Braves plan to offer Horner \$900,000

Cox optimistic 1-year deal can be reached

Braves Notebook, Page 13-C By Gerry Fraley Staff Writer

The Atlanta Braves will offer free agent Bob Horner a one-year contract worth \$900,000. The contract will also include incentives and a provision for weight checks, possibly on a daily basis.

General manager Bobby Cox will present the proposal to Horner and his agent, Bucky Woy, during next week's winter meetings in Dallas.

"I think we have better than a 50 percent chance at him," Cox said Thursday. "If he wants to play in the States, I don't think there are too many teams out there prepared to offer what we're going to offer."

In conversations this week, Cox told Woy to expect less than the three-year, \$4.5 million contract Horner rejected in January before he left the Braves to play in Japan.

Woy "wasn't stunned, for the first time in his life," Cox said. "The impression I get is (Horner) does not want to go back to Japan. He'd play for a lot less in the States. felt Bucky was being very honest and truthful about Bob's situation, about not liking it in Japan. He would prefer to play over here for a lot less."

Horner earned about \$2 million in salary and incentives with Yakult of the Japan Central League this season. Yakult has offered a three-year contract worth \$10 million. Yakult officials are scheduled to discuss the situation with Horner and Woy after the meetings.

In a discussion earlier this week, Woy indicated Horner wants about \$1.5 million a year but would consider offers down to \$1 million if incentives were included. Woy could not be reached for comment on the Braves' plans.

Among North American teams, the Braves have shown the most interest in Horner. The Chicago White Sox, San Diego and Texas have expressed a desire to meet with Horner and Woy during the meetings. None of the teams is expected to top the Braves' offer.

"There won't be a lot of bidding," Cox said. "It just depends on where Bob wants to play and at a certain price. That's going to be it."

Cox raised concerns about a longstanding problem for Horner: weight. One purpose of the meeting in Dallas is "to see what kind of shape (Horner) is in," Cox

No Braves executive has seen Horner in

person since he went to Japan, but the club received reports of Horner returning at close to 245 pounds. Cox said Horner looked "big" after watching him in a national television interview Sunday. Cox vowed not to sign a 240-pound Horner.

Horner weighed 234 pounds after his last game with the Braves, in 1986. His contract included a clause stipulating he keep his weight at 215 pounds or lose a portion of a \$100,000 bonus.

Cox believes Horner hurt himself with crash diets designed to make the limit on weigh-in days and wants him monitored daily. The ideal weight for Horner as a third baseman, Cox said, is between 210 and 215 pounds.

"I think a weigh-in on a daily basis would be better," Cox said. "Bob can hit no matter what. He can go out and hit at 250. But if he's going to be a third baseman, he definitely has to shed some weight."

If Horner rejoins the Braves, he would return to third base, his position until midway through the 1985 season. Ken Oberkfell, the starter at third base since the switch, would either be packaged in a trade or kept as a reserve at \$750,000 for each of the next two years.

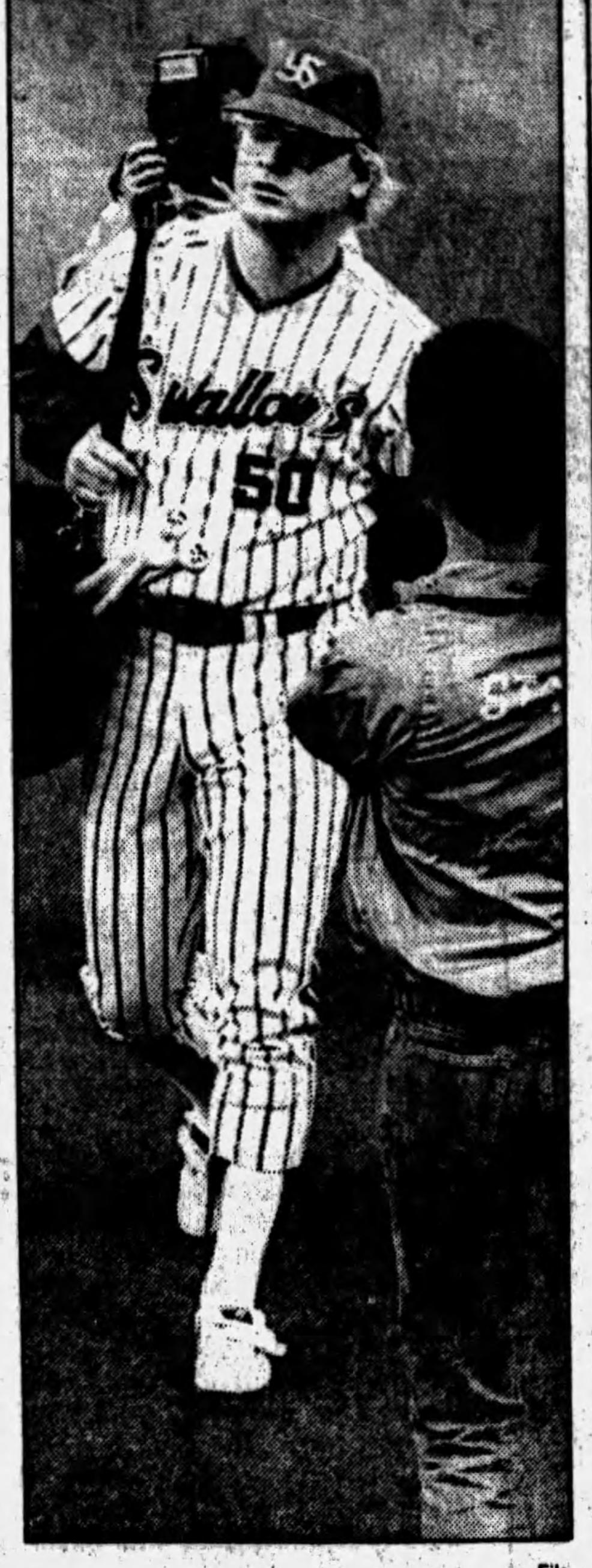
In other Braves matters: Cox said the Braves "are not counting on Damaso Garcia" but hold out hope for a return by reliever Bruce Sutter this spring.

Garcia, a two-time All-Star second baseman with Toronto, missed last season because of two surgeries on his left knee. The Braves expected Garcia to play with Licey in the Dominican Republic winter league, but he has decided to "rest" and perhaps play in the final two weeks of the Dominican season.

Garcia, in the final year of a contract that will pay him \$850,000 in 1988, will go to spring training without a definite position. Ron Gant gets the first chance at replacing Glenn Hubbard as the starter a second base, and Garcia is insurance at the position. If the Braves do not sign Horner, Garcia could platoon at third with Oberkfell.

Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium groundskeeper Sam Newpher built a pitcher's mound at Sutter's home in Kennesaw. If his rehabilitation program continues to go well, Sutter could begin light throwing from the mound after the holidays.

Sutter, who will be 35 before spring training, has not pitched in a game since May 27, 1986. He has had three surgeries



Bob Horner received \$2 million to play for Japan's Yakult Swallows last year.

on his right shoulder in the last 23 months. "You wouldn't recognize Bruce," Cox said. "He's been working with the weights

and looks great. We're still hopeful." ■ Graig Nettles is "agreeable," Cox said, to signing a minor-league contract and attending spring training as a non-roster player. If Nettles does not make the team, the Braves would release him before the end of spring training.

"It's not done yet, but I think we're 99 percent there," Cox said.

Nettles, 43, led the league with 23 RBI as a pinch hitter and had the best run-production average on the Braves with 33 RBI in 177 at-bats. He earned a salary of \$200,000 and \$18,000 in incentives. If Nettles makes the team, he will receive the same contract.

College coaches prepare to tackle agent 'monster'

By Chris Mortensen Staff Writer

HOUSTON - A federal investigation in its final stages and an NCAA coaches convention in Atlanta next month will help build a mounting attack against unscrupulous sports agents in 1988, according to one of the most outspoken coaches against agent abuses.

"Right now, agents are the No. 1 problem in college football and it's time they are dealt with strongly," said Mike Gottfried of Pitt. "We, as coaches, have to face up to it. The college presidents and athletic directors have to face up to it. If we don't, it's going to become a monster."

Gottfried said coaches will address the issue in early January. He said they will strongly urge a more aggressive approach by the NCAA, and believes athletes will be allowed to receive more money in 1988 than under current rules.

Gottfried's primary hope is that a Chicago-based federal grand jury investigation into the dealings of agents Norby Walters and Lloyd Bloom will have an impact on the agent/athlete relationship.

"If the Chicago situation does turn up indictments, I think it will change the course of this problem," said Gottfried, appearing in Houston to promote the Bluebonnet Bowl game between Pitt and Texas. "It not only will get the attention of the athletes and agents, it could be a catalyst to the NCAA and college presidents to get more aggressive in dealing with the problem."

Gottfried has coached three players who were involved with Walters and Bloom: Tony Woods, Charles Gladman and Teryl Austin. Woods played through his senior year in 1986 despite having taken money, Gladman was declared ineligible for his senior season this year, and Austin was suspended for four games this season, two by the NCAA and two more by Pitt.

Gottfried cited the recent activity by Atlanta-based agent Jim Abernethy, whose dealings this year cut short the careers of Georgia Tech football/baseball player Riccardo Ingram and TCU football player Tony Jeffery.

Gottfried and Abernethy recently had a heated argument on national television. "Abernethy said to me. 'What we do isn't against the law,' and I said, 'We'll see what happens with Norby Walters in Chicago," said Gottfried.

Walters and Bloom face possible charges of fraud, wire fraud, mail fraud, racketeering and extortion in the federal investigation, sources close to the investigation said.

Several college athletes also face fraud charges and tax charges for accepting

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money from the agents and signing a representation contract. The fraud aspect is being explored, sources said, because athletes annually sign documents that renew their scholarships in which they state they have done nothing to jeopardize their eligibility.

Efforts to conclude the grand jury hearings prior to Christmas have been slowed by logistics, said sources, who now expect a decision on indictments in

Gottfried fears that agents are approaching a fourth player at Pitt - All-America running back Craig Heyward, the only junior invited to Saturday's Heisman Trophy presentation.

"I've had long talks with Craig because want him to understand what some of these agents are all about," said Gottfried. "The most important stuff about dealing with Norby Walters and Jim Abernethy are what they all entail, what they're all about, what they're involved in. A lot of things can't even be told in these agent situations, how they come about gaining the confidence in their victim, and what they use to

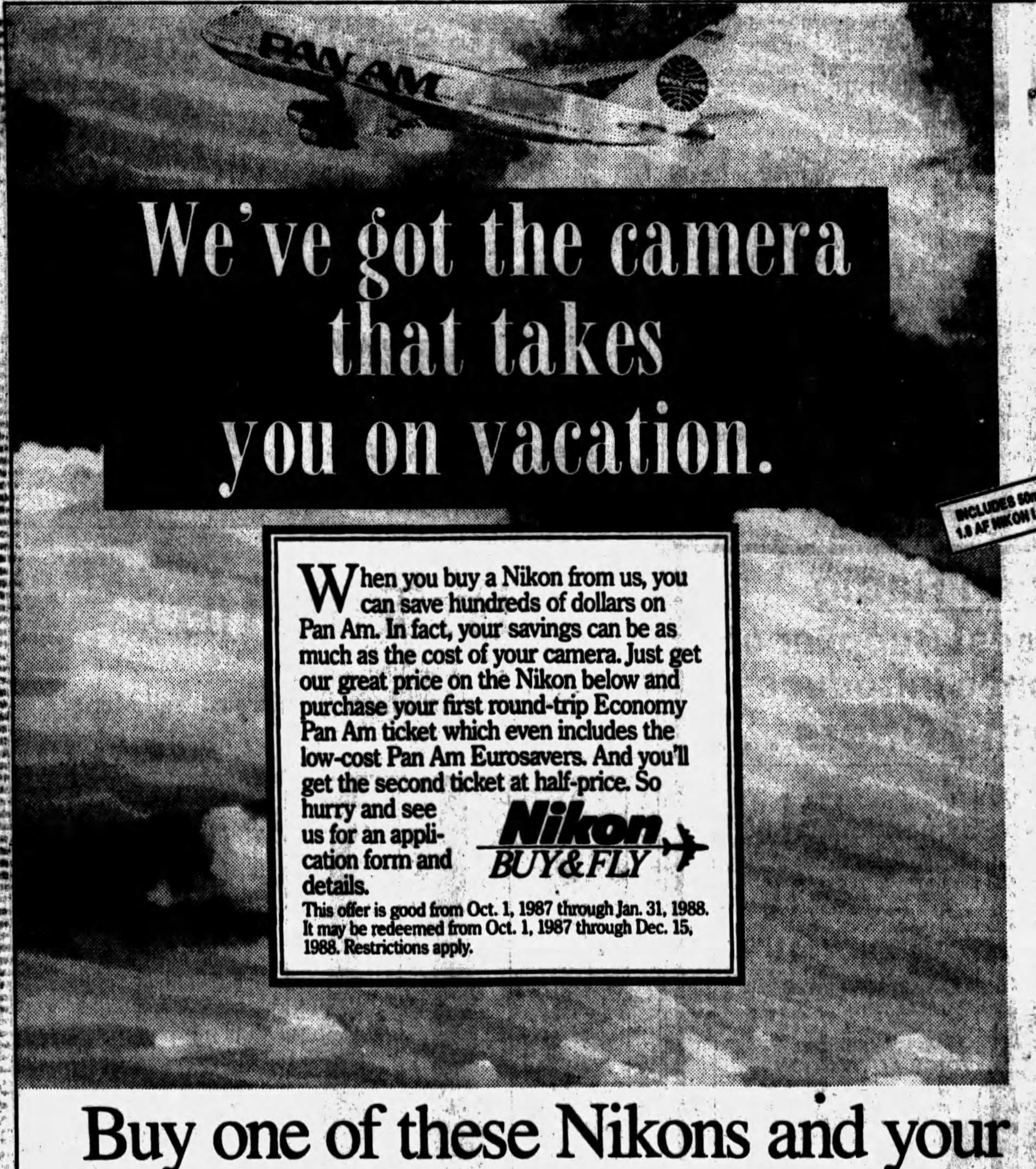
"I told Abernethy, 'I'm going to make sure Craig Heyward stays away from you.' wouldn't want to see Craig Heyward involved with these type of people."

Gottfried said Gladman is an example of what can go wrong when an athlete signs early with an agent. In Pitt's spring game, Gladman gained more than 200 yards. By summer, he was ineligible. He later was signed by the Tampa Bay Bucs as a free agent during the replacement games, but he walked out on the team and was released.

"Charles Gladman just became a father, he's not in school and he walked out of Tampa Bay," said Gottfried. "He just wasn't ready. All the people who complain that underclassmen should have the opportunity to go pro early may have a good argument, but he wasn't ready, and now what happens to Charles Gladman?

"It's not only serious because you lose a player. The kid gets tainted. Riccardo Ingram misses out on the rest of football season, all of baseball season."

Like many coaches, Gottfried believes some athletes would be less tempted if the NCAA loosened two of its rules. One involves federal grant money, by which athletes are allotted \$900 of the maximum \$2,100 allowed during a school year. Another rule does not allow an athlete to work at a job unless school is not in session. Gottfried said the coaches likely will pass a resolution at their Atlanta convention urging a change in both rules.



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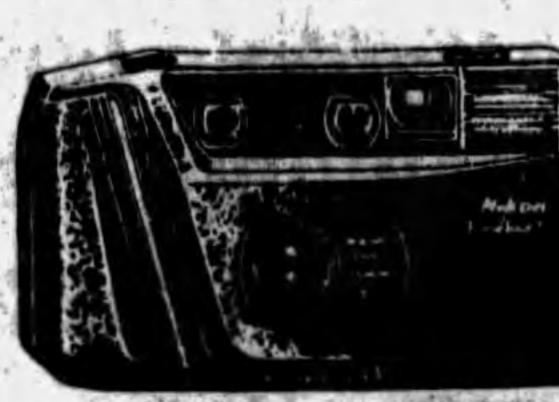
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