

# SPORTS

## Prosecutors quit after Don King is found innocent in partial verdict

By LARRY NEUMEISTER

Federal prosecutors promised not to seek a rematch against Don King after failing to convict the spike-haired boxing promoter or his company in a second insurance fraud trial.

A Manhattan jury acquitted King, 66, of all nine wire fraud charges accusing him of stealing \$350,000 from Lloyd's of London after a 1991 bout was canceled.

The federal jury was unable to reach a verdict on charges against Don King Productions Inc. A jury in 1995 failed to reach a verdict on the same nine wire fraud charges against King, who beat a federal tax evasion charge in 1995 as well.

U.S. Attorney Mary Jo White said prosecutors were throwing in the towel.

"We do not believe it to be in the public interest to try the case for a third time," White said.

King's lawyer, Peter Fleming Jr., repeatedly implied to the jury that his client was unfairly prosecuted, pursued by relentless government investigators who singled him out.

William H. Murphy Jr., who represented Don King Productions Inc., said the exoneration of King and an 11-1 vote for an acquittal of King's company, proved the case never should have been brought.

"This was a blowout, a resounding defeat for the government," he said.

He also accused prosecutors of unfairly pursuing King with flimsy evidence.

"I hope they understand the lesson: When you come at somebody hard, you got to come at them fair," he said.

King lingered at the courthouse for more than an hour after his victory, signing autographs, posing for pictures and vowing to use his success to catapult him to even greater achievements.

"This is so great. I'm so thrilled," said King, who read a biography of Martin Luther King Jr. and the bible throughout the three-month trial. "The most important thing to me now is freedom."

A jury note on Tuesday

gave the impression that jurors were on the verge of convicting either King or his company. When it was learned Thursday that the jury reached a verdict against one defendant, a subdued defense team waited anxiously.

At the jury's announcement, King smiled. Fleming clapped his hands as his eyes filled with tears.

King greeted the jurors individually with a handshake.

"Thank you all very much," he said, later hugging and kissing some of them outside the courtroom.

Juror Steve Fiscus said he became convinced by the evidence that Lloyd's provided coverage for the money that became the basis of the charges. The most serious charge carried a potential prison term of up to five years.

The verdict capped a trial in which prosecutors tried to convince jurors that the defendant who cheerily nodded and smiled at them during the trial was a wily crook.

Defense lawyers accused prosecutors of trying to tear down a self-made man, a major figure in boxing for three decades who has promoted fights for everyone from Muhammad Ali to Mike Tyson.

After the verdict, King sounded like



one of his boxers, hesitant to degrade his defeated opponent although he made vague comments warning Americans to beware of losing liberties and said that "power corrupts."

He said prosecutors were "tenacious, steadfast and committed." He added, "I have been just as tenacious, steadfast and committed."

King took out an insurance policy with Lloyd's in case a 1991 fight between Cesar Chavez and Harold Brazier was canceled. The fight was ultimately called off when Chavez was injured during training.

According to prosecutors, King then altered his contract with Chavez in a way that would force Lloyd's to reimburse King for all training expenses. Then, King submitted a claim to Lloyd's and

fraudulently collected \$350,000, prosecutors said.

Prosecutor Baruch Weiss argued that King either altered the contract himself or ordered someone to do it. Prosecutors noted that King kept such close tabs on every financial aspect of his business that he once signed a check worth a nickel.

Chavez, former World Boxing Council super lightweight champion, testified that King paid him only \$80,000 to train for Brazier and never told him about an insurance claim.

King has had repeated run-ins with the law. He was acquitted of tax evasion in 1985. In 1954, he killed a man who was robbing a numbers house he operated in Cleveland. It was ruled self-defense.

## Fan dies in Champs-Elysees accident

A bystander hit by a car during a World Cup celebration along the Champs-Elysees has died.

The unidentified victim died at the Beaujon hospital in Clichy, near Paris, a spokesman for Paris' public hospitals said.

Thirty-three people are still hospitalized from the accident early Monday. A woman apparently panicked when the crowd pounded her vehicle and she plowed into a crowd of revelers.

About 80 people were injured and 10 people are still in serious condition.

More than a million people were on the avenue at the time. The celebratory mood quickly turned to horror as doz-

ens of ambulances and 200 rescue workers converged.

The driver, a 44-year-old teacher who had been under-

going psychiatric treatment, panicked and ran away. Her son later brought the distraught woman to a police station.

France Info radio reported Tuesday the woman is in a psychiatric hospital.

This was the second death in France related to the World Cup. A French actor was stabbed to death by an apparently deranged English fan following the England-Argentina game.

And a French policeman remains in a coma after his head was beaten by a German man wielding an iron bar.



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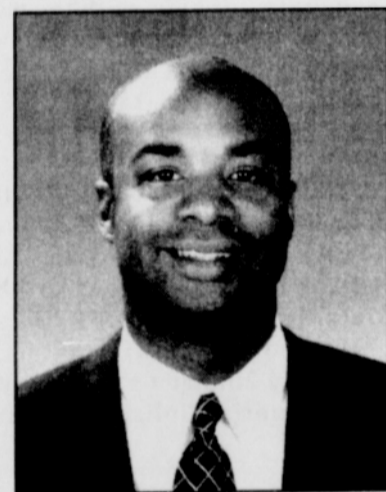
## Seahawks Name Vernon Cheek Publications Director

The Seattle Seahawks named Vernon Cheek Director of Publications. Cheek, 31, joins the Seahawks staff from Grambling State University where he has served as Sports Information Director/Marketing since July 1995.

Among other public relations duties, Cheek will oversee the writing, design and layout of all Seahawks publications including the 1998 Information guide and the Seahawks Insider magazine.

A Grambling State Graduate, Cheek was a member of the Chicago Bears marketing department before accepting the position at his alma mater.

Born in Chesapeake, Virginia, Cheek was instrumental in obtaining



corporate sponsorships for the Tiggers' media publications as well as spearheading numerous community relations ventures.

## Jack Nicklaus To Retire in 2000



As he ends his streak of 154 consecutive majors by missing the British Open, Jack Nicklaus now says he won't play any of golf's biggest tournaments after 2000.

"It's my full intention to play all four majors in the year 2000," the 58-year-old Nicklaus said Monday. "Then that will be the end of my playing golf period. We've all got to stop some time, and I don't think it's any big deal."

Nicklaus pulled out of the British Open last week with an ailing left hip. It's the first major he'll miss since 1962.

"I don't want to go out there and have people see just a part of Jack Nicklaus," he said during a visit to a new course he designed at Carden Park with his son, Steve. "I have tried to give them the best I could give them."

"I know I can't give them the Jack Nicklaus of 35, but I'd like to give them the best I can give them of the Jack Nicklaus of 58. I think the Jack Nicklaus of 58 could probably still play decently."

Nicklaus said he will still play in some Senior PGA events after 2000, but his competitive career will be over.

"I'm fairly much in touch with what's realistic and if I say I'm going to stay out there and keep competing, then that would be

rather silly," he said. "I'll still play some senior golf, but I'm not going to compete against the kids."

On Sunday, Nicklaus finished sixth in the Seniors Players Championship, 12 shots behind winner Gil Morgan. Before the tournament, Nicklaus said he'll play the U.S. Senior Open on July 23-26 and that will probably be his final event of the year.

Nicklaus is one of only four players to win the career Grand Slam, and the only player to win all four majors more than once.

He won a record six Masters, 23 years between the first and the last; four U.S. Opens, sharing the record with Ben Hogan, Bobby Jones and Willie Anderson; three British Opens, along with a record seven runner-up finishes; and five PGA championships - only Walter Hagen, who played in the match-play era, won that many.

## Malone, Rodman Do Battle in Ring

By PAULA STORY

The winner of the "Bash at the Beach" tag-team wrestling match was almost as much a mystery as Dennis Rodman's latest hair color and Karl Malone's nasty role reversal.

The NBA stars took their feud inside the wrestling ring Sunday.

Rodzilla delivered. The Mailman didn't. The match was decided by a controversial, last-minute entrance from a bodyguard.

Rodman, a member of the NBA champion Chicago Bulls, and "Hollywood" Hulk Hogan beat Malone, a member of the Utah Jazz, and "Diamond" Dallas Page before a sellout crowd of 12,000 and a pay-per-view television audience.

But this time, it was Malone who traded in his quiet, workmanlike self and acted like the wild, authority-defying rebel.

Malone and Page charged into the ring at San Diego State's Cox Arena wearing purple latex pants. Lagging behind Hogan, Rodman sauntered into the ring with a bandana on his head to hide his latest hair color - or perhaps lack of hair. The bandana stayed in place throughout the tussle.

No tatus here - he wore jeans and a T-shirt.

When the rowdy crowd grew bored of the two leggy basketball stars taunting each other, they began screaming "Boring! Boring!"

Hogan responded, bouncing Malone from rope to rope in a classically choreographed "clothesline" move before sending him headlong into Rodman's shiny black boot.

Hogan and Rodman were declared winners.

But a defiant Malone disagreed with the result.

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