is expected to be back in the Los Angeles Lakers lineup Tuesday against the Orlando Magic, one day after the team lifted his suspension. The Lakers reinstated Ceballos from his four-game suspension on Monday.

RANGERS' GIL UNDERGOES SURGERY

Texas Rangers shortstop Benji Gil will undergo surgery for a herniated disc in his lower back that will sideline him six to eight weeks. Gil underwent an MRI by the club's spine consultant Doctor Drew Dossett in Dallas Monday. The exam revealed a herniated disc that is causing irritation to the nerve in his left leg.

GRAF, AGASSI, SAMPRAS IN ACTION

Top seed Steffi Graf of Germany and American stars Pete Sampras and Andre Agassi headline the action at the \$4.1 million Lipton Tennis Championships in Key Biscayne, Fla. Graf is playing her quarterfinal match against fifth seed Kimiko Date of Japan in a rematch of last year's final, which Graf won in straight sets. Graf advanced to the quarterfinals Monday with a 6-1, 6-0 rout of ninth seed Mary Joe Fernandez of the United States.

UMPIRE DIES ON FIELD

Posponed Chechup For 25th Opener

Veteran umpire, John McSherry, collapsed behind home plate at Riverfront Stadium in Cincinnati Monday. He died on the field only minutes into the opening baseball game between The Cincinnati Reds and the Montreal Expos.

After only seven pitches McSherry walked away from his post behind home plate and raised his hand to motion for assistance.

Before anyone could reach him, McSherry fell face first as he tried to get to the umpires' locker room.

The Reds' trainer, Greg Lynn, reached him within moments and began administering CPR. Lynn, two Expo trainers, two doctors who work for the Reds and several doctors from the stands worked on the stricken umpire for several minutes before he was taken to University of Cincinnati Hospital.

McSherry had planned to see doctors the next day about an irregular heartbeat. He had postponed the appointment because he wanted to work his 25th opening game.

He had passed his annual physical exam in February and had battled weight and health problems for some time. Over the last five years he had left five games because of heat exhaustion, dehydration or dizziness. His listed weight was 328 pounds.

McSherry had been an umpire since 1971 and was third in seniority among all National League umpires. He was well liked and respected for his understated but commanding style.

STRICKLAND PLEADS GUILTY

TrailBlazer point guard Rod Strickland pleaded guilty Monday to one count of harassment in a Bronx, N.Y. criminal court. Strickland admitted to striking Judith Cruz Oct. 25, 1995 with the intent to "annoy and alarm her."

Judge Lettiteia Martin granted Cruz a full order of protection and directed Strickland to attend a program for batterers. Strickland must

show proof of attendance or face a jail sentence.

"We fully support the court-mandated program and expect Rod to complete it satisfactorily," said Trail Blazer general manager, George Whitsitt.

Strickland slapped Cruz in a hallway outside her apartment during an argument about child support that started in a Manhattan nightclub.

They have a 5-year-old son, Brandon, together, but Strickland maintains that Cruz is not his girlfriend or even his ex-girlfriend.

In her original complaint, Cruz said Strickland "punched her in her eye two or three times, pushed her into a wall where she struck her heard and then knocked her to the ground, causing serious physical injury."

SUPERBOWL SUPERSTARS IN DRUG TROUBLE

Two months ago, Pittsburgh Steelers tailback Byron Morris and Dallas Cowboys receiver Michael Irvin were on the NFL's biggest stage with key roles in Superbowl XXX.

Last week, Morris and Irvin were focal points in unrelated drug cases in the Dallas Area.

A grand jury indicted Morris for possession of 5 to 50 pounds

of Marijuana and one count of possession of 1 to 4 grams of cocaine. After finding more than six pounds of marijuana in the trunk of Morris car, authorities said they found 1 1/2 grams of cocaine during a subsequent search.

Both charges are third-degree felonies punishable by 2 to 10 years in prison and a maximum \$10,000 fine.

Meanwhile Irvin, former Cowboys tight end Alfredo Roberts and two women appeared before a grand jury under subpoena to testify about marijuana and cocaine found in a motel room March 4.

Pending the outcome of the cases both football players could be subject to suspensions for conduct detrimental to the league.

PATRIOTS WAVE GUYTON, BROWN

The New England Patriots waived safety Myron Guyton and linebacker Vincent Brown Tuesday. Guyton had five interceptions in 30 games since joining the Patriots as an unrestricted free agent prior to the 1994 season. A favorite of Patriots coach Bill Parcells during his tenure with the New York Giants, Guyton assumed the starting safety role with his former team as a rookie.

Brown led the Patriots in tackles last season and registered four sacks and four interceptions.



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