Thomas Says He's Hurt, Not Pouting

Nixon Wants Shortstop Back in Braves' Lineup

> By Joe Strauss Staff Writer

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. -Andres Thomas says a back injury, not bruised feelings, is why he sat out the Atlanta Braves' last three exhibition games. Manager Russ Nixon says he expects Thomas to return to the lineup today, despite Thomas's contention that he may not be ready.

"If I can play, I'll play. If not . . . I'm hurting and I don't care what anybody else thinks. I'll take care of myself," Thomas said Monday.

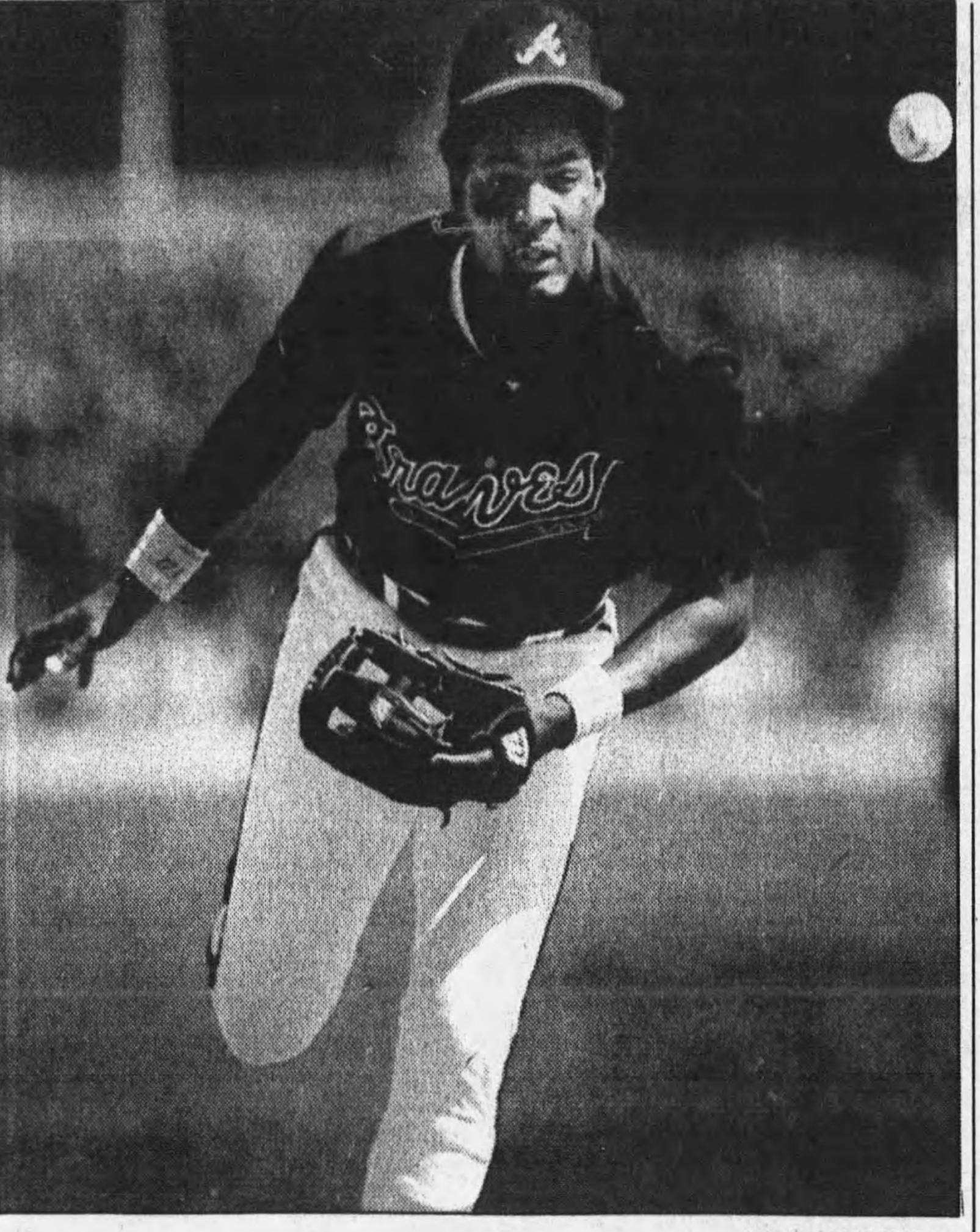
Six hours after being removed by Nixon from last Friday's starting lineup for an exhibition against the Baltimore Orioles, Thomas said he injured the lower right side of his back during a running drill following the game. Scheduled to start Saturday against the New York Yankees, Thomas cited the injury and removed himself from the line-

Nixon originally included Thomas in Friday's lineup because of a minor leg injury suffered by Jeff Blauser, who has been the subject of trade talks and has shared time with Thomas at shortstop.

Nixon, however, replaced Thomas with Blauser after receiving a trainer's report clearing Blauser to play. Thomas complained before the game and asked for an explanation.

"If people want to call me a troublemaker for that, then I'm a troublemaker," said Thomas. "I'm here to play every day."

The two met Saturday to discuss the situation and Nixon considered it resolved. Thomas is scheduled to start at shortstop today against the New York Mets. However, Thomas



WILLIAM BERRY/Staff

Braves' Andres Thomas says he suffered a back injury shortly after being pulled from the lineup of an exhibition game last Friday.

said his status is uncertain.

Nixon promised another, more volatile meeting should Thomas's reluctance to play linger. "Hopefully it will be taken care of before it gets this far," he said.

Thomas has received daily treatment since complaining of the injury; however, he took light batting practice Sunday and Monday. Nixon did not include him on the team's trip to Miami for a Monday exhibition against the Baltimore Orioles, the fourth consecutive game Thomas missed.

Thomas's absence from games is bothersome to Nixon. He met two weeks ago with Thomas and third baseman Ronnie Gant to emphasize the importance of sound work hab-

its and an upbeat attitude after Thomas reported late to camp for the second straight year. Thomas cited a cold and uncertain weather conditions for his tardiness.

"Russ and I have great communication," said Thomas. "If it was somebody else, I might go out there for one inning, then come in and say I couldn't play anymore."

Thomas, who last year led all National League shortstops with 13 home runs and 68 RBI, has been overshadowed in spring training by Blauser and the ongoing trade discussions.

"I don't know, maybe I have a 20 percent chance [of making the club]," Thomas cracked Monday.

□ Braves Notebook, Page 2D

Witness: Walters, Franzese Threatened Jackson 5 Tour

Group Didn't Want Agent Involved

By Chris Mortensen Staff Writer

CHICAGO - The former personal manager of singer Michael Jackson testified Monday that agent Norby Walters and reputed crime boss Michael Franzese threatened to interrupt a tour planned by the Jackson Five musical group in 1981.

Ron Weisner, who represented Jackson and his brothers from 1978-83, took the stand as prosecutors began to explore the racketeering conspiracy in the trial of sports agents Walters and associate Lloyd Bloom in U.S. District Court. According to Weisner, Franzese issued his threat after Walters had been rejected as the booking agent.

Walters, who was involved in musical acts before he entered the sports agent field, and Bloom are being tried on charges of racketeer ing, extortion, mail fraud and wire fraud stemming from their dealings with more than 50 college athletes. The government's case for the remainder of the trial will intertwine entertainment and sports.

Weisner testified that the group moved one concert away from the Nassau Coliseum in New York because of Franzese, described by prosecutors as a "captain" in the "New York Colombo crime family."

After an initial meeting with Walters in the Jackson family's home in Los Angeles, Weisner said, the group decided it did not want Walters as the tour's booking agent. A letter sent to Walters from the group's attorney was admitted as

Despite the notification, Walters persisted and Weisner again informed him the group had not changed its mind, according to testimony. Walters called once more and met again with Weisner, but the group hired Howard Rose as the booking agent, said Weisner.

At this stage, Weisner testified,

Walters called and wanted Weisner to meet with an "associate," Franzese. They met in Weisner's Los Angeles office.

Franzese, Walters and a "man I didn't know" visited Weisner in his Los Angeles office, the group's man-, ager testified. Walters left the room after an introduction, Weisner said.

"Michael Franzese then told me he was involved with Norby, and they wanted to participate in the tour, to be partners, to get a percentage out of the tour," testified Weisner. "He said that if we did not go along with it, we were going to have some problems.

"He said that if we didn't go with them, we were not going to have a tour."

Assistant U.S. Attorney Howard Pearl asked Weisner about the tone of voice Franzese used in the conversation.

"He was very serious about it," testified Weisner. "It was threatening. The point came across. In one respect, I was concerned, but in another I didn't want to give in to them. But, naturally, I was [concerned], from what I had heard about him [Franzese] in the past."

"Michael Franzese and Norby Walters each telephoned a number of times after that," testified Weisner. "He [Franzese] pretty much said the same thing: either that I agree or the tour would be in

Weisner testified that he became familiar with the reputation of Franzese and his father, John "Sonny" Franzese, more than 15 years ago in New York when Weisner worked in promotions and marketing with Buddha Records.

"I heard his name, I saw him around the office a few times," Weisner said of Michael Franzese "I knew they were involved in organized crime."

Franzese is scheduled today to p

member to ever testify in a federal case, according to FBI agent George Randolph. Franzese is currently serving a 10-year prison term on a racketeering conviction. Security will be "at the highest level" in and around the courthouse, said

Randolph. The government has filed a document which says Franzese will testify that he was Walters's silent partner in entertainment and planted \$50,000 seed money when Walters and Bloom formed a sports agency in 1984.

After Weisner testified Monday, the next three witnesses were former Notre Dame players Alvin Miller and Robert Banks and former Notre Dame president Father Theodore Hesburgh.

Miller and Banks each testified that Walters and Bloom introduced themselves in May 1986, prior to their senior seasons at Notre Dame, as "agents of the stars."

"They named Luther Vandross and Patti LaBelle as some of their clients, just to name a few," said

Miller accepted \$2,500 from the agents and Banks \$5,000 in separate meetings that took place at a hotel in South Bend, Ind., near the Notre Dame campus.

"He [Walters] took the \$5,000 out of a briefcase and spread it on a table," testified Banks. "He had a lot more cash in the briefcase."

The government contends that the agents defrauded Notre Dame when Banks and Miller falsely certified documents to receive their scholarships in 1986.

"More important than NCAA rules is the university's own rules," said Father Hesburgh. "I know. I happened to have written those rules. Anything in this area [accepting money from agents], and I can assure you we would have revoked their scholarships if we had known."

THE EXHIBITION REPORT

Braves 3, Orioles 1

The Braves improved their spring record to 6-3-1 Monday by defeating the Baltimore Orioles 3-1 in Miami. Tom Glavine became the first Braves pitcher to go five innings, shutting out Baltimore on three hits and a walk. Jody Davis hit his second home run in 13 at-bats in the second inning for a 1-0 lead. Third baseman Ed Whited homered and Jeff Blauser drove in Mark Lemke with his enth inning to increase the lead to 3-0. The Orioles reached Charlie Puleo for their only run in the seventh. Andy Nezelek picked up the save.

The Promising

Now 2-1, Glavine has yet to exceed his pitch limit in three starts. He was allotted up to 65 pitches Monday and needed only 48. Lemke began three double plays in the first four innings. Bruce Sut-

ter escaped his one inning with only seven pitches. Sutter has thrown 16 pitches in his last two appearances. Davis, sidelined last weekend with a sore shoulder, made a strong throw to catch Brady Anderson on an attempted steal on a split-finger pitch from Sutter.

The Unpromising

The Braves had a chance for a big seventh inning that would have broken the second double of the game in the sev- game open, but managed just one run.

Up Next

Atlanta returns to Port St. Lucie, site of Saturday's 3-2 loss to the New York Mets, for a 1:05 p.m. game with the NL East champions. John Smoltz will start for Atlanta, followed by David Miller, Jose Alvarez and Eddie Mathews. The Mets will start Dwight Gooden, to be followed by Wally Whitehurst.

-Joe Strauss

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Schmidt L, 0-2	5	6	1	1	1	0	
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Sparky Like a Breath of Spring Air

LAKELAND, Fla. — You arrive in spring training and you discover Santa Claus is dead. There is more talk about Penthouse than Sports Illustrated. Players are throwing left hooks at each other during team picture days. The Bronx Bombers are being called the Bronx Boozers, and a warm afternoon has become only a memory throughout most of the Grapefruit League.

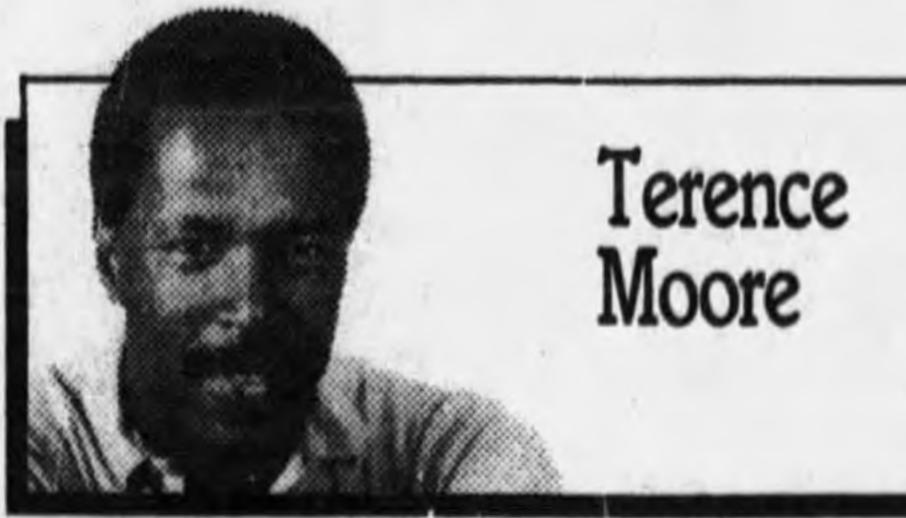
You search for sanity. Where to go? You travel to Tigertown, where you believe the closest thing to heaven on earth sits behind the manager's desk of the Detroit Tigers. With pipe smoke circling around his white hair, Sparky Anderson ends your search with a smile as he leans forward in his chair.

"All of these problems in baseball prove one thing," Anderson says. "We're only human beings. wish we didn't have these problems, but I also wish we could find a cure for AIDS. Problems in baseball, as in life, have a way of running their course. We're not dealing with saints and gods. I know I don't walk on water, but I also know that I've been in baseball long enough to show somebody the right way."

Anderson nods, puffs and fills out the Tigers' lineup card for the day. You think back 14 seasons to your first conversation with Anderson when he managed the Cincinnati Reds. You notice Anderson hasn't changed. He remains humble. He remains entertaining. He remains the classiest manager you've ever encountered. You sigh with relief. You discover that Santa Claus lives after all.

You notice that this is Anderson's 20th spring as a major-league manager, and you cringe after recalling that Anderson has spent more years managing the Tigers than the Big Red Machine. This is his 11th season in Detroit. You remember that day in October 1978 when Reds general manager Dick Wagner told you he fired Anderson because the Reds wanted to go in a different direction. They did. After winning five NL West titles, four pennants and two World Series under Anderson, the Reds became the worst team in the National League within four years.

Anderson, who was called a push-button manager by Wagner, signed with the Tigers during the summer of 1979 to rev up the Big Blue Machine. Five years later, the Tigers won a club-record 104 victories en route to a world championship, but Anderson's critics wondered how he could lose. They said Pete Rose, Joe Morgan and Johnny Bench of



Anderson's Big Red Machine were named Alan Trammell, Lance Parrish and Kirk Gibson in

Then along came the last two seasons, when Anderson's critics retreated to the shadows. In 1987, after the Tigers were picked to finish fifth in the AL East, they won the division. Anderson was chosen Manager of the Year for the fourth time in his career, and he challenged for the award again last season when the Tigers finished a victory shy of repeating as AL East champs. They were picked as alsorans before the season.

The Tigers have the only manager ever to win a World Series in both leagues, the only manager ever to win 100 or more games during a season for two different teams. Despite his accomplishments, George Lee "Sparky" Anderson puffs on his pipe and wonders what all the fuss is about over a 55year-old guy who was the youngest and least-known manager in the majors when he joined the Reds before the 1970 season.

"Over the past 20 years, I haven't become an ambassador of baseball, or any other high distinction that people try to apply to me," Anderson says. "I'm just a street person. To me, spelling is a foreign language. If I had to take one of those fancy tests to get into college, I'd be totally lost. But I'll tell you something right now. Those Princeton and Harvard boys don't have nothing on me when it comes to common sense. That's the secret to success."

Anderson leans forward again, puffing harder,

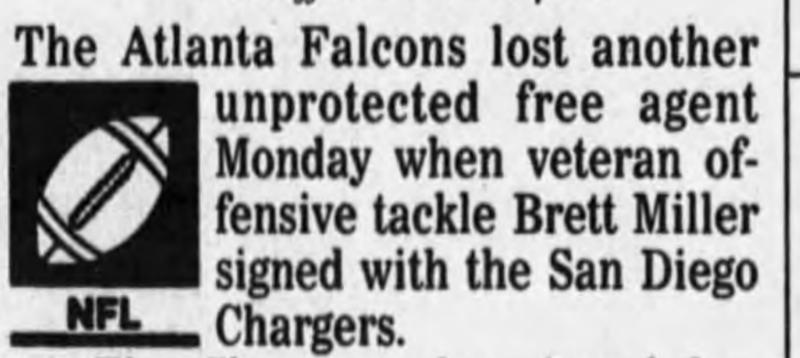
speaking almost in a whisper.

"I've been around so long as a manager that the job has gotten easy for me," Anderson says. "I've seen every situation hundreds of times, and it's like stealing money for me at this point. As easy as it is for me right now in baseball, it's going to be that much easier for me 10 years from now. And, yes, I plan to be around as a manager at least that long."

You smile.

Brett Miller, Archer Sign With Chargers

From Staff and Wire Reports



The Chargers also signed former Atlanta guarterback David Archer. Both players started for the Falcons under former head coach Dan Henning, who was recently hired for the same position in San

Miller became the eighth player left off the Falcons' 37-man protected roster to sign with another club. However, he had lost his starting job last season to rookie Houston Hoover and did not fit prominently into the Falcons' plans this year. A fifth-round draft pick out of

Iowa in 1983, Miller moved into the starting position as a rookie. Eventually, with him and guard Bill Fralic blocking on the right side of the line, the Falcons became a formidable rushing team. However, Miller was constantly

in and out of the lineup with injuries despite his reputation as one of the league's strongest players. He was reduced to four starts last

Archer played for Atlanta from 1984-87, completing 331 of 647 passes for 4,275 yards and 18 touchdowns. He started 22 games for the Falcons in 1985 and 1986 for Henning but was released following the 1987 season, a year after the Falcons fired Henning.

Archer played in one game last season for the Washington Redskins, where Henning was offensive coordinator.

Former Yellow Jacket Lilly Comes to Terms With Eagles

The Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — The Philadelphia Eagles have signed free agent cornerback Sammy Lilly, who played college ball at Georgia Tech and spent all of his NFL rookie season last year on the injured reserve list with a knee problem.

Terms of the two-year contract were not disclosed in a statement the team released Monday.

The New York Giants, who picked Lilly in the eighth round of last year's draft, left the 5-foot-9. 178-pound back unprotected.

He finished at Georgia Tech with 137 tackles, four interceptions, three fumble recoveries and two forced fumbles.









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