Section 4 Chicago Tribune, Thursday, June 4, 1987 4

SPORTSPEOPLE



By Skip Myslenski & Linda Kay

Imagine Gary Fencik as a grammar-school teacher. Imagine Willie Gault as the swimming pool director at a public school. Don't strain your brain any longer. The two are so employed in "Thinking Big," a kids' film being made by Sports Illustrated's Rick Telander and Tom Engel, former programming director at Channel 11. The plot revolves around a 7-year-old boy and his magic teddy bear, which made it appealing to two Bears of the human variety. Says Telander: "Gary and Willie agreed to do the movie largely because they like the image. They play adults kids can admire—and there's not a football in the film."

Goin' to Kansas City

Next year's Final Four basketball championship in Kansas City marks the 50th anniversary of that highly popular event, and the NCAA intends to duly note the occasion. It has tabbed **Bob Sprenger** to oversee the Golden Anniversary gala, and the former publicity director for the Kansas City Chiefs has no doubt the bash will be a smash. After all, more Final Fours have been held in Kansas City than any other locale (this is the city's 10th) and, Sprenger notes: "That gives us a great jumping off point." Another plus: 93,000 ticket orders already have been received, a figure double the requests for this year's Final Four in New Orleans and one far in excess of the seats available in Kemper Arena.

If push comes to shove, Gault will be ready for tough sledding

Memo to Bears coach Mike Ditka: Don't worry about Willie Gault's physical condition when camp opens later this summer.

Gault, proving there is no such thing as an offseason for him, jetted to Lake Placid, N.Y., late Tuesday night, caught a few winks and took a strenuous conditioning test Wednesday in his quest to become a member of the U.S. bobsled team for the Winter Olympics.

He took one day to score the highest point total (894) in the history of an exam designed to take two days; had to get home to Lake Forest for more projects, you know.

Before leaving Lake Placid, Gault told the half-dozen or so observers that he was disappointed in his showing.

"I wanted to break 900 and I know I can do better," he said, promising he'll return later this summer for a second

The test included throwing a shot, lifting weights, jumping and running. As might be expected, Gault, taking just a

few minutes between events to catch his breath, scored heavily in the dashes.

The wide receiver already has established himself as a world-class sprinter, a talent highly sought by U.S. officials.

Americans are known as excellent drivers in international bobsled competition, but it is in the push to get started—requiring strength and speed—that the Europeans get the jump to maintain dominance in the sport.

The U.S. testing has been taking place over the past month. So far, Jim Herberich, a member of the USA 1 bobsled team, is the closest to Gault's 894 total with 866 points. A score of 630 points is required to be considered as a candidate for the four-man team.

Gault got interested in bobsledding while watching it on TV last winter. (You may recall the Bears' 1986 season was a little shorter.) He proved last February he can be helpful in trial runs. But with a spot on the U.S. team almost a certainty, Gault has a slight

problem with the international trials scheduled for Europe next October and November leading up to next February's Winter Games.

Does the U.S. Bodsled Federation hand Willie, who will be playing football, a spot on the team and let him skip the trials?

"It's a natural progress in a team sport to replace better athletes," Gault said. "But if the better athletes are sitting on the bench, then the team suffers.

"My job is to be in tip-top physical condition and I will be. My job is to be fast and I will be. I'm not trying to come in and take over."

David Heim, federation executive director, said the addition of Gault to the team would give the U.S. its best chance in 40 years to win a medal.

"If Chicago would just send us Walter Payton, too, I could guarantee it," Heim said. "We need all the athletes we can get."

They'll be calling Moeller a baseball factory



Willie Gault is ready to lend world-class oomph to the U.S. bobsled team in the Olympics.

Diplomacy in action

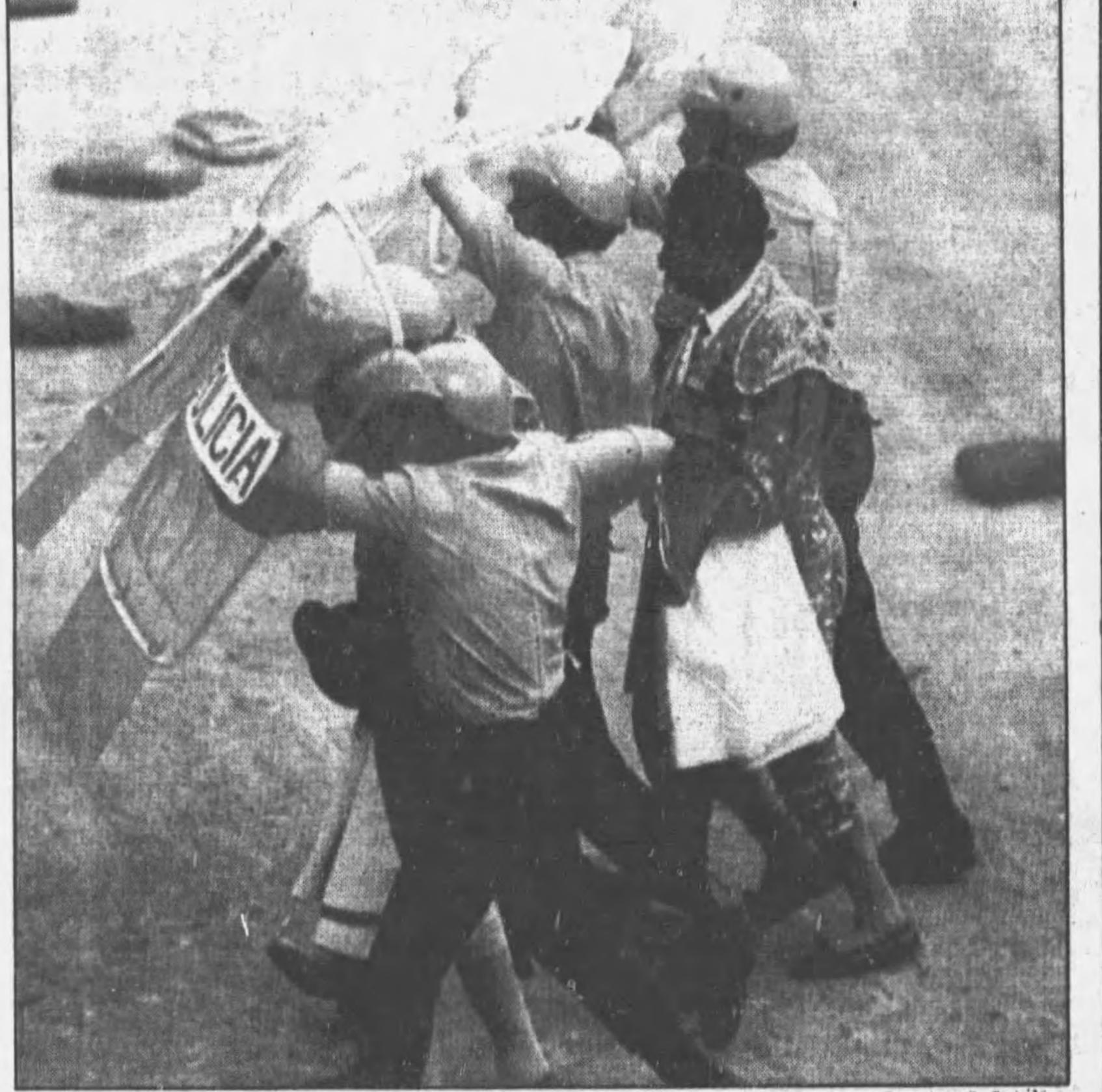
What to do? What to do? That was the question facing the folks at NBC Sports once Chris Evert and Martina Navratilova were matched in the semifinals of the French Open. NBC could, by contract, tape either that semi or the one between Gabriela Sabatini and Steffi Graf, but it would air it only in the case of a rain delay or blowout during coverage of Saturday's final. What to do? What to do? Should it let ESPN cover the Chris & Martina Show live on Thursday morning? That way, they would be the good guys. Or should they keep it for themselves? That way, they ran the risk of a public relations disaster if it never aired. What to do? What to do? We'll tape Evert-Navratilova, NBC sheepishly said late Wednesday morning. No, it diplomatically declared an hour later, we'll give it up and tape Sabatini-Graf instead. And that means -sometime shortly after 8 Thursday morning, you can catch Evert-Navratilova live on ESPN.

Could this be an omen?

It is widely known that Alysheba, who goes after the Triple Crown in Saturday's Belmont Stakes, flourished after an operation that made it easier for him to breathe. That makes it interesting to note that Reference Point, who won Wednesday's English Derby with Steve Cauthen aboard, had an operation to clear up a sinus problem just two months ago.

Seeking an answer

While the Yankees sit atop the American League East, outfielder Dave Winfield grapples with a force much fiercer than an opposing pitcher. "Turn It Around" is the title of a book he has written on the nation's drug problem, and it is drawn from the slugger's work with young people and with the Drug Enforcement Agency. Winfield writes that he has never used drugs ("I have too much respect for my mind and body to pollute them"), but adds that several friends have served drug-related jail terms and that his college roommate was shot and killed while robbing a McDonald's to support his heroin habit. If he stumbles into situations where players are using, Winfield says: "I'm gone. I'm out of there faster than Rickey Henderson stealing a base. I'm frightened. There could be a bust or word could get out and your name 'is ruined."



Reuters photo

winning 400-meter and 1,600-meter relay

"She just inspires the whole team," UCLA

coach Bob Kersee said. "She hates sitting

around in the stands. She says it makes her

Although Devers, 20, a minister's daughter

"I think three will be enough," he said,

pointing out that Devers suffered hamstring in-

juries in last year's NCAA's due to her mix of

"She's one of the best I've ever coached,"

And this guy knows what he's talking about.

He's married to Jackie Joyner, one of the best

all-around track athletes the U.S. has pro-

Kersee said. "She has a good attitude, she's

conscientious and she's self-disciplined. It's

tough to say what her best event actually is."

from San Diego, has qualified for eight events,

Kersee has entered her in only three.

sprinting and hurdling.

Seat cushion day at Wrigley Field can be rough, but the Mets never had to have police help them from the field as did matador Curro Romero after an off day at the Las Ventas bullring in Madrid.

Boris Becker said Wednesday at "I want to go," the 19-year-old

The Moeller High School football team in Cincinnati may have the better reputation, but the baseball team is gaining.

In 19 seasons, coach Mike Cameron's teams have won 348 and lost 159 with 1 state title, 4 city titles and 10 league championships. Now, Ken Griffey Jr., the first pick in the baseball draft, has been added to the list of alums who've made a splash in the sport.

Among Moeller's former baseball players are Barry Larkin and Buddy Bell of the Reds, Bill Long of the White Sox and Len Matuszek of the Dodgers.

"None of them has brought the inter-

est of Kenny Griffey," Cameron said. "He's an outstanding athlete, who has baseball instincts. The thing I enjoy most is his defense. That's where his pure athletic ability takes over."

What makes the 17-year-old Griffey something of a puzzle is that he was ineligible his first two years at Moeller because he failed to meet statewide academic standards.

"It's more of a motivational thing. He's not a dumb kid at all," Cameron said. "He's a very engaging kid. Doesn't have a worry in the world."

Especially now, it would seem.

Are they Hoyas?

Charles Miller's Lake Forest College basketball team went 3-19 last season, but he's going to coach at Georgetown—that's Georgetown, Guyana.

Miller has been picked by the U.S. Information Agency to spend three weeks this s u m m e r i n Guyana working with the South

BRIEFS

A bank owed millions of dollars by horseman Tom Gentry has seized 11 of his horses, including War, winner of the Lexington and Blue Grass Stakes. The horses were seized Tuesday at Churchill Downs in Louisville, at Gentry's farm in Lexington, Ky., and at Arlington Park.

Louisville's Citizens Fidelity Bank & Trust Co. plans to sell the yearlings next month at Keeneland to pay off Gentry's debts and will sell War and the other race horses in New York in August. A seizure order by U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Joe Lee was issued Monday after a day-long hearing at which Citizens Fidelity charged Gentry had defied a March 24 court order to sell various horses to repay his debts. The order had directed Gentry to sell 20 horses, including War, in a May 19 auction at Santa Anita, Calif. Gentry withdrew War, North of Eden, Sokhop and You Make Me Happy before the auction and sold 10 horses.

War, who is at Arlington, is scheduled to run in the June 13 Ohio Derby. Despite the setback, Gentry said he would remain in the horse business. "There's nothing else I can do; I can't cook," he said.

Changing his pitch

Winfield also bristles at the way alcohol and tobacco are glorified in advertisements and says none other than noted beer spokesman **Bubba Smith** does, too. It seems the former defensive lineman returned to Michigan State for homecoming last year and witnessed a display that disgusted him. According to Winfield: "Many drunken college students were there to greet him. Those on one side of the street chanted 'Tastes great.' Those on the other side yelled 'Less filling.' Bubba decided this was not the influence he wished to have on America's youth and vowed never to make another such commercial."

News, notes and nonsense

Berths on the U.S., Canadian and Latin American equestrian teams that will compete in this summer's Pan Am Games are up for grabs this weekend at the international Masters of Dressage competition to be held at St. James Farm in Warrenville. The event, which begins at 8 on both Saturday and Sunday mormings, marks the first time international riders compete in the Midwest. ... Telander and Engel are negostiating with network and cable television for the rights to "Thinking Big." ... Doug Collins and Jim Covert speak at a awards banquet honoring athletes of Greek descent Monday at the Diplomat West in Elmhurst. It's sponsored by the Order of Ahepa. . . . Jane (Mrs. Rich) Dotson, Maureen (Mrs. Ron) Karkovice and Cindy and Ryne Sandberg are among the celebrity guests on a July 11 cruise aboard the "Star of Chicago" sponsored by the Women's Board of the Baseball Cancer Charities. . . . Former Cubs and current Astros announcer Gene Elston has joined 10 others who take turns broadcasting the Game of the Week on CBS Radio that is aired each Saturday on WBBM-AM. And finally: Requests for tickets to next year's Final Four have come from all 50 states—and Canada, Japan, England and Italy.

the French Open that he will play in the Olympic tennis tournament in Seoul next year if invited. Several other top players also

Several other top players also have said they would go to Seoul, but Becker is one of the most enthusiastic. West German said. "I think it is really the biggest thing that could ever happen to me as a sportsman, and if they asked me, I would go right away.

"The Olympics mean much more in the world than Wimbledon."

teams.

nervous."

American nation's coaches and players, some of whom will be involved in Olympic competition.

Former pro football lineman Charlie Krueger, permanently disabled by a knee injury, won his fraud suit against the San Francisco 49ers. The California Supreme Court let stand a ruling that the team had concealed the severity of the injury. The court withdrew the lower-court ruling as precedent for future cases. The action returns the case to a San Francisco Superior Court to determine how much the 49ers must pay Krueger. ... Running back Eric Dickerson will ask the Los Angeles Rams to renegotiate his contract to bring his salary in line with the top backs in the National Football League. Charles Chin, Dickerson's business representative, was quoted in the Los Angeles Times as saying that Dickerson will request a yearly salary of \$1.5 million.

The FBI has demanded financial-aid statements and other records from Michigan, Ohio State, Illinois, Purdue, Michigan State and Iowa in connection with a Chicago grand jury investigation of two sports agents, according to the New York Times. The investigation centers on agents Norby Walters and Lloyd Bloom and their athletic clients.

Evansville's Marty Simmons won't be playing basketball this summer as planned. Simmons broke his right wrist in December. A routine exam found it hasn't healed. "When they took the screw out, the bones fell apart," Simmons said. "There was no bonding of the bones at all." Doctors decided on a bone graft. Bone was removed from Simmons' hip and inserted into the wrist. The wrist will be in a cast for three months.

The Pittsburgh Penguins reportedly are about to announce that their new coach will be **Pierre Creamer**. Three Montreal radio stations and the two Pittsburgh papers reported Creamer had signed a three-year contract with the Penguins. Creamer, 42, is coach and general manager of the Sherbrooke Canadiens in the American Hockey League.

Defending champion Dick Weber captured the top seed of the Showboat Professional Bowlers Association Senior Invitational in Las Vegas. He had 8,401 pins. Also in the finals are Glenn Carlson, J.B. Blaylock, Carmen Salvino and John Pacific.

American Jay Sigel rallied from a four-hole deficit to beat Paul Broadhurst on the 19th hole and advance to the second round of the British Amateur in Prestwick, Scotland.

UCLA's miniature sprinter not short on versatility

The NCAA track championships are this weekend at Louisiana State. Here's some advice for anyone wanting to see UCLA's Gail Devers: Don't blink or you might miss her.

For one thing, Gail is fast. Last year, she set an NCAA record of 11.12 seconds in a 100meter heat before she scratched in later qualifying race. For another, Gail is small: 5 feet 2¹/₂ inches, 115 pounds.

Above all, Devers is versatile. There will be three chances to spot the Bruin junior. She's entered in the 100 meters and two relays. For her, this meet will be a summer vacation.

"I always feel that if I'm sitting for a halfhour, I'm wasting my time," Devers said. "I should be doing something to help the team."

Last week, this was her "something" in the Pac-10 championships: first in the long jump, first in the 100 meters, first in the 200 meters in a personal best of 22.71 seconds, first in the 100-meter high hurdles, and anchor legs for the

If they meet, he'll be the horizontal one

Until now, Mike Tyson's op- in ponents were the ones who thought they were seeing two of the the whirlwind champion. a

"I'd like to push my career up there fast, because I'm older than a lot of guys when they start

duced.



Soon, boxing fans also may be seeing two Mike Tysons.

There is the Mike Tyson, who defended his WBC and WBA heavyweight titles Saturday, and there is former ketchup bottler Mike Tyson, 28, of Davenport, Ia.

The older, least-known Mike Tyson has had success in "tough man" competitions, where fighters compete in no-holds-barred battles. He has a 2-2 record as a conventional heavyweight boxer.

The 6-foot-1-inch, 205-pounder has joined a California promoter and has headed West to seek gold

fighting," he said. "I kind of need the money."

Some Davenport fans believe he may come away empty handed.

"He's tough," said Alvino Pena, who runs the gym where Tyson began training. "You could hit him with a hammer and he'd still keep coming.

"But he's dumb. You tell him something, he shakes his head like he's going to do it, and 10 seconds later, he's doing it the old way. He's like a Missouri mule."

Well, at least he was smart enough not to change his name.

AP Laserphoto

Mike Tyson ... no, not the champion, the other guy. ■ Marv Albert, one of the top sports announcers for NBC, reportedly is negotiating with CBS. Albert does the pregame show for NBC's major-league baseball game of the week and also does play-by-play on National Football League and college basketball games. He is the network's No. 1 boxing announcer. He also does the Rangers and Knicks for New York TV. Albert confirmed he has had informal talks with CBS.

Compiled by Mike Conklin, Mike O'Donnell and Rich Lorenz from staff, wire reports.

