Sports

SECTION E THE ATLANTA CONSTITUTION

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Dave Kindred

The write stuff

As for prizes and other doodads, I once knew a city editor who took a year off when he won a fellowship to Harvard for studies on social issues. My, was he proud. So proud that when he came back to work, the city editor took care to explain his curious tie tack. "This," he said to everyone, touching the thing, "is my Harvard key," a certain snootiness to the last two words.

Our state editor, crusty as an Illinois cornfield in July, did a long harrumph on hearing of the key. Finally he said, "Big deal. On my garage at home I got a Yale lock."

Red Smith used to pry the metal off his awards and use the wood in the fireplace. "Just do good work, kid, because the work's all that matters," Smith once told a kid from Illinois. I think of this now because as much as we say it doesn't matter, it does matter to newspaper people when we're talking about the Pulitzer Prizes, journalism's highest awards.



years was Chris Mortensen's work this year for the Atlanta Journal-Constitution. As good as the Lexington Herald-Leader's stuff was when it won Pulitzer in 1986 for showing that college basketball players are paid under the table, as nice a job as the Macon Telegraph did in demonstratacademic-athletic

The best sports report-

ing I've been around in 25

Chris Mortensen ing abuses for its Pulitzer in 1985 - however deserving those newspapers were, they couldn't have carried Mortensen's notebook on any day of the week.

Easy to trust a guy in Air Jordans

This time a year ago, nothing better to do, Mortensen loitered in my office, maybe wearing his Springsteen T-shirt, certainly wearing the blue-jeans and sneakers that have been his camouflage in two decades as a truthseeker. People take one look at this broken-down rocker and tell him their life stories, figuring it's better to trust a guy in Air Jordans than Guccis.

Mort allowed to me that he had a story, "a good 'un," is what he said, and when Mort says it's a good 'un, you listen up because he's going to tell you something you didn't know and couldn't have guessed. Great reporters do that sort of thing.

"So what's the story?" I said, and Mortensen said it involved college athletes, agents, big money and lawsuits. Not only did Mort's reporting from coast to coast uncover the shenanigans of agents Norby Walters, Lloyd Bloom, Jim Abernethy et al, by year's end his reporting had expanded the story to arrests, convictions, ineligibilities, threats of bodily harm and frantic scramblings by state legislatures to rewrite their laws.

Made a fellow proud to be in the business and proud to work at the Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

The deputy sports editor of the Washington Post, Leonard Shapiro, on being introduced to Mortensen at the Super Bowl in January, said with admiration, "Damn you, Mortensen, with your agent stories. You're beating us to death. We can't catch up."

No one could catch up, because Mortensen, by the classic newspaper work of phone call after phone call, piecing together bits of information from disparate sources, had made himself the sole repository of the whole story. By year's end, lawyers, agents and politicians were calling Mort to find out what was going on.

Proving sports is no toy department

Thursday afternoon, for the first time in 21 years, the Atlanta newspapers won a Pulitzer Prize. It went to our editorial cartoonist Doug Marlette. A hundred reporters had gathered around newsroom video display terminals to read the Pulitzer announcements, which came one by one over the wire services. Marlette's victory set off a celebration of balloons, champagne, applause and orations by publisher Jay Smith and editor Bill Kovach, the editor saying we had five finalists in the 13 categories, tying a record set by one other newspaper.

"And we should have had six," Kovach said. By that he meant Mortensen's work on the agent story, which was said to have been rated fourth in investigative reporting, just missing the cut to three stories moved on to the final

judging.
"The Pulitzer people may not have expected such hard, aggressive reporting in sports as Chris Mortensen did," Kovach said during our newsroom self-congratulations. "But they better get used to it. Because Mortensen isn't done

with that story yet." Other contests in other places have given Mortensen's work their prizes, even holding it above work that Thursday won Pulitzers. We're proud here in the sports department. Too many people think we're the toy department of journalism when in fact the sports department is asked to cover a part of American culture that reaches every aspect of the human condition. What Mortensen did this year was simply newspaper work of the highest quality, period, exclamation point.



BILLY DOWNS/Staff

Evander Holyfield puts on headgear Thursday before workout at Asa Gordon's gym. He faces Carlos DeLeon on April 9 in a cruiserweight title fight.

Next time, Holyfield will be a heavyweight

Champ eager for last fight as cruiserweight

By Terence Moore Staff Writer

Five weeks of training in Houston for his cruiserweight title fight against Carlos DeLeon has turned Evander Holyfield into a tailor's delight. Nothing fits him anymore. He needs new clothes.

His coat size has increased from 44 to

His neck size has increased from 171/2 to 181/2.

His waist size has increased from 29

Watch out Mike Tyson, Michael Spinks and all the rest. Holyfield is moving quickly toward bringing his considerable skills to the heavyweight division.

"We're looking to have a heavyweight fight in July sometime," Holyfield said Thursday, looking thick and strong for his

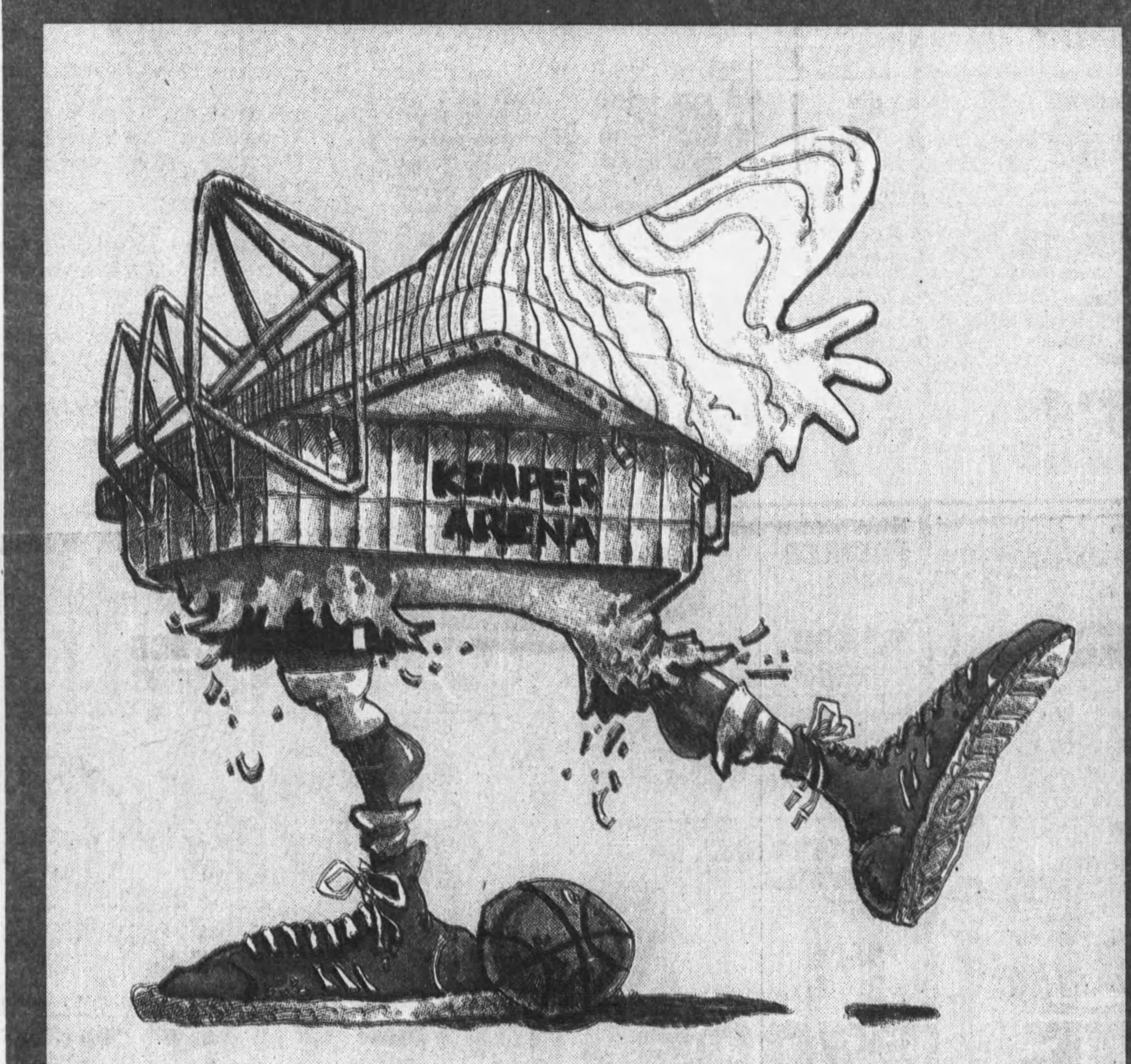
workout at Asa Gordon's gym near Buckhead.

"Just two weeks ago, I weighed as much as 202 pounds, and I was able to carry that weight around without hurting my effectiveness in the ring. Today, I'm down to 190 pounds for the fight."

Holyfield will fight DeLeon on April 9 in Las Vegas. If Holyfield and his handlers have their way, this will be the last fight ever as a cruiserweight for the Atlanta native.

Holyfield will try to become the first cruiserweight ever to unify the title. He holds the IBF and WBA championships with a 17-0 record and 13 knockouts. De-Leon is the WBC's champ at 43-3-1 and 29

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VERNON CARNE/Staff

Growing pains in Final Four

KC's ticket crunch proves the NCAA championships have outgrown average facilities for basketball

> NCAA report, Page 7E By David Davidson College Editor

KANSAS CITY, Mo. - Add it up: A relatively small gym (Kemper Arena, 16,420 seats) plus a local team (Kansas) plus another team from the local conference (Oklahoma) plus a big event (the NCAA Final Four). It equals a ticket crisis perhaps unprecedented in American sport.

Face value for a book of tickets for Saturday's semifinals (Kansas vs. Duke, Oklahoma vs. Arizona) and Monday night's championship game is \$50. But in this seller's market, seats in good locations are on sale in Arizona for as much as \$4,000 each, and desperate fans are offering to swap everything from land to a week at a Miami Beach condo for

The Final Four When: Semifinals are Saturday, final is Monday. -Where: Kemper Arena in Kansas City, Mo. Saturday's games: Duke vs. Kansas, 5:30 p.m.; Oklahoma vs. Arizona, 8 p.m. TV/radio: CBS-TV Channel 5, WGST-AM (920).

After 1,200 tickets were allocated for each team, several hundred seats removed to accommodate the media and several thousand tickets dedicated to members of the National Association of Basketball Coaches, which holds its annual convention in conjuction with the Final Four, only about 3,600 tickets were available for sale to the general public.

The NCAA last spring received orders for more than 320,000 tickets. A lottery determined which applicants would get the tickets.

In Thursday's Kansas City Times, there were three display advertisements placed by ticket brokers. In the classified section, three columns were devoted to advertisers to buy or sell Final Four tickets.

John Langbein, a ticket broker in Phoenix, Ariz., said he has been buying Final Four tickets for \$500 to \$1,500 and selling them through his Ticket Exchange for \$700 to \$2,500. depending upon location.

Langbein said he has sold World Series tickets for \$500, Indianapolis 500 tickets for \$600 and Wimbledon tickets for \$900.

"This is the hottest show I've ever had," Langbein said. "It's for three reasons: The proximity of the schools, the size of the building and the following of the schools."

The University of Kansas is just

45 miles from Kemper Arena. The ticket crunch is a primary reason the NCAA recently has been moving toward playing the Final Four in domed stadiums rather than conventional basketball arenas. Although no firm policy has been set, the Division I basketball committee soon is likely to set a 23,000-seat minimum on Final Four arenas.

The NCAA first turned to a domed stadium for its Final Four in 1971 — the Astrodome in Houston, where 31,765 attended the championship game, shattering the previous high of 18,892 at Freedom Hall in Louisville, Ky., in 1967.

The 1982 Final Four was held at See NCAA, Page 7E

Valvano is top choice of UCLA

N.C. State coach offered 5-year, \$2.5 million deal

By Tony Barnhart

North Carolina State basketball coach Jim Valvano is expected to decide soon, perhaps today, whether to leave for

Valvano, who has led N.C. State to six NCAA tournament appearances and one national championship in eight years as coach, has received a five-year, \$2.5-million offer to become UCLA's coach, sources close to the school said Thursday. Valvano is expected to meet with UCLA officials today, the sources said.

Valvano, in Kansas City, Mo., for the NCAA Final Four, refused to comment Thursday about the UCLA job. Sources at UCLA said the school expects him to accept the job, and Valvano reportedly was booked on a plane today to Los Angeles.

"Obviously, I have nothing to say," said Valvano. "I'm sorry I can't help you.

"In situations like this, there are appropriate times to comment and inappropriate times. This is not an appropriate time. If there's an appropriate time, you know me, I never hesitate to talk."

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Sluman leads on record-tying 64 at Greensboro

Thompson an upstart contender, Page 9E By Tom McCollister Staff Writer

GREENSBORO, N.C. — As hard as he's tried, Jeff Sluman has had trouble escaping the memory of the big one that got away — The Players Championship he lost in sudden death to Sandy Lyle a year

Thursday, he pushed the past behind him by shooting a course record-tying 64 for the first-round lead in the Greater Greensboro Open.

The 5-foot-7, 135-pound native New Yorker had nine birdies and a bogey to take a two-stroke lead over two-time Tour winner Mark Calcavecchia, journeyman Robert Thompson and Taiwan's T.C. Chen. At 67 are Scott Hoch and Donnie Hammond, while Scotland's Lyle heads a group of six at 68 that also includes Rocco Mediate, Dan Halldorson, Ken Green, Bruce Zabriski and Gil Morgan.

Sluman's round equaled the course record set by Tom Purtzer in 1980 and matched six years later by Lyle.

Unlike a year ago, when cold, wind, rain and snow sent scores soaring on the first day, the field of 144 was greeted by clear skies and a balmy breeze. They took to the Forest Oaks course with a birdie frenzy. Par wasn't much good, considering

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