

SPORTSPEOPLE

Odds & **INS**



By Skip Myslenski & Linda Kay

As a 10-year veteran, he has seen them come and go. "It goes back to the old theory that it's easier to replace a coach than a team," Black Hawk defenseman Doug Wilson said Wednesday.

Nevertheless ...

Wilson has good vibes about Bob Murdoch. His brother, Murray, played with Murdoch for the Canadiens, and Doug played against the Hawks' new coach. "He was a very steady defensive defender," Wilson remembered, "and if he brings that character to the team, we'll be very disciplined. And, to be honest, that's exactly what we need right now."

Dancing to the Motown beat

We asked Wilson how a disciplined squad is formed, and he told us: "You build it by saying, 'Either you do it this way, or you don't play.' I look at what Detroit did in a one-year period. They went from the bottom to the top by instilling discipline and letting people know what their jobs are. [Coach] Jacques Demers sent his No. 1 draft choice [Joe Murphy] down to the minors. He put a star, Petr Klima, on the bench.

"We play against the best teams, like Edmonton, and we beat them, and then we play against a team we're supposed to beat, and we don't play the same style of hockey. We don't do our jobs night after night. We don't execute. A couple of years ago, when we went to the semis against Edmonton, we did what we had to do. Everybody would do the little things that win games. It's the little wee things that you do on a constant basis that make you win. You keep hearing that we have a good hockey team, but we have to come together more as a team and play to win, not worry about personal stats. That's what Detroit did."

A real quencher

He promoted Brown's Fried Chicken last season, and now he's advocating something to help wash it all down. Mike Singletary, No. 50 on your Bears roster, is the new spokesman for an old product, Canfield's 50-50 soda. The ad campaign for the soda—which blends the tastes of grapefruit and lime—features a determined-looking Singletary touting 50-50 as a Thirst Stopper. "That kind of image ties in to Mike's professional goals. He's hard-working and well-respected," says Don McCormack, director of marketing for Canfield's. Look for Singletary on billboards, in print ads and on a 50-50 poster. Radio spots begin airing in mid-July.

We wonder: Can Singletary do for 50-50 what Tribune columnist Bob Greene did for Canfield's Diet Fudge?

Check the label

While Singletary hawks soda, Mike Ditka keeps on pushing sartorial splendor, and though a contract with clothier Jaymar-Ruby prohibits the coach from publicly rooting for any other line, watch for Gallagher of Des Plaines to quietly introduce its exclusive Mike Ditka label in June. The line includes ties, suits, shirts and overcoats, all with Ditka's signature discreetly placed on the garment. Shhhh. Ditka can wear the clothes, but he can't talk about them.

Gridiron grit

Steve and Debra McMichael are buying the home that Dave and Alicia Duerson own in Vernon Hills. The McMichaels have a boat—and the Duersons live on Diamond Lake. The Duersons are heading for Highland Park. ... The city of San Diego has contracted with Radio City Music Hall to produce the entertainment for Super Bowl XXII and is negotiating with Frank Sinatra and Liza Minnelli to appear in the halftime show next January. ... You'll get a different perspective when a holographic portrait of Mike Ditka is unveiled soon at Ditka's City Lights. Made by Holicon in Evanston, the portrait is three-dimensional. No less an authority than Robin Leach has deemed it the ultimate portrait for the rich and famous. ... Walter Payton is part of a halftime feature during the CBS telecast of Thursday night's Celtics-Pistons game. The topic? Why it's so difficult for a championship team to repeat.

One man's opinion

Cliff Drysdale made it to the semifinals of the French Open two years straight, and now, 21 years later, is back covering the event for ESPN. From Roland Garros Stadium, he conveyed his thoughts on John McEnroe's first-round loss: "McEnroe has a big decision to make for the future. He must come to terms with the fact that he won't make it all the way back to No. 1. I don't see how he'll deal with being an also-ran."

About Martina Navratilova, who had a tough first-round win: "She'll be able to stay on top, but neither she nor McEnroe seem to be feeling psychologically well on the court."

News, notes and nonsense

Robin Ventura plays for Oklahoma State and has hit safely in 56 consecutive games, which ties Joe DiMaggio's streak as a Yankee. Ventura tries to top that mark Friday when Oklahoma State plays Arizona State in the College World Series (ESPN, 4 p.m.). ... Arnold Palmer is the honored guest Thursday night at a private reception at Flossmoor Country Club for David Ogilvie III, the PGA's golf professional of the year. ... Chicago native Richard Remmert has been named director of communications for the Women's International Tennis Association.

And finally: Hilary Mills of Northfield broke her nose playing soccer, had it set last Saturday, then went out and scored New Trier's only goal in a playoff game—on a header. Ouch!



Left-fielder Jeff Simmons of Mt. St. Joseph makes a diving attempt to catch a three-run homer by Calvert Hall's Don Nace Tuesday ...



... and winds up crashing through the outfield fence and into a parked car. He was treated at a Baltimore hospital and released. Mt. St. Joseph won the Maryland Scholastic Association Class A playoff game 7-5.

Sure, they look good on paper

Take a break, Jim McMahon. Don't sweat your rebound from a shoulder injury. Never mind that the Bears' first day of training camp still is two months away and you haven't demonstrated you can throw a football with your right arm.

According to the American Paper Institute, you have been selected one of 22 winners of its inaugural Comeback Awards.

The award is presented by the API's Recycled Paperboard Division. Recycled, get it?

"These victors of career-fatal injuries, uninspired seasons and premature retirement are back in public demand by virtue of their superior performance," says the publicity release. (Maybe the API was impressed by McMahon's golf game.)

Judith Grossman of Robert Marston & Associates, which is in charge of the publicity, said a committee made the choices and cynics shouldn't think for a second that only high-profile athletes were considered to enhance the award.

Hey, the Bulls' Michael Jordan was honored, and, after all, there was that foot injury two years ago.

Among other recipients "with unprecedented comeback stories," according to Grossman, were Roberto (No mas!) Duran, Dennis Conner, Mike Bossy, Pam Shriver, Bill Shoemaker and Bob Tway.

The entire Kansas City Royals baseball team, World Series champs two years ago before stumbling last year, was selected for being in first place this year—and never mind that there are four months left in the season.

The Yankees' Tommy John was selected, and there can't be much argument there. But there are two New York baseball teams, of course, and apparently the other had to represent, too.

You guessed it. It's Dwight Gooden. "A comeback classic sidelined after World Series headlines, soon to be back on the mound," said the API, referring to his recent stay in a drug rehabilitation clinic.

Despite the fact he hasn't pitched this season in the major leagues and was just shelved in his latest minor-league tune-up, Grossman said Gooden will not have to return his trophy if he falls flat on his face.

They could return punts against Michigan

Rock star Jon Bon Jovi performed in Columbus, Ohio, over the weekend, and early Tuesday two WNCI-FM disc jockeys gave out a phone number where a listener assured them Bon Jovi could be reached.

He couldn't. But Ohio State football coach Earle Bruce could.

Bruce said the calls started coming in to his home at 6:10 a.m. and were still coming in when he left at 9:45

to play golf.

One of the disc jockeys said they tried to check the number before giving it out, "but the line was busy." WNCI General Manager Dale Weber said he has apologized.

"We'll probably end up getting him a new number or whatever it takes to rectify the situation," Kelly said. "If he wants us to go up against his defensive line, we'll do it."

And they won't get the girl, either

Gentlemen, start your basketballs. Production for "Heaven is a Playground," a film based on the book of the same name about inner-city basketball, will begin later this summer, and a first call has been issued for people to be cast in small parts or as extras.

The prerequisites are this: You must be black, male, appear to be 10-18 years old, and be able to jump and dribble and shoot a basketball with some dexterity. Being able to go to your left is optional, a project spokesman said.

The call will be Sunday, June 7, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Chicago State University gymnasium on the city's South Side. Candidates will be asked to read one line, have their picture taken and display their basketball skills.

The spokesman said the filming, which is scheduled to last eight weeks, will begin in August in Chicago, but indicated that none of the larger roles will come out of the upcoming casting call.

Michael Jordan will have a role, but he will not appear at the June 7 call. After all, we know he can dribble, jump and shoot.

Oh, yes. College basketball players interested in retaining any existing eligibility need not apply. The NCAA says you'll be benched for appearing in the film, which is the action it took a year ago against a DePauw (Ind.) player who appeared in "Hoosier."

However, the film's spokesman said a check with the Illinois High School Association has indicated that high school players would not lose eligibility for appearing in the film.

Ski bandits, beware

The Chicago Police Department holds its regular awards ceremony Thursday morning at the police academy. A special, smaller presentation will take place in conjunction with the program. Maybe the local TV station that did a recent series on what it said was the poor physical condition of local policemen will send cameras.

This will show the other side of the story because members of the department's newly formed ski club will make Supt. Fred Rice an honorary member. They will present him with the trophies won at last month's U.S. championships for law enforcement officials, and Rice will help hold them. The club brought home 14 medals and two team plaques.

"We're pretty enthused about the club," said Harold Kunz, an organizer. "This was our first year and we've got close to 100 members."

"This summer we're going to have a bikeathon to help raise funds for the U.S. ski team," said Kunz. "It'll also help us get in shape for next season. We expect to do even better."

"We'd like to send a Chicago police team to the world championships."

Japanese baseball fever—catch it!

Baseball has been played in Japan for more than 100 years and professional clubs have been in existence since the 1930s. This year, with Americans playing bigger roles than usual, the Japanese season is off to a flying start with impressive numbers.

12

The 12 big-league teams in Japan are divided evenly between the Pacific and Central Leagues. They play a 140-game regular season followed by a World Series. The Yomiuri Giants lead the Central by a half-game. The Hankyu Braves lead the Pacific by 1½ games.



4

In his first two games, ex-Atlanta Brave Bob Horner belted four home runs and had two other hits. Horner is hitting .359 after 12 games with 7 home runs.

14

Former Brewer Carlos Ponce leads the Pacific League in homers with 14.

.357

After 30 games, ex-San Francisco Giant Gary Rajsich is hitting .357.

55

Legendary slugger Sadaharu Oh has the Japanese season record for most home runs with 55 and the career record with 888.

2,130

Hiroshima's Sachio Kinugasa, a 40-year-old third baseman, is expected to surpass Lou Gehrig's record for consecutive games played (2,130) in early June. Kinugasa is a 23-year veteran of Japanese pro baseball, and the last time he missed a game was Oct. 18, 1970. He owns a videotape of the film depicting Gehrig's life, "Pride of the Yankees."

845,000

Hiroimitsu Ochiai became the highest-paid Japanese player in history this season, when he held out for a one-year contract valued at \$845,000. However, U.S. players Bob Horner, Randy Bass, and Warren Cromartie earn more. They will make \$2 million, \$1.1 million, and \$1.04 million, respectively, this season.

2

Japan had two Triple Crown winners last season. Hiroimitsu Ochiai led the Pacific League with a .360 batting average, 50 home runs and 116 RBIs. Randy Bass led the Central League with a .399 BA, 47 HRs and 109 RBIs.

'For anybody else, a mistake is more easily forgiven. For me, it's not expected, by me, my teammates or the fans.'

—Detroit's Isiah Thomas about the pass Larry Bird stole to win Tuesday's game

BRIEFS

■ The Bulls' Michael Jordan, who was second to the Lakers' Magic Johnson in last week's NBA Most Valuable Player voting, Wednesday was given the Seagram Sports Award, symbolic of the NBA player of the year. The award is based on a computerized evaluation of a player's regular-season performance in seven categories: scoring, field-goal percentage, free-throw accuracy, rebounds, blocked shots, assists and steals. "I'd like to thank the computer," Jordan joked during a ceremony at Madison Square Garden. "If it wasn't for that, I might not have gotten an MVP award this year." Based on their computer ratings, Jordan clearly had a better season than Johnson. Jordan received an 80.81 rating, compared to 75.61 for Johnson.

■ New Orleans Saints nose tackle Tony Elliott has charged the team with racism in negotiating contracts for black players, including himself, but General Manager Jim Finks says the accusations are groundless. Finks said the contracts negotiated for black players show the charges aren't true. "Ask [defensive end] Bruce Clark or [linebacker] Ricky Jackson if they've been lowballed. The last time I looked, they were black. And ask Walter Payton or ... other black players I've dealt with all my life. ... Tony says a lot of things for effect. I'm not impressed with it at all."

■ Cincinnati Bengals running back Stanley Wilson met with NFL Commissioner Pete Rozelle in an effort to persuade the league to end his May 5 suspension for cocaine use. The NFL didn't say what was discussed or when Rozelle would decide whether or not to reinstate Wilson.

■ Former Iowa running back Ronnie Harmon, now with the Buffalo Bills, has formally requested immunity from prosecution in a federal grand jury's investigation here of New York-based agents Norby Walters and Lloyd Bloom, the Atlanta Constitution reported. Harmon's attorney, Martin Rauch, has asked for immunity after the U.S. attorney's office here informed him that Harmon is subject to indictment for fraud and tax evasion because of his dealings with the two agents. Harmon is among 60 athletes who have been or will be subpoenaed to testify before the grand jury. Notre Dame wide receiver Alvin Miller said Wednesday he had been subpoenaed.

■ Mississippi State could be penalized because its fans allegedly harassed Oklahoma State's black players, in particular center-fielder Anthony Blackmon, Monday during the NCAA Midwest Regional in Starkville, Miss. "If the NCAA believes something could have been done, that Mississippi State was negligent in the way fans were getting on the players, yes, the NCAA could take some action," said Jerry Miles, NCAA director of men's championships. It was the second such incident in two weeks involving Mississippi State fans. LSU right-fielder Joey Belle, who also is black, had to be physically restrained from going into the stands after Mississippi State fans harassed him during the Southeast Conference tournament at Athens, Ga.

■ Funeral services are scheduled Thursday in Green Bay for former Packer and University of Nebraska football player Charley Brock. Brock, 71, died Monday of natural causes. He joined the Packers in 1939 and played for them as a center until 1947, twice making the Associated Press All-NFL team. ... Robert F. Giegengack, who coached Yale track teams from 1946 to 1975 and the U.S. Olympic team in Tokyo in 1964, died in New Haven, Conn. He was 80.

■ Gulf and Western, the owner of Madison Square Garden, and a developer announced plans to move the arena two blocks and build an office complex on its current site. The new arena would seat 22,000, or 3,000 more than current capacity. Plans call for the facility to be ready by the 1991-1992 sports season. The current Madison Square Garden would then be razed and replaced with a 4.5 million-square foot office complex.

■ Tony Lavorato, basketball coach at Princeton (Ill.) High School the last 13 years, will be named coach at Hinsdale South. Lavorato, 73-18 his last three seasons, will be recommended to the school board by athletic director Dave Smith at its meeting next week.

Compiled by Mike Conklin, John Dowd and Bob Vanderberg from staff, wire reports.

TANK McNAMARA



GIL THORP



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