

# SPORTS BRIEFS

# SPORTS @ The Portland Observer

## NBA center returns home

VILNIUS, Lithuania- Free agent center Arvydas Sabonis today joined Lithuania's national champion Zalgiris Vilnius and will play for them in the European league during the NBA lockout.

Sabonis, who played for the Portland Trail Blazers last season, signed a five-month contract, but both sides said he could return to the NBA on short notice if players and owners settle their labor dispute.

## Carolina wasting little time in looking for new coach

CHARLOTTE—The Carolina Panthers wasted little time searching for a new head coach, bringing in former San Francisco coach George Seifert to talk about the position vacated with Dom Capers' dismissal.

## Holmes: Bout with Foreman is a go

HOUSTON — Larry Holmes has been reading in the newspaper that his "Birthday Bash" bout with George Foreman is off. Not as far as he knows.

He said Tuesday that he spoke with promoter Roger Levitt, who assured him the old-timers' showdown in the Houston Astrodome on Jan. 23 was still on.

## Pak named AP female athlete of year

Woods and Pak have the same dynamic smile, the same knack for winning a major championship in unforgettable fashion. They both were trained in unorthodox manners by fathers obsessed with them becoming a champion.

Pak helped thrust women's golf back in the spotlight. "What we could not have anticipated was the emergence of Se Ri Pak."

## Bledsoe likely will miss playoff game

FOXBORO, Mass.—The New England Patriots have won all three games they've played against the Jacksonville Jaguars. For the first time, it appears they'll have to do it again without Drew Bledsoe.

## Mitchell wants to ensure bidding process is 'fair and above reproach'

WASHINGTON — Former Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell Tuesday promised a "thorough and prompt" investigation into claims that bribes helped Salt Lake City win the right to stage the 2002 Winter Olympics.

## Boxing-Botha to use Holyfield strategy against Tyson

NEWYORK - Francois Botha is studying how to beat Mike Tyson by watching how Evander Holyfield handled the former heavyweight champion twice.

"I am going to use the same strategy the way Holyfield fought him," the South African said in a teleconference call Tuesday from his training camp in Las Vegas where he will fight Tyson at the MGM Grand Hotel on January 16.

## Tigers sign Jefferies to a two-year deal

DETROIT - Gregg Jefferies, who has failed to live up to his potential since breaking into the major leagues in 1987, agreed Monday to a two-year contract with the Detroit Tigers worth about \$5 million.

Jefferies, a 31-year outfielder, spent more than 3 seasons with Philadelphia until the Phillies traded him to Anaheim last Aug. 28. He became a free agent after the season.

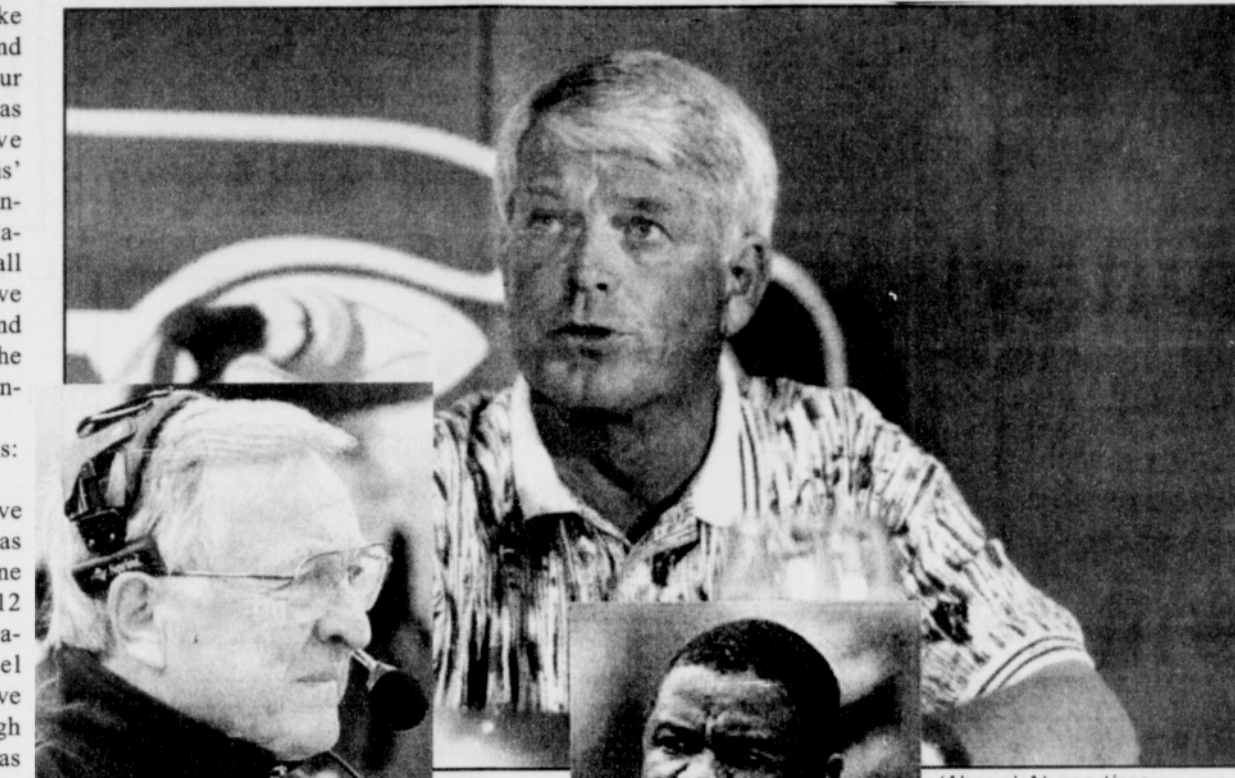
NFL teams decided to make coaching changes Monday — and they wasted no time doing it. Four coaches were fired before noon as the Chicago Bears' Dave Wannstedt, the Baltimore Ravens' Ted Marchibroda, the Carolina Panthers' Dom Capers and the Philadelphia Eagles' Ray Rhodes all were let go by their respective teams. But the firings didn't end there as later in the afternoon the Seahawks terminated coach Dennis Erickson's contract.

A roundup of the day's firings: Bears fire Wannstedt  
LAKE FOREST, Ill. — Dave Wannstedt was fired Monday as coach of the Chicago Bears, one day after the team finished 4-12 for the second consecutive season. Team president Michael McCaskey said he made the move because "we didn't win enough football games." Wannstedt was the fourth NFL coach fired Monday.

Capers let go by Panthers  
CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Dom Capers was fired Monday as coach of the Carolina Panthers, who have plummeted in the two years since they came within a victory of reaching the Super Bowl.

Capers, who was 30-34 as the only coach in the team's four-year history, was released a day after the Panthers finished their worst season at 4-12. In 1996, Capers led Carolina to a 13-5 record and the NFC West title, and was the NFL's coach of the year. But the team followed that success with a 7-9 season before falling even further this year.

Seahawks fire Erickson  
KIRKLAND, Wash. — Dennis



(Above) Ending the season, Ted Marchibroda takes one last look as Baltimore's coach

(Above) At one time, Seattle's Coach Erickson

(Above) Eagles Coach Ray Rhodes ended a four year reign Monday



(Left) Charlotte's Coach, Dom Capers fired after 4 years



(Right) Dave Wannstedt taking his last walk off of the Chicago Field

Erickson was fired as coach of the Seattle Seahawks Monday after an 8-8 season left the team out of the playoffs for the 10th consecutive year.

Seahawks president Bob Whitsitt said the decision to fire Erickson was based on a three-year evaluation, starting when owner Paul Allen became interested in acquiring the team.

"It wasn't based on one game here or one game there," Whitsitt said. Eagles make change, fire Rhodes

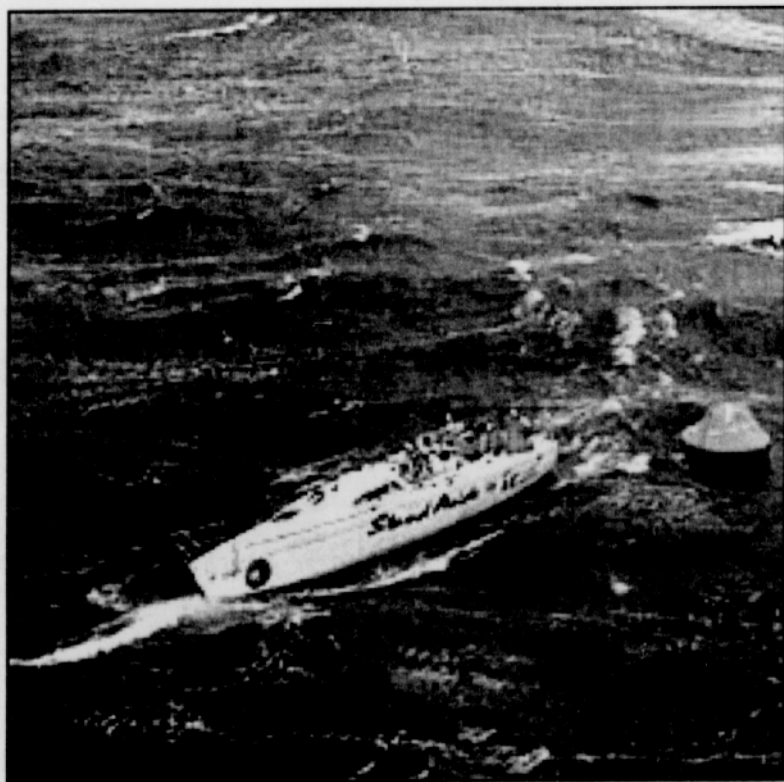
PHILADELPHIA — Ray Rhodes was fired as coach of the Philadelphia Eagles Monday, ending a four-year reign that began with a coach of the year award and collapsed with a 3-13 season.

Following Rhodes' advice and prediction, Eagles owner Jeffrey Lurie fired the 48-year-old coach after the team's final game, a 20-10 loss to the New York Giants on Sunday that clinched Philadelphia's first 13-loss season and worst record since 1972.

"When you don't win, changes have to be made. This is part of the business," Rhodes said at a news conference with Lurie.

Marchibroda fired as Ravens coach  
BALTIMORE— Ted Marchibroda was fired as coach of the Baltimore Ravens Monday after he failed to produce a winning season in his three years with the team. Marchibroda's entire staff of assistant coaches also was dismissed. "It's a bittersweet moment," Ravens owner Art Modell said. "I'm saddened by what I had to do Monday, but look forward to winning again. I didn't come from Cleveland to Baltimore to lose."

## Four confirmed dead, two others feared lost as rescue efforts end



A Dismasted racing yacht Stand Aside is stranded in Bass Strait

SYDNEY, Australia—Authorities recovered the bodies of four sailors and gave up hope Tuesday of finding two others after a monstrous storm decimated the Sydney-to-Hobart yacht race, its 90-mph winds and 35-foot swells snapping masts and flipping boats over.

Former British Olympic sailor and an Australian competitor were missing and presumed drowned, Australian Maritime Safety Authority spokesman Brian Hill said. "We wouldn't stop searching for them if we thought they were still alive," Hill told The Associated Press. "It's tragic, but most people would realize that we do have to be realistic."

Australian officials Tuesday halted one of the country's largest maritime rescue operations ever after finding the bodies of four sailors in a span of two days. Military helicopters plucked about 50 other sailors to safety off Australia's

southeastern coast, 250 miles south of Sydney. The race continued, however, finishing Tuesday morning when American Larry Ellison and his maxi yacht Sayonara arrived in Hobart, Tasmania, to take line honors ahead of Brindabella. Ellison, the chief executive officer and founder of Oracle Corp., also won the race in 1995. The 23-member crew arrived at Constitution Dock to a funeral atmosphere, rather than the usual popping of champagne corks and booming of cannons.

"It was just awful. I've never experienced anything remotely like this," Ellison said of the raging seas that peaked Sunday and Monday. "It's been a very emotional experience to get here. This is not what this is supposed to be about. It's a tough crew, but the guys were choked up."

ONE OF THE MISSING SAILORS.

33-year-old Briton Glyn Charles, had represented Britain in the Star Class at the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta, where he finished 11th. The other missing sailor was Australian John Dean, a crew member on the yacht Winston Churchill, which sank. The other missing two other Winston Churchill crew members, Jim Lawler and Michael Bannister, were found Tuesday. Two other sailors were found dead Monday after the 40-foot boat Business Post Naiad capsized 60 miles off the New South Wales town of Merimbula. The dead were both Australians — the yacht's owner-skipper Bruce Guy and crewman Phil Skeggs.

The four confirmed deaths from the storm already have made this the deadliest Sydney-to-Hobart race.

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