Wilkins Unhappy Over Benching by Fratello for His Defense

□ Scouting the Hornets, Page 8F By Jeffrey Denberg Staff Writer

Coach Mike Fratello told Dominique Wilkins on Thursday that he twice pulled the Atlanta Hawks forward from their game at Boston the previous night largely because of weak defensive work.

"I can always make the next shot," said Wilkins, who remained upset after his conversation with the coach at Logan Field in Boston before the team boarded its plane. "In my heart, I know that. If Larry Bird were healthy, would he come out of a close game in the fourth quarter? No. Well, I should be in there, too."

Both men were vague about their conversation Thursday. "He gave me a reason,"

Wilkins said of his benching. "I don't have to like it. I don't have to agree with it. But he gave me a reason."

Asked if that reason was Wilkins's defense, Fratello said, "That would be an accurate statement."

Fratello believes Wilkins was guilty of loose defensive work against the Celtics' Reggie Lewis, who scored 22 points in the 104-90 decision. In the Hawks' huddle during one timeout, Fratello lectured Wilkins about how to guard Lewis.

Wilkins wound up playing only 13 of 24 minutes during the second half as he and his coach renewed a quiet battle of wills.

Fratello believes Wilkins's participation is vital to the team's success, but he insists the Hawks' leading scorer play to an overall high level. Occasionally, Fratello feels the need to underscore that point by removing the four-time All-Star.

Nevertheless, Wilkins voiced his anger after the defeat, saying, "I don't care what they say, they can't convince me I should not have been on the floor" during a key four-minute stretch of the fourth quarter.

"I couldn't figure out why I wasn't in the game and nobody would tell me. I asked Joe (O'Toole, the trainer); I asked Brian (Hill, the first assistant coach). I asked my teammates, 'Why aren't I in the game? Shouldn't I be in the game?"

Actually, Wilkins was on the floor when the Hawks cut the Celtics' lead to 80-78. sinking two key shots, but he also threw up an airball from the foul circle and launched an ill-advised running hook while off balance. The Celtics increased their lead to

six and iced the game with a 7-0 run.

Fratello said he would have liked to have had the opportunity to explain Wil-

kins's benching to him during the game. "The trouble is, you're still trying to win the game and the ball's going up and down the court," he said.

Several times previously over the years, Fratello has sat down Wilkins for lapses in play. The last incident occurred Nov. 23 in San Antonio, and Wilkins expressed his displeasure after that game.

Wilkins's teammate, Doc Rivers, came to his defense.

"You're human and I think that's important to remember," he said Thursday. "You can't play the same way every night. Your body doesn't react the same. That's why I salute Cleveland. They've won 43 (of

55) games. I think it's great when a team can be that good every night. I wish we were. I hope we can be."

And while Wednesday's disagreement is but a small blip on the season's radar screen, it emphasizes the difficulty Atlanta has in playing consistently over an 82-game schedule. Charlotte's appearance tonight at 7:40 in The Omni only serves to underscore that dilemma. After all, the expansion team beat the Hawks last month after losing to them by 21 and 24 points earlier in the

Wilkins, meanwhile, promises to make amends when the Hornets visit.

"We owe them a beating," he said. "I want to get them down 30 in the third quarter. I've got some scores to settle." □ Hawks Notebook, Page 2F

Byrum Beats Rain for 65, Early Lead

CORAL SPRINGS, Fla. — Before a mid-afternoon thunderstorm halted the first round of the Honda Classic, Thursday was the kind of day the PGA Tour's better players hate: no big wind on a course that needs it to divide the mediocre from the mighty.

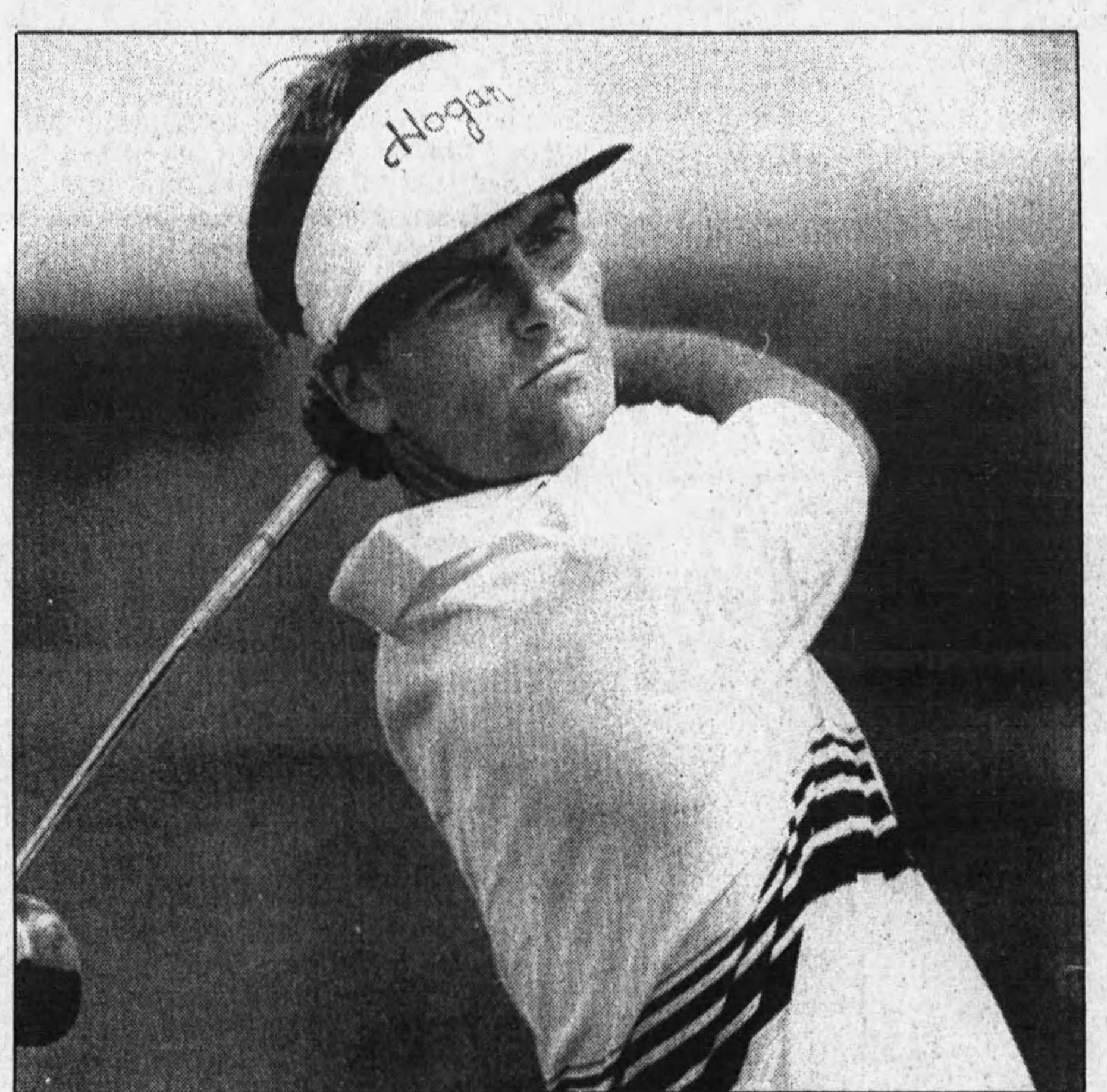
The Tournament Players Club at Eagle Trace is long — 7,037 yards — and small lakes dot the terrain. But there are no large trees and little rough. On Thursday the wind that usually gives this course its bite was laying low.

Before the rain stopped play with half the field of 144 players still on the course, 46 of them, led by Tom Byrum with a 65, had broken par of 72.

The remainder will resume play early today before the second round can begin, and it's unlikely 36 holes will be completed until Saturday. It was the seventh time in nine tournaments this season that a round was not finished on the day it began.

While that is an irritant, it is the prospect of a no-wind week that was the topic of conversation Thursday among some of the game's leading players. Few of them

want a crowd in contention on Sunday. "If it stays like this, there will be 10 or 15 guys 18- to 20-under and fighting it out on Sunday," said Fred Couples, who was tied at 66 with Fulton Allem and Ted Schulz. "When you have these kind of conditions, everybody out here can shoot 66. I'd rather see the wind blow and the greens fast. That's what separates the av-



The Associated Press

Early leader Tom Byrum follows the flight of his tee shot at No. 17 Thursday.

erage from the very good and the very good from the best."

There are some from each category on the abbreviated leaderboard. There's Masters champion Sandy Lyle at 67 with Ed Fiori and Jim Carter. Curtis Strange, Calvin Peete and Gene Sauers join Ronnie Black, Mike Sullivan, John Inman, Lance Ten Broeck, Mike Miles and John Huston at 68.

NOTES: Seve Ballesteros shot 77, but

had the excuse of playing with a temperature of 103. "He shouldn't have been out there," said Couples, his playing partner.

... Bob Murphy played his first nine like the wind was howling. He shot 40, but turned around with a 31, birdieing five straight holes at one point. The tournament record is six straight by Couples in 1985. . . . Ballesteros, Rocco Mediate and Allem had the day's only eagles.

□ Scores, Page 10F

Wallace Gets Pole, Record In Goodwrench Qualifying

By Ed Hinton Staff Writer

ROCKINGHAM, N.C. — Just as he'd predicted, Rusty Wallace stormed back to the forefront of stock car racing Thursday, winning the pole for Sunday's Goodwrench 500 at a track record 148.793 mph.

Wallace, who won four of the last five races in 1988, had a miserable time at this year's season-opener, the Feb. 19 Daytona 500. He never got his Pontiac working satisfactorily and finished 18th. But even then, he was warning that once he left the 2.5mile Daytona International Speedway and hit the smaller tracks, such as the 1.017mile North Carolina Motor Speedway (NCMS) here, "It's going to be a different story."

And it was Thursday, as Wallace roared around on a qualifying lap that was "comfortable, but a little hung-out — there was a little reckless abandon there."

"We've got the restrictor plates off the cars," Wallace said of the carburetor restrictors that are required only at Daytona and the 2.66-mile track at Talladega, Ala. "The restrictor plates have always seemed to hurt the Pontiac more than anything."

Daytona 500 winner Darrell Waltrip qualified second Thursday in a Chevrolet at 148.353, followed by Ken Schrader in another Chevy at 148.173 and Mark Martin in a Ford at 148.125.

Wallace's lap broke the NCMS record of 148.359 set by Bill Elliott in a Ford here last October.

Elliott, still hampered by the broken left wrist he suffered in a crash during practice for the Daytona 500, qualified his Thunderbird seventh at 147.113, driving

one-handed. Sunday, as he did in the Daytona 500, Elliott plans to drive until the first caution period, then turn his car over to relief driver Jody Ridley.

"The problem," Elliott said Thursday, "is that I just can't do everything I need to do. If I get the least bit out of (control), there's a chance that I can't get it back, and I just can't afford to let that happen. I'm a little hesitant. I drove with one hand. So, I have to play it a little conservative."

But Wallace, who almost overtook Elliott for the Winston Cup season points championship at the end of last year, said, "We're back on track. At Daytona, it was hard to keep smiling. It just didn't seem that we were ever in the hunt. Now, I can go back to the hotel tonight and say, 'Yep, we've picked up right where we left off at the end of last year."

Waltrip, who'll be starting on the outside front row for the second straight race, said Thursday's run was "as good a qualifying lap as I've ever run at this track. Rusty got around a tick better than I did, but we're in good shape."

Schrader, who started on the pole in the Daytona 500, conceded he hadn't felt as dominant going into Thursday's qualifying.

"That was the best lap we'd had," said Schrader, "except for one (in practice) earlier this morning."

Dale Earnhardt, the three-time NAS-CAR champion who has had terrible luck in qualifying — he didn't win a pole all last season — barely made the field in Thursday's first round, which determined the top 20. Earnhardt qualified 19th at 145.257

□ Thursday's Qualifying, Page 10F

Jury Selection Snag Delays Walters-Bloom

Jurors List Dwindles; Trial Can't Start Till Monday

By Chris Mortensen

Staff Writer CHICAGO — What had been an occasional comic session between a federal judge and potential jurors ended in frustration Thursday when

sports agents Norby Walters and Lloyd Bloom was delayed until Monday. U.S. District Court Judge George M. Marovich agreed with attorneys that the group of prospective jurors

jury selection for the trial of former

had dwindled too much — from 60 to 33 — to successfully empanel 12 jurors and four alternates for the "We need a (minimum) pool of 39 jurors," said Marovich. "I had made specific plans to avoid this. I

am not happy. I don't like to waste money and time, but we have no alternative." rors because the expected lengthy

Marovich has dismissed 19 jutrial would create a hardship on their lives. Two were reported ill Thursday, and six have been dismissed because they were judged unable to be fair or impartial.

One juror, Patrick Rink, disqualified himself for two reasons: He is a season ticket-holder for Notre Dame football and the Chicago Bears, and he admitted that he had read material on Walters and Bloom that which would not make him impartial.

Notre Dame is one of the universities allegedly defrauded by Walters and Bloom because of their dealings with ex-Irish football players Robert Banks and Alvin Miller.

Though two members of the Chicago Bears, wide receiver Ron Morris and defensive back Maurice Douglass, are scheduled to testify that Walters and Bloom threatened physical harm when the players attempted to renege on representation contracts they had signed with the agents, being a Bears' fan is not going to eliminate potential jurors, all sides agreed Thursday.

A majority of men and women admitted they were Bears' fans. One juror, Noah Wright, said he knew ex-Bears great Bill George.

"Do you still see him on a regular basis?" Marovich asked. "No, he's dead now," replied

"Oh, yeah, I think I read something about that," the judge responded.

When one man described himself as a St. Louis Cardinals football fan, the judge wondered aloud, "There are still some of you left?" The Cardinals have moved to Phoenix.

One woman, Cynthia Eason, told the judge, "I'm a reformed sports" fanatic. It used to run my life. Now can take it or leave it. I used to watch the Bears, the Bulls, and the (White) Sox all the time."

Marovich: "All of whom have given you cause for a broken heart. Is that why you are reformed?"

"It certainly is," replied Eason, drawing laughter in the courtroom. Steve Meyer, an English teacher and potential juror, described himself as a "rabid Bears and sports

"How rabid?" asked Marovich. "It's my religion," said Meyer to more laughs.

One woman, Doris Scholeman, described herself as "a sports widow" during the football season. "What does your husband fol-

low?" asked Marovich. "Anything or anybody," she said. 'That's why we have three

Walters, 58, appeared more relaxed than Bloom, 29, during the individual questioning of jurors. Walters often laughed with others at

some responses. Walters and Bloom declined public comment. They each face a maximum 70 years imprisonment, \$2 million in fines and forfeiture of assets if convicted on all charges of racketeering, mail fraud, wire fraud

Though their relationship has been strained since the federal investigation began almost two years ago, Walters and Bloom sat next to each other and chatted before the potential jurors were brought into the courtoom...

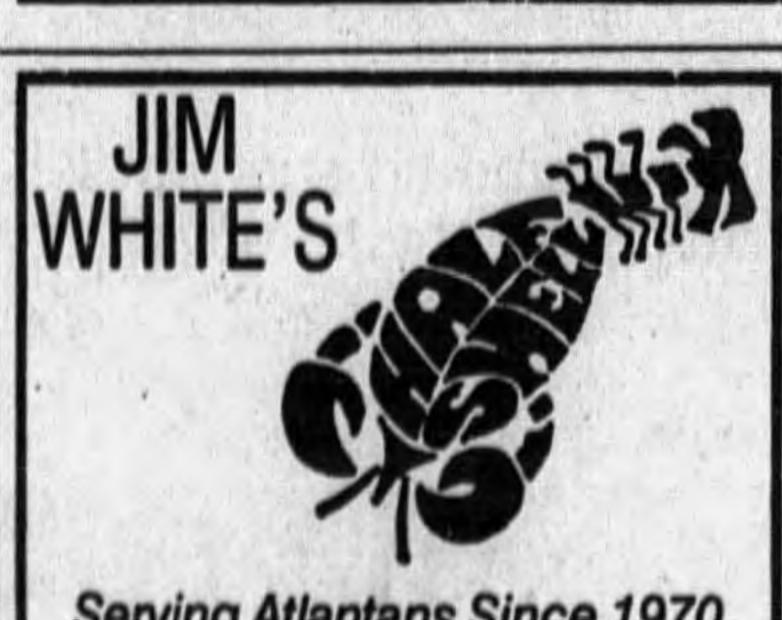
Marovich plans today to rule on several pending motions made by defense counsel. But he told the attorneys he thought they will be making their opening statements to a jury on Monday afternoon.





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