

# SPORTS

## UNITED STATES 2, KUWAIT 0



By LONDON HALL

It was hard to tell what a 2-0 victory over Kuwait meant for the U.S. soccer team.

David Regis, an American for all of five days, looked like a sure World Cup starter as he made his international debut.

Tab Ramos, back from his second serious knee operation, scored and continued to impress in his fight to get back in the starting lineup.

Ernie Stewart scored, too, and the Americans created plenty of chances - outshooting Kuwait 25-4. But they failed to connect on most of them.

"The U.S. thoroughly outplayed Kuwait, but we failed to capitalize on our scoring opportunities," American coach Steve Sampson said after Sunday's game. "It's nice that we converted two chances, but we had 14 in the first half alone. We need to do better in front of the goal."

With just next Saturday's game against Scotland remaining before the trip to France, the Americans (6-3-2) don't have much time left to find their rhythm.

"If we would've played on a smooth field, we would've won 5-0," said Claudio Reyna, who claimed the rain-soaked temporary field slowed U.S. midfielders. "Hopefully, next week against Scotland we'll really be able to press and run."

Some players are put off by the system of three defenders, six midfielders and one forward, which has left slow-footed Alexi Lalas and Marcelo Balboa on the bench. But

Reyna is a fan of the formation, in which Brian Maisonneuve and Chad Deering play defensive midfield, allowing Stewart and Reyna to go on offense.

"The midfield guys really have now the freedom to just get forward without worrying that (opponents) are going to track back," he said. "Just having so many guys coming out of the midfield is very difficult for opponents."

Regis, who became a U.S. citizen on Wednesday, looked sharp in his international debut. The former Frenchman, who was born in Martinique, said he was misty eyed during "The Star-Spangled Banner." He then played the full 90 minutes, just missed a goal in the 18th minute on a shot that went wide.

Stewart, who missed last week's scoreless tie against Macedonia, scored in the 37th minute when Maisonneuve found an opening in front of the penalty area and looped a pass to the right in front of him. Stewart caught up to the ball and drove it into the net, ending a 128-minute scoreless streak for the Americans.

Ramos, who played just the last 15 minutes, connected in the 82nd minute from a severe angle off a pass from Preki Radosavljevic. Ramos worked the ball in close on goalkeeper Khalid Al-Fadhi and sent the ball into the left side of the net, his seventh goal in international play.

Ramos, expected to challenge for a starting spot at the World Cup, was playing his second international game since surgery last fall to repair a torn knee ligament.

Eric Wynalda, the Americans' regular starting forward, played the second half and moved well on the slippery field in his first game since arthroscopic knee surgery on April 16. Wynalda had three shots, none of them difficult.

## Sonics coach fired two weeks after team ousted in playoffs

By JIM COUR

Two weeks after his Seattle SuperSonics were eliminated by the Los Angeles Lakers in the playoffs, George Karl was fired as coach on Tuesday.

Karl, 47, coached the Sonics for 6½ seasons and had the best winning percentage (.719, 384-150) in the team's regular-season history. Under Karl, the team had three 60-victory seasons.

"I've had an interesting couple of weeks," team president and general manager Wally Walker said in announcing Karl's firing. "It was an extremely difficult decision to make."

It might have been difficult but it wasn't unexpected - after the Sonics were beaten four straight by the Los Angeles Lakers in the Western Conference semifinals, the first four-game losing streak of Karl's tenure in Seattle.

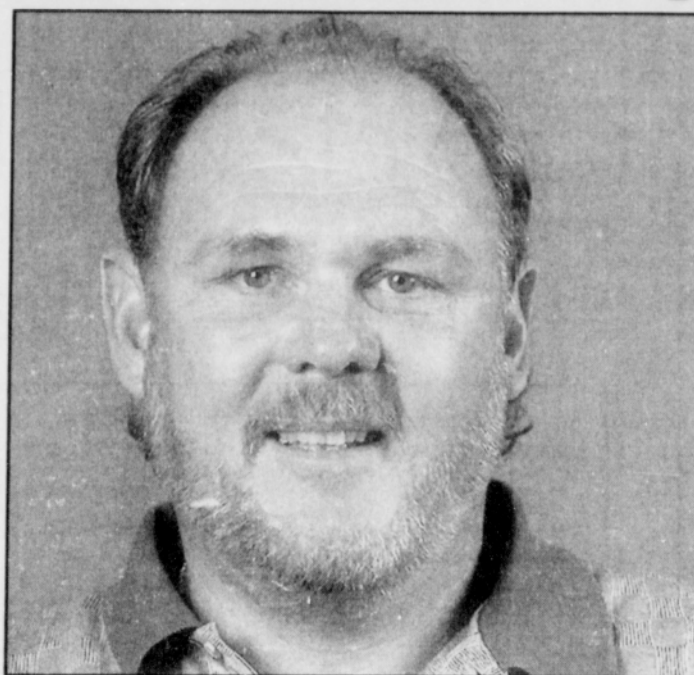
Karl was paid \$3.2 million in the last season of a contract that expires July 1.

"Our decision is based entirely on what we believe in the team's best interest of going forward," Walker said. "It's not about money. It's not personal."

Walker said the decision to fire Karl was his alone, and not that of owner Barry Ackerley. Walker made it during the weekend and told Karl on Tuesday morning.

He said he believed Karl wanted to stay in Seattle and "was disappointed" when he found out he wasn't going to be re-hired.

Two years ago, Karl coached



George Karl

the Sonics into the NBA Finals, in which they lost in six games to the Chicago Bulls.

While Walker said the decision not to retain Karl wasn't about money and wasn't personal, those were two factors that weren't on Karl's side of staying in Seattle.

He isn't expected to stay unemployed long and probably will command a salary of \$5 million from some team next season.

Ackerley and Walker were unhappy with Karl because they viewed him as a loose cannon who leaked information to the media.

"I don't think George is about to change," Walker said. "I don't want to be in a position where I can't trust him to keep secret informa-

tion that is very sensitive and can't get out."

Walker deliberately didn't tell Karl before the Sonics were involved in a three-team trade that brought Vin Baker to Seattle and sent Shawn Kemp to Cleveland before last season.

Still, Karl's departure from Seattle probably was more about the Sonics' playoff failures than anything else.

Ackerley complained before the playoffs that he didn't have a championship ring.

Under Karl, the Sonics had a 40-40 playoff record, losing to Houston in the Western Conference semifinals in 1997. They were upset by Denver as the No. 1 seed in

the West in 1994 and lost in 1995 to the Lakers in another upset.

After the Lakers beat Seattle in 1995, then team president and general manager Bob Whitsitt was fired by Ackerley. Whitsitt now is president and general manager of the Portland Trail Blazers under owner Paul Allen and also is president of the NFL Seattle Seahawks, a team Allen owns.

"We're ultimately making this decision for the right reasons," Walker said of Karl's firing. "We're doing it to have a chance to attain our primary goal - that of winning the championship. We need a different approach."

Assistants Bob Weiss, Tim Gurgurich, Dwane Casey and Terry Stotts were also fired.

Walker said he met with Karl for "a couple of hours" on May 15, three days after the season ended. He said he ended his conversation with Karl by asking him "for a number that it would take in order for him to be satisfied as the Sonics coach."

He said subsequent information he received convinced him that he was not going to keep Karl happy in Seattle.

Karl, who took over for K.C. Jones on Jan. 23, 1992 after leaving the Real Madrid team in Spain, got the Sonics to the playoffs in all seven of his seasons in Seattle.

It was the third time that Karl, a former player with the San Antonio Spurs in the ABA and then NBA, was fired as a coach.

## PACERS RESERVES DOMINATING BULLS

By HANK LOWENKRON

Chicago's road to a sixth NBA championship in eight years has been stalled by Indiana's depth.

The Pacers evened the best-of-7 Eastern Conference finals with victories at Market Square Arena on Saturday and Monday. In both games, Indiana's reserves were a big reason.

In Game 3, Jalen Rose had 15 points to lead three Indiana reserves in double figures as the Pacers posted a 107-105 victory. Indiana's backups outscored Chicago's reserves 43-25 in that game.

On Monday, Indiana scratched out a 96-94 victory with a 32-13 scoring advantage off the bench and a strong defensive effort by Derrick McKey as a reserve.

"The bench came through," Indiana coach Larry Bird said. "They've been doing it throughout the playoffs. Today, they stepped up, especially

when we needed them."

Travis Best led the scoring by the reserves with 10 points. Antonio Davis and Rose had eight apiece, and McKey added six, including a 3-pointer that gave Indiana its first lead of the second half at 88-87.

"Travis played an outstanding ball game. He forced the issue a lot of times, made some key baskets for us," Bird said. "McKey did as good a job as you could do against Michael Jordan. ... Antonio is Antonio. He's going to give you everything he's got."

The Bulls have struggled against the quickness of Best.

"We were just taking what was there," said Best, who hit a 3-pointer that gave Indiana a 91-89 lead and a layup to cut Chicago's lead to 94-93 with 33 seconds to go, setting the stage for Reggie Miller's winning 3-pointer in the final second.

"I came down, nobody was guarding me," Best said of the layup. "It was a shot I put up a lot in college. I felt comfortable shooting it."

Best knows Chicago will be even tougher when the series resumes Wednesday night in the United Center, where the Bulls have won 11 straight in the conference finals. The last two of those have been by six-point margins over Indiana.

CLOSE CALL: @ Michael Jordan just missed hitting the winning shot when his 26-footer at the buzzer went in the basket, but spun out.

"I don't know if any camera fell to the ground, but I fell to the ground (in agony)," Best said. "I thought it was good. It went in and out. That would have been a tough way to lose. ... He put up a great shot. He's made so many in his career, that you never count the Chicago Bulls out when Mike is putting up a shot."

## NBA Suspends Rose; Miller Can Play

By CHRIS SHERIDAN

Reggie Miller and Ron Harper escaped suspensions today for their scuffle late in the fourth quarter of Monday's Bulls-Pacers playoff game, but Jalen Rose of Indiana was suspended one game for leaving the bench area.

Rose will be banned from the United Center when the series resumes Wednesday night, tied at two games apiece.

"I'm sincerely sorry Jalen was suspended since I thought that, while he was removed from the bench, he was (under the) control of our coach-

ing staff and never entered the fray," Pacers president Donnie Walsh said.

"Additionally, I didn't feel like either Reggie Miller or Ron Harper deserved suspensions for what occurred and the incident never really turned into an altercation. Neither team wanted a fight. It was just the emotion of the game," Walsh said.

Rose declined comment on his suspension.

Harper was fined \$3,500 for initiating the fracas by yanking Miller into the Chicago bench area and shoving Miller.

Miller was fined \$2,500 for retali-

ating and pushing Harper.

Chicago coach Phil Jackson was fined \$10,000 for his comments about the officiating, including comparing the refereeing to the 1972 Olympic gold medal game in Munich when the United States lost to the Soviet Union.

By not suspending Miller or Harper, the league determined that neither threw a punch.

"There were no punches thrown," said Miller, one day after his 3-pointer with 0.7 seconds left gave the Pacers a 96-94 victory over the Bulls.

## Indy 500 Standings

Official results of Sunday's Indianapolis 500, with finishing position, starting position in parentheses, driver, hometown or country, car number, chassis-engine, laps completed, average speed and reason out where available, and prize money announced Monday night at the annual Victory Dinner (r-rookie):

- (17) Eddie Cheever, Tampa, Fla., No. 51, Dallara-Aurora, 200 laps, 145.155 mph, \$1,433,000.
- (11) Buddy Lazier, Vail, Colo., No. 91, Dallara-Aurora, 200, 145.118, \$483,200.
- (23) r-Steve Knapp, Salem, Wis., No. 55, G Force-Aurora, 200, 145.076, \$338,750.
- (8) Davey Hamilton, Las Vegas, No. 6, G Force-Aurora, 199, running, \$301,650.
- (21) r-Robby Unser, Santa Fe, N.M., No. 52, Dallara-Aurora, 198, running, \$209,400.
- (3) Kenny Brack, Sweden, No. 14, Dallara-Aurora, 198, running, \$310,750.
- (16) John Paul Jr., West Palm Beach, Fla., No. 81, Dallara-Aurora, 197, running, \$216,350.
- (19) r-Andy Michner, Ann Arbor, Mich., No. 17, Dallara-Aurora, 197, running, \$182,050.
- (13) r-J.J. Yeley, Phoenix, No. 44, Dallara-Aurora, 197, running, \$198,550.
- (18) Buzz Calkins, Denver, No. 12, G Force-Aurora, 195, running, \$248,500.
- (26) r-Jimmy Kite, Stockbridge, Ga., No. 7, Dallara-Aurora, 195, running, \$287,300.
- (22) r-Jack Hewitt, Troy, Ohio, No. 18, G Force-Aurora, 195, running, \$265,800.
- (27) Jeff Ward, San Juan Capistrano, Calif., No. 35, G Force-Aurora, 194, running, \$242,050.

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