

SPORTS BRIEFS

SPORTS

Dennis Erickson Press Conference

Sampras Wins, Rios Loses at ATP

Pete Sampras got a perfect start Tuesday at the ATP World Championship and, unfortunately for Marcelo Rios, so did Tim Henman.

Sampras and Rios, the top players in the world, are battling for the No. 1 ranking at the end of the year.

DiMaggio Marks Birthday in Hospital

Joe DiMaggio marks his 84th birthday Wednesday in a Florida hospital where he reportedly is battling lung cancer and had a heart attack last week.

DiMaggio's lawyer denied reports by two television stations that the Hall of Famer had a heart attack or is gravely ill.

Astros Drop Effort To Sign Johnson

The Houston Astros gave up their effort to re-sign Randy Johnson, saying today they will not match the Texas Rangers' offer of a four-year guaranteed contract.

Astros general manager Gerry Hunsicker said Barry Meister, one of the left-hander's agents, told the team today they would need a four-year offer for any chance at retaining Johnson. Texas is said to have offered nearly \$50 million during Johnson's visit to The Ballpark on Monday.

Cowboys Expect To See a Lot of Moss

Get ready for a double dose of rookie sensation Randy Moss.

The Dallas Cowboys secondary got the news Tuesday that Minnesota wide receiver Jake Reed won't play against them Thanksgiving Day. That means more work for the game-breaking Moss.

K.C. and Tampa in the Super Bowl?

Before the season, Kansas City was one of the favorites to go to the Super Bowl, and at least one national publication picked Tampa Bay. There was also a feeling the Giants and Redskins would battle for the NFC East title.

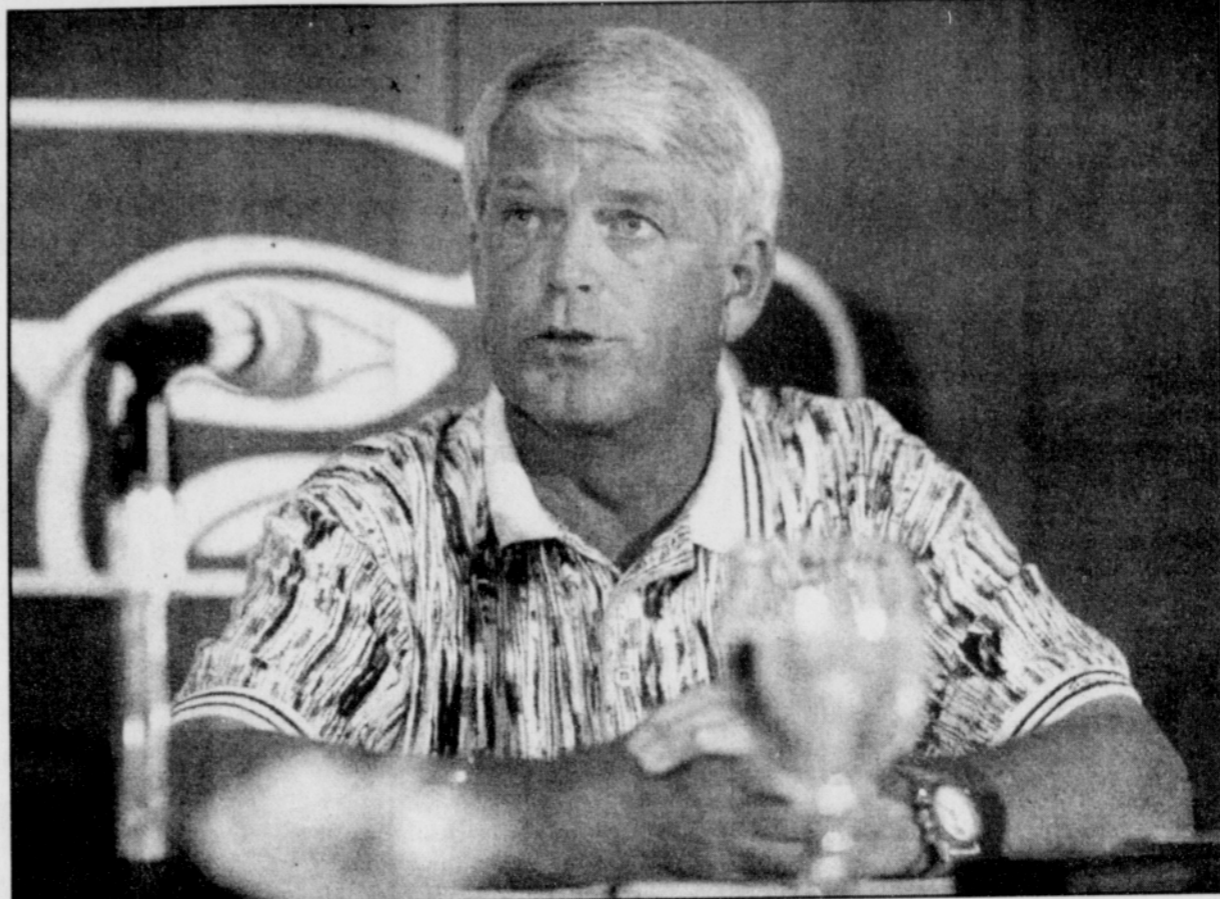
Detroit, a playoff team last year, was thought to be a playoff team again.

Three months later, those five teams are a combined 18-37 and all but mathematically out of the race.

Check Out Next Week On SPORTS BRIEFS

I'll go ahead and talk a little bit about San Diego and where they're at. Obviously, they've had a coaching change. We all know about that. But as a football team they're number one in the NFL on defense. They're an outstanding defensive football team led by Junior Seau, who is as good as anybody in football right now. He's kind of the heart and soul of that defense. They play like him, they play with his enthusiasm all the time and they're just an outstanding defensive football team. They run to the football. They do everything you can ask, and that's why they're number one in the NFL. He's a huge team leader for them and does a lot of things. They're very difficult to run the football against. They play a lot of man coverage; hopefully we can try to do some things to take advantage of that. But they're an outstanding defensive football team.

On the other side of the ball - Natrone Means is the key to what they do offensively. He, to me, looks better than he's ever looked. He's always been a very physical runner, but it's looked to me that he's making people miss a lot more than he ever has. He'll hit it up in there and then he'll cut back and do some different things - juke a guy, run over a guy - he's the real key. That's what they were able to do against Philadelphia. They were able to run the football and not put Ryan Leaf into a lot of situations where he had to throw it. They got him in good situations to throw it. They simplified things a little bit which really made a difference for him, as far as his reads are concerned. He can throw the football. He made some throws in that game that a lot of people can't make. He's got a strong arm. He's a guy that's going to be a great player. It's just experience with him, and what June Jones is doing with him right now is simplifying it and putting it on Natrone Means and that offensive front, who are very good run blockers. They're doing the right thing. They have a great defen-



Dennis Erickson at press conference

sive football team and they're playing to that defensive football team. That's exactly what they should be doing and that's why they won that football game, and that's why they beat Tennessee earlier in the year and Buffalo, so they went back to that.

It's a game where they're real physical and it's going to be a game, that obviously is a key game for both of us. It's going to be fun. We just came off the bye-week, as you know and practiced on Monday and seemed to be fresh. The only bad thing about a bye is getting back into what you need to do as far as practice and getting back into that type of thing. So that's what we're trying to get to, today in practice. That's what we tried to do on Monday. Get back to the every day work thing that we need to do in preparation for games. Sometimes when you're off and you

only practice two times or three times, you're going to be a little rusty. I thought Monday we came back pretty good and had a good practice, so hopefully we'll practice well today.

DOES WARREN MOON NEED TO PRACTICE TODAY TO BE ABLE TO PLAY?

"No, but he needs to practice tomorrow. He's got to practice tomorrow and we'll see where he's at. That's part of it, the other part of it is how he feels physically. I'm not going to put him out on the field when he's not close to 100%, it's not fair to him. Obviously, we're going to get a quarterback ready this week, which would be John Friesz. He gets all the practice turns and that's the direction that we would go."

WILL WARREN PRACTICE TODAY?

"He's going to go out and try to

throw. How much he'll be able to do, I don't know."

WHAT TYPE OF AFFECT DOES IT HAVE ON A TEAM WITH A COACHING CHANGE? DOES IT BENEFIT THE TEAM AS MUCH AS IT CREATES A CHANGE FOR THE OPPOSITION IN PREPARATION?

"I don't know, I haven't been around one in the middle of the season. Normally, they wait until the end of the year. They played pretty well last week. I do know that."

ARE THE SEAHAWKS GETTING ANTSY TO PLAY?

"We're anxious to get back and play. Again, the week off was good for us, but now we have ten games left and it's a ten game season for us. We can still accomplish a lot of things that we've set out to accomplish, but we don't have a whole lot of room for error, as most teams don't at this time. If you look at the league, as I mentioned before, there are a lot of teams with two, three and four losses. A lot of things can happen. Nobody has a lot of room for error at this point other than Denver, they have a little room for error."

ON HOW MOON FEELS...

"He's sore. Again, if he feels good, if he could throw it then he'll practice. If he can't, he's the guy you'd have

to ask."

ON MOON HAVING TWO CRACKED RIBS INSTEAD OF ONE... "I don't know that anybody knows that answer, it may have been there before, it may not have been there before. They really don't know."

HE LOOKS OKAY AND HESAYS HE'S OKAY, MIGHT HE STILL NOT PLAY BASED ON AN INTUITIVE DECISION ON YOUR PART?

"Could be, we'll just see how he operates at practice, if he practices."

IS THE PROTOTYPE RUNNING BACK NOW A GUY THAT WEIGHS ABOUT 220-225 AND CAN CATCH AND HAS POWER?

"If you can find him, yes, that's what you'd like to have, they're hard to find. Natrone Means is 240 pounds, he creates a lot of problems for people. Usually, it depends on the situation. A lot of people play with third-down backs, they have a bigger guy on first and second down to run it then on third down and eight. He's a guy that can come out of the backfield."

The reason Ricky Watters is involved with us is because we felt he could do it all. That's why we decided on him when we made our decision on who we were going to get to play running back for us."

HOW WELL IS JOHN FRIESZ PLAYING?

"Fine. He came in and played in the one game and I thought he played pretty well. Kansas City, it's pretty hard to evaluate anybody in that game. As I said earlier or last week after the game, he came in and did a good job for us against Denver."

HAVE YOU SEEN ANY IMPROVEMENT ON RYAN LEAF IN THE LAST FEW WEEKS?

"Yes, he's getting better and better. Physically, he's got all the tools, it's just a matter of learning in this league. Looking back, how many rookies have come in and dominated in this league? I can't name any. You just don't do it."

ON THE SEATTLE DEFENSE AGAINST A ROOKIE QB WHO'S STRUGGLING...

"With their philosophy, regardless of who the quarterback is, you've got to stop Natrone Means. That's the whole key, regardless if it's Ryan Leaf or anybody else. That's what the key is in this football game, stopping their running game. So that's what we're emphasizing."

Beavers Say.... "Not So Fast" The Civil War

The Beavers of OSU had a whole different program, for their record crowd of 37,777, as they set fire to the #15 Ducks at Parker Stadium Saturday, in what proved to be one of the most exciting Civil War games in the history of the two (2) teams.... it took two (2) over-times, but it was oh so sweet, by the time the "ole lady in black, got up to sing."

The victory represented sweet justice for the Beavers (5-6, 2-6) for the year.

The Beavers nearly won the game in the first overtime when they led 38-31. They stopped the Ducks on a fourth-and-13 play from the Oregon State 28 after safety Terrance Carroll knocked down Akili Smith's pass. The fans stormed the field, thinking the game was over.

Not to fast. The crowd didn't notice an official throwing a flag, penalizing OSU cornerback Andrae Holland for pass interference. It took about 10 minutes

for stadium officials to clear the field.

With fans crowded around the sidelines and end zone, Smith hit Jed Weaver for a 12-yard gain. Jerry Brown was then stopped cold on two tries from the 1-yard line. On third down, Smith faked a handoff and found Weaver all alone for the touchdown. The extra point made it 38-38.

For the Ducks, the loss will hurt mentally and financially. With a win, the Ducks were probably on their way to the Holiday Bowl and a \$1.8 million payday. Now, it could be the Sun Bowl or the Aloha Bowl and considerably less payout.

"I don't know - we're looking at everything," Oregon coach Mike Bellotti said. "I'm sure we're looking at any bowl; I don't know what the ramifications are for this down the road."

The most costly part of this loss for Oregon might have been in the pocketbook. This defeat took the Ducks out of a big-

money bowl, which eventually could cost them as much as \$1 million.

But they didn't look much like a team that deserved to be in the top 20 in the country down the stretch of the game. The Beavers were clearly the dominant team in overtime. OSU needed just four plays to score in the first overtime and two in the second.

It was a physical mismatch by that point, with the Ducks simply out-manned.

"Our offensive line won the game," Smith said. "We threw that one pass in the second overtime and I'm not even sure why we did it. I felt really good about the way we were running the ball."

Beavers fans filled the field when it was over, hanging from goal posts, dancing with joy and, in general, celebrating the way people celebrate something that doesn't happen very often. These people actually tore sections of the artificial turf off the stadium floor.

Portraits in Jazz Sundays' Noon to 1 p.m.



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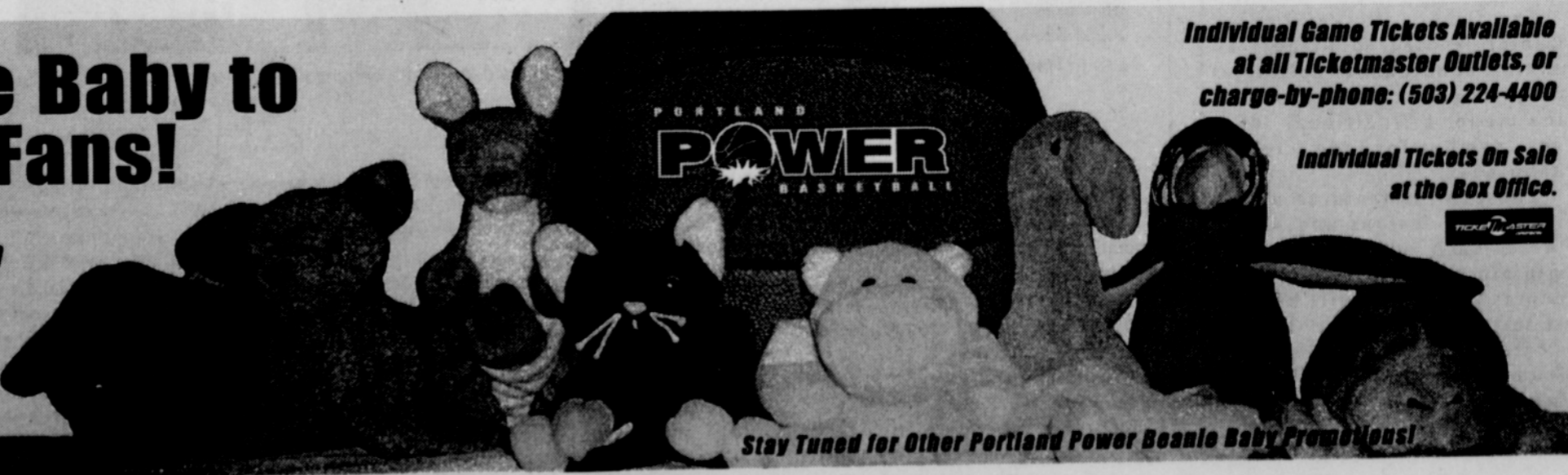
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