

# SPORTS BRIEFS

## Falcons' Reeves Returns To Hospital

SUWANEE, Ga. - For the Atlanta Falcons, this is a time for celebration. It's also a time for concern.

The Falcons' first division title since 1980 is clouded by the absence of coach Dan Reeves, who returned to the hospital after complications from heart bypass surgery.

## Record-busting backs top Little All-America team

NEW YORK-Brian Shay and R.J. Bowers, a pair of record-busting running backs, and a wideout who broke Jerry Rice's receiving record were selected to The Associated Press' Little All-America team on Tuesday.

Shay, from Emporia State, ran for 2,265 yards and 29 touchdowns and finished as the all-divisions career rushing leader with 6,958 yards — 661 more than Heisman Trophy winner Ricky Williams. Shay won the Harlon Hill Award as the top player in Division II.

## Anderson mulls prison time for drugs

HOUSTON- Greg Anderson blames bad judgment and a poor choice of friends for his fate: an imminent prison sentence for participating in a cocaine deal to which he has pleaded guilty.

Anderson, in an interview in Sunday's Houston Chronicle, said that as a favor to friends, he allowed himself to be drawn into a drug deal one that turned out to be a setup in an FBI drug sting. Anderson and three others pleaded guilty Oct. 20 to possession of cocaine with intent to distribute. He faces a maximum of 40 years in prison, but federal sentencing guidelines mean he'll probably serve three to four years in prison with no chance for parole.

## Hamilton gets \$17 million deal

TORONTO-It didn't take long for Joey Hamilton to get a big-money deal with the Toronto Blue Jays. Hamilton, traded from San Diego for Woody Williams during the winter meetings, agreed Monday to a \$17 million, three-year contract.

"I tried over the last couple of years to get something done with San Diego and they weren't very receptive," Hamilton said. "It's like a big burden lifted off my back. I think being able to come here and get a fresh start is going to be really good for me."

## Suspect Nabbed in Soccer Knife Throw

WARSAW, Poland - A 19-year-old was arrested Tuesday as the man said to have thrown the knife that hit and injured Italian soccer player Dino Baggio during a UEFA Cup match in Krakow in October.

Pawel Michalski was arrested in Krakow, according to Malgorzata Wilkosz-Sliwa, a spokeswoman for the prosecutor's office. If convicted, Michalski could go to jail for up to 10 years.

## New trainer looking for Tyson to recapture old style

NEW YORK-Trainer Tommy Brooks is looking for a return of the old Mike Tyson when the former heavyweight champion makes his comeback next month.

"In order for him to be successful again, to regain the title, we have to go back to the old style," Brooks said of Tyson (45-3 with 39 knockouts), who has not fought since being disqualified for biting Evander Holyfield's ears in their rematch in June 1997. Tyson was banned by boxing for a year before having his license returned by the Nevada State Athletic Commission two months ago. "We are looking to get that head movement, non-stop punching and stepping aside and around his opponent back," Brooks said.

Check Out Next Week In Sports Brief

# SPORTS

## ABL Folds, Files for Bankruptcy

PALO ALTO, Calif.- The American Basketball League just couldn't beat the WNBA even when the pioneer women's league was practically the only pro game in town.

The nine-team ABL folded Tuesday midway through its third season, unable to compete with its rival, which was backed by the money and marketing power of the NBA.

As the league filed for bankruptcy protection, ABL franchises canceled their games and began drawing up plans for paying players and employees, and refunding ticketholders' money.

The ABL had teams in Chicago; Columbus, Ohio; Denver, Hartford, Conn.; Nashville, Tenn.; Philadelphia, San Jose; Seattle; and Portland, Ore.

"At this point, the league is out of money," league co-founder and CEO Gary Cavalli said in a statement. "This is a sad day for our fans, employees, players and coaches, and for women's basketball in general."

He said the ABL was unable to get the necessary TV exposure and sponsorship support.

The ABL was launched in 1996, riding the enthusiasm of the gold-medal-winning U.S. women's team in the Atlanta Olympics and the boom in women's college basketball. When the WNBA began play the following year, however, many began to wonder if two women's leagues could survive.

This year, the ABL had hoped to take advantage of the NBA lockout, which has forced cancellation of at least half the season.

"I'm a little surprised about the timing of it," said forward Katie Smith of the Columbus Quest, which won the league's two championships. She plans to play with a national team this summer and then look into joining the WNBA.

Players, some of whom chose the ABL because it offered higher salaries than the WNBA, were informed of the shutdown when they called the league office.

"We have closed our entire operation," said a recorded message.



After taking over 1st place, Coach Lynn Dunn & Natalie Williams ABL League MVP contemplate. A stellar season "in the making", turned upside down with the news of the League filing for bankruptcy

"The league is currently working on a plan to ensure that you'll be paid as much of your salary as possible for the month of December. This plan is subject to court approval."

"I am shocked. I never saw it coming," New England guard Jennifer Rizzotti said. "I am thankful for all of the loyal fans throughout this trying season. It's a shame this happened. I'm still trying to figure it out."

"I can definitely feel for people finding out they just lost a job because that's obviously what happened," Nashville guard Michelle Marciniak told WKRN-TV. "We don't have practice. We don't have a game on Christmas Day. I have a calendar filled up 'til the spring. Now there's nothing."

At league offices in Palo Alto, a pile of freshly typed paychecks sat on the front desk. A plastic bag filled with chocolate chip cookies and Christmas cards hanging inside the front door did little to dispel the gloom.

League spokesman Dean Jutilla said ABL employees were instructed by lawyers not to make any comment about the shutdown.

The league's board of directors decided late Monday night

to suspend the rest of the 1998-99 season that began in early November and file a Chapter 11 bankruptcy petition, leading to the league's liquidation. "People are shaken up emotionally," he said. "There are a few tears here and there."

The league was formed in 1995 by Anne Cribbs, Steve Hams and Cavalli, a public relations executive, and began play in October 1996. But it was challenged the next summer by the debut of the WNBA, backed by the multimillion-dollar marketing and publicity might of the NBA.



Karl Malone, shown left at the NBA charity game, feels the NBA offer was fair

### NEW YORK-

Karl Malone called the NBA's latest offer "fair" and "decent." Patrick Ewing disagrees, and many other players are standing with him.

"That deal is the same deal we've been going over for the last two or three weeks maybe even longer," the New York Knicks star and union president said.

Malone was referring to a nine-page letter the league sent to players on Thursday, outlining the owners' concessions.

"They haven't changed their position one iota. All they did was make the numbers look great, but it's not a good deal," Ewing said.

The players' association negotiating committee held an internal meeting Monday, with about 125 players listening in on a conference call. The players gave union director Billy Hunter their thoughts should the sides meet in the near future. Monday marked the ninth day since the last round of bargaining, and players continue to

lose \$50 million a week in salaries as the lockout drags on. No new talks are scheduled, with commissioner David Stern on vacation.

If a deal isn't reached soon, the entire season will be scrapped. Stern has steadfastly refused to say when it will be too late to save the season.

The league and the players are trying to determine how to divide about \$2 billion in annual revenues.

Sonics center Jim McIlvaine was among those who attended the union meeting in New York. He sided with Ewing.

"We came out on this morning's meeting the same," McIlvaine said at an event in Harlem where he and Ewing handed out Christmas presents to underprivileged children. Knicks teammates Herb Williams, John Starks and Marcus Camby also attended.

"We just wanted to clarify some things. There's a lot of stumbling blocks in order to make the deal and the big one is control," McIlvaine said. He added that Malone's version of adjustment may not be the same as everyone else's.

"That could be a presidential definition of 'tweak,'" McIlvaine added. "'Tweak' for him could mean a major modification for someone else."

One of the items that continued to be a topic for the players was to try to take care of the middle-range salary players. "Karl said he liked the deal, but he also said there's things that need to be changed," Herb Williams said. "If you look at the numbers, they look good. The superstars are going to get their money, but we're trying to take care of the guys in the middle."

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