

NFL

NFL to interview several stars in PED's probe

Pittsburgh's Harrison, Green Bay's Matthews among players

By BARRY WILNER
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Clay Matthews, Julius Peppers and James Harrison will be interviewed next month by NFL officials in connection to a media report that linked them to the use of performance-enhancing drugs.

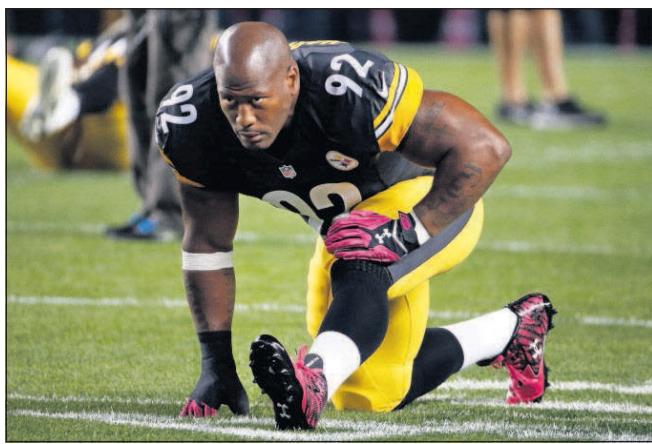
A letter from NFL executive Adolpho Birch that was obtained Friday by The Associated Press says Green Bay linebackers Matthews and Peppers and Pittsburgh linebacker Harrison will be

interviewed when training camps open. The Packers begin practicing on July 26, the Steelers on July 29.

The letter also mentions defensive lineman Mike Neal, a free agent who will be interviewed. It does not mention the now-retired Peyton Manning, who also was cited in Al-Jazeera's doping report in December.

But USA Today, citing an unnamed source, reported that an investigation into Manning's possible involvement also is progressing.

The NFL first notified Matthews, Peppers, Harrison and Neal about its investigation into the report on Jan. 11. That investigation has proceeded, but Birch wrote that the NFL Players Association hasn't responded to "multiple requests" to schedule the



In this Oct. 1, 2015, file photo, Pittsburgh Steelers outside linebacker James Harrison stretches before the team's game against Baltimore in Pittsburgh.

interviews, which would be conducted with a union representative present.

Al-Jazeera America reported allegations by Charlie Sly, who worked as an intern at an anti-aging

clinic. But Sly later recanted his claims.

In his letter, Birch wrote that "the players were further advised that, with their full and timely cooperation, the investigation

would be conducted expeditiously and with minimal disruption."

"While the investigation has proceeded," he continued, "we have yet to interview the players. We have attempted since early April to work through the NFLPA to schedule them, but despite multiple requests the NFLPA has failed to respond, except to seek reconsideration of the basis for the investigation. This continuing delay and avoidance has obstructed our ability to conduct and conclude the investigation."

The NFLPA said Friday it had contacted Birch about the nature of the investigation.

"The NFLPA represents its players in conjunction with any investigation by their employer," the union

said in a statement. "On behalf of its players, the NFLPA made numerous inquiries of the NFL through Adolpho Birch asking whether the basis of the NFL's investigation of players is entirely predicated upon recanted statements to a person used by Al Jazeera to make secret recordings. The NFL has not provided any other evidence, nor has it informed the NFLPA or players that any such evidence exists."

"As of today, the only additional response from the NFL has been to demand interviews, and apparently to provide correspondence to the media. The NFLPA will continue to represent and advise its players of their rights, and to communicate the players' decisions to the NFL."

Motorsports

Tony Stewart ready for final season to come to an end

By JENNA FRYER
Associated Press

SONOMA, Calif. — There was a twinge of nostalgia in Tony Stewart's voice as he was inducted into the Sonoma Raceway Wall of Fame.

Then his mood quickly turned as he talked about the reasons he's retiring from NASCAR competition at the end of the season.

"I'm ready to go run stuff that makes me happy, and driving a Sprint Cup car does not make me happy right now," Stewart said Friday. "A lot of things have changed. The atmosphere has changed. There's so much stuff in the garage area that's changed that it was time for me to make a change with it."

"I've dedicated 18 years of

my life to this series and it's done great by me - I've made a great living doing it. But at the same time, there are other things in life I want to do other than be at a NASCAR track three days a week for 38 weekends out of 52 weeks a year."

Stewart is a two-time winner at Sonoma, and Sunday's race will be his final one on the road course. Then comes Daytona next week, for his final appearance as a driver at that vaunted track.

But when he starts to feel sad about the close of a career, he's reminded that there is more to life than just NASCAR. He said the 38-week schedule encompasses a driver's entire life, and retired friends Don Prudhomme and Ray Evernham had made life away from the race track sound pretty appealing.

"I can't imagine there's not more to life than this," he said. "I know there is. I know people that talk about it all the time."

Part of Stewart's comments Friday reflected his frustration with practice, which ended in an incident with Jamie McMurray. Stewart flipped his middle finger at McMurray because he thought McMurray had ruined his lap.

"Some of the things these guys do nowadays doesn't make sense," Stewart said. "When we had Dale (Earnhardt) Sr. and Rusty Wallace and Dale Jarrett, they were able to get their arms around these guys and get them to listen and make sense. There's really nobody here that can do that anymore. Everybody is out of control."

But Stewart wouldn't bite when asked how to change the attitudes of the younger drivers.

"I'm not even going to talk about those guys," he said. "It's not worth it."



Stewart

WNBA

Sparks top Lynx to halt record streak at 13

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — Kristi Toliver tied a career high with seven 3-pointers and scored 25 points to help the Los Angeles Sparks beat Minnesota 94-76 on Friday night, ending the defending champion Lynx's record season-opening winning streak at 13 games.

Toliver sank a 3-pointer with 4:22 left and Candace Parker had a putback on Los Angeles' next possession for a 76-70 lead. Parker hit a 3 to extend Los Angeles' lead to 81-72 and she drew an offensive foul on the other end.

Nneka Ogwumike added 20 points and nine rebounds for Los Angeles (12-1). Parker finished with 14 points, nine rebounds and

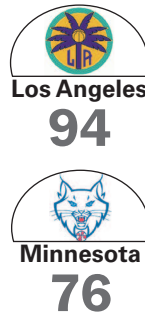


Aaron Lavinsky/StarTribune via AP

Minnesota Lynx forward Maya Moore (23) reacts after missing a 3-point shot during the first half against the Los Angeles in Friday's game in Minneapolis.

five assists.

Maya Moore was the only starter to reach double figures for top-ranked Minnesota (13-1). She made six 3s and scored 28 points.



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