

SPORTS BRIEFS

Barkley expected to be traded to Houston

Superstar Charles Barkley got what he wanted — a trade to the Houston Rockets that will be announced on ESPN reported that the Phoenix Suns have dealt Barkley to the Rockets for guard Sam Cassell and forwards Robert Horry, Mark Bryant and Chuckey Brown. Houston also gets second-round draft pick in 1998.

Jim Miller named starter in Steelers' QB jumble

Neil O'Donnell's successor as Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback is Jim Miller — at least for a game. Head coach Bill Cowher today announced that Miller will start the September 1st season opener at Jacksonville, beating out Mike Tomczak and Kordell Stewart.

But there are no guarantees for Miller, who has not enjoyed a stellar training camp, as Cowher indicated that the starting role does not carry clout for the entire season.

Cardinals agree to terms with Swann, cut Simmons

The Arizona Cardinals agreed to terms with defensive tackle Eric Swann and cut veteran defensive lineman Clyde Simmons. There is also speculation that running back Garrison Hearst could be trimmed from the Cardinals' roster as a way of getting room under the salary cap.

San Isidro wins to open 50th Little League World Series

The 50th Little League World Series is under way at Howard J. Lamade Stadium in Williamsport, Pennsylvania. Latin American champion San Isidro from the Dominican Republic defeated Canadian champion Surrey, 5-1, in the first game.

Muster, Ivanisevic headline field at du Maurier Open

Thomas Muster of Austria attempts to cut into American Pete Sampras' hold on the world number-one ranking as the \$1,750,000 du Maurier Open, the final tune-up for next week's U.S. Open, gets underway today in Toronto, Canada.

Muster, who currently trails Sampras by 596 points in the rankings, enters the tournament as the top seed. Muster, the premier claycourt player in the world, will be seeking his seventh title of the year, but his first on the hardcourt surface.

BILLS LOOK LIKE BEST OF AFC

Here's a scary thought for AFC fans hoping that 12-year Super Bowl drought might end next January: the Buffalo Bills are the best team in the conference.

Yep. The Bills, who contributed so mightily to that losing streak with four straight super flops, are likely to be back for another try. Just as likely, it will be a final try with the present group.

That group includes three players — Bruce Smith, Jim Kelly and Thurman Thomas — almost certainly headed to the Hall of Fame. It also includes veterans Andre Reed and Kent Hull, mainstays of the 1990-93 AFC champs.

But what sets these Bills apart from the rest of a jumbled conference are recent additions. Bryce Paup brought pop to the pass rush, getting 17 sacks to earn Defensive Player of the Year honors in 1995. Phil Hansen has developed into a terrific complement to Smith at defensive end. Henry Jones is one of the league's best safeties, and partner Karl Schulz is getting there. The cornerbacks are young but aggressive and talented.

The linebacking is fine. Mark Maddox is healthy, and Chris Spielman was a terror with the Lions — he led them in tackles in each of his eight seasons — and a better all-around player than the departed Cornelius Bennett. Unlike in their Super Bowl seasons, the Bills have a reliable defense that can turn around games.

"This is a strong, winning defense," Smith said. "We can win games the same way our offense can, and that's the combination you want."

The offense might be too reliant on Thomas, who goes for a record eighth straight 1,000-yard rushing season and is capable of 1,000 as a receiver. But Darick Holmes, if he holds the ball a bit better, is a good backup, and the blockers, led by tackle John Fina and guard Ruben Brown on the left, plus the superb Hull at center, are just fine.

Kelly says his arm is stronger after shoulder surgery, but his 36-year-old body is battered. He must stay healthy for Buffalo to go anywhere.

Then again, operating without key weapons for much of last year, Kelly threw for 22 TDs and 13 interceptions and had an 81.1 rating. And the Bills won the AFC East again.

Now, he has free agent Quinn Early, promising rookie Eric Moulds, a healthy Reed and the versatile Steve Tasker as targets.

"Our goal is to go out and win it this year, and if we don't, I'll come back and hopefully do it the following year," Thomas said. "But if we do, I'm outta here."

MEL RENFRO ATTAINS HALL OF FAME

The Bridge Center today announced the induction of their Ambassador, Mel Renfro, former Dallas Cowboy into the Pro Football Hall of Fame. Notification came today from the Pro Football Hall of Fame Committee.

Mel played football for the Cowboys from 1964 to 1977. In addition to this ultimate honor for a pro football player, Renfro's 14-year career with the Cowboys included many honors: 10 consecutive Pro-Bowls, 5-time All Pro, 4 Super Bowls, and the Ring of Honor at Texas Stadium.

Renfro was raised in NE Portland. He attended Boise Elementary and Jefferson High School where he ran track and played football. He went on to excel in both sports at the University of Oregon.

While at the U of O, Renfro earned many honors including: Maxwell Trophy as Outstanding Running Back in the Country (1963), Hoffman Award for U of O's Outstanding Player of the Year (1963), National Football Foundation and College Hall of Fame.

More recently Renfro has been inducted into the Oregon African American Hall of Fame, the University of Oregon Hall of Fame and the Portland Interscholastic Hall of Fame.

About his years in the NFL, Renfro commented, "As I look back on my career, it's clear that the successes I experienced were not just mine, but the work of the Lord. He gave me these talents at a young age and has been guiding my life all along. Now he's given me a new career as the Ambassador for the Bridge. I hope now to help children throughout the country achieve their dreams and have their own successes."

Jefferson HS State Champion, U of O All American, NFL All Pro, today Mel Renfro has turned his disciplined energy and focus back to the community he was raised in. He wants today's youth to have the same safe environment he had in which to develop their talents and live out their dreams.

Today you'll find Mel Renfro at the Bridge Center, and organization that supports a number of Christian ministries to provide that safe haven (counseling, job skills training, after-school tutoring, and athletic facilities).

Pastor Don Frazier, founder of the Bridge Center, and long time friend of Renfro explained, "We are so pleased that Mel has received this ultimate honor. It just adds more credibility to his position as a role model for the youth in our communi-



Mel Renfro

ty and around the country. We at the Bridge are blessed to have him as our Ambassador. His deep faith and his

passion for our children are an asset to our organization and an inspiration for our daily lives."

FEMALE READY FOR HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL

Freshman Donnell Finnman loves the look on a quarterback's face when she plants him back-first into the ground.

Yes, she. She's not the first girl to play football in North Carolina. But the hard-hitting, 5-foot-6, 150-pounder is in the running for a starting job on the defensive line at the

Eastern North Carolina School for the Deaf. "She's a tough girl," said coach Leonard Baker. "All the boys respect her." Junior running back Jeffrey McMillan agreed.

"She's challenged every one of the boys," he said. "She's tough. Some people on the outside ask us why we let a girl on

the team. And we said because she's tough." But some problems are expected for the 14-year player.

"She's going to have a hard time with other teams," said fullback Jermaine Black. "They'll probably pick on her, but

the team will look out for her."

Other players remember moments like a recent tackling drill. A 6-foot-3 boy knocked Finnman flat. She stood up, motioned for him to try that again and, this time, Finnman returned the favor.

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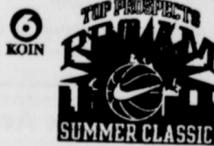


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