Steve Jones

Clearwater Charges to the Front in Players Championship With a 65

By Tom McCollister Staff Writer

PONTE VEDRA, Fla. — Veteran Bruce Lietzke describes the current crop of PGA Tour youngsters as playing Lanny Wadkins golf — afraid of nothing, forever charging.

That was young Keith Clearwater Thursday afternoon, holding nothing back, firing at every pin. For 16 holes he flirted with the course record of 64. Then two bogeys left him at 65, with the first-round lead in the Players Championship.

One behind at 66 are Lietzke, Steve Pate and David Frost, with Ben Crenshaw's

67 two behind. Another nine players shot 68s, including Curtis Strange, Andy Bean, Fred Couples and Paul Azinger.

When a buffer was taken to the Tournament Players Course and the sharp edges rounded, the maintenance crew also pulled some of its teeth. How else to explain a record 49 players breaking par and another 20 matching it?

Maybe it was the lack of wind.

"I walked out this morning, saw the flags weren't moving and knew then the scores were going to be low," Lietzke said. "No matter how tough the course, wind, or lack of it, dictates scores, nothing else."

Or maybe it is the all-exempt era that allows the go-for-broke attitude of the new breed which doesn't have to worry about making the cut in order to play next week.

"These guys out here now aren't afraid of anything," Lietzke said. "They just let it go. Fifteen years ago, there were 30 players capable of winning. Now there are 80 to 90 to 100. It isn't that they are better players, just more of them. And they work harder."

It was that work ethic that made Clearwater the Tour's Rookie of the Year in 1987. He won the Colonial with back-toback 64s in a rare 36-hole final day, won the Centel and finished with \$320,000, 31st on the money list. It was the absence of that ethic that dropped him to 127th a year later, a struggle that continued into his first six events of 1989.

"You can't casually go about playing in the major leagues," said Clearwater, 29. "That's what it is out here. After the great year in '87, we had a baby, built a house, and I took a casual attitude toward excellence. I'd fly home on Sunday night and not come back out until Wednesday. That won't do it. Now, I'm working like you should, trying to remember how to play, and maybe it's starting to pay off."

□ Scores, Page 11F

The Leaderboard Paul Azinger Keith Clearwater -6 Fred Couples **David Frost** -6 Mike Donald Steve Pate Mike Hulbert Bruce Lietzke Curtis Strange Ben Crenshaw Tom Kite David Graham Mark McCumber -Kenny Perry **Bob Tway** Andy Bean

Dan Pohl

Ex-Spartans Receiver Ingram Testifies That Agents Paid Him

Player's Theft Conviction Raised as Key Issue at Trial

> By Chris Mortensen Staff Writer

CHICAGO — Which was the bigger crime: Mark Ingram's felony theft convic- penalty.' tion in 1986 or his dealings with sports agents Norby Walters and Lloyd Bloom prior to his senior season at Michigan

Ingram's 30-day jail term after his junior season at Michigan State became an issue Thursday before a federal jury that is considering charges of racketeering, mail fraud, wire fraud and extortion against Walters and Bloom.

Ingram, a wide receiver with the New York Giants and a first-round NFL draft pick in 1987, testified that he received a \$7,500 bonus from Walters and Bloom on Aug. 4, 1986 for signing a representation contract.

During the next five months, most covering his senior season at Michigan State, Ingram eventually borrowed almost \$25,000 in cash and other benefits such as airline tickets and a \$500,000 insurance policy. Ingram testified that he has not repaid any of the money to the agents.

The university never found out about the arrangement, but Bloom's defense attorney, Dan Webb, contended that Ingram should have been kicked out of school because of his problem with the law several

months earlier. To support his line of questioning to Ingram and later to Michigan State faculty

representative Gwendolyn Norrell, Webb produced a document Ingram signed at Michigan State. It stated different rules the school could apply to revoke his scholarship.

One rule dealt with "desirable behavior on and off the field." Another cited "serious misconduct warranting substantial

"I think they felt that 30 days in jail would be enough," replied Ingram.

Ingram served one-third of the 90-day sentence in January 1986 he received for the felony-theft conviction. He was arrested for stealing money from other students' rooms in the Michigan State dormitories.

It was not Ingram's first arrest. Between his freshman and sophomore years, he was arrested for theft, but charges were

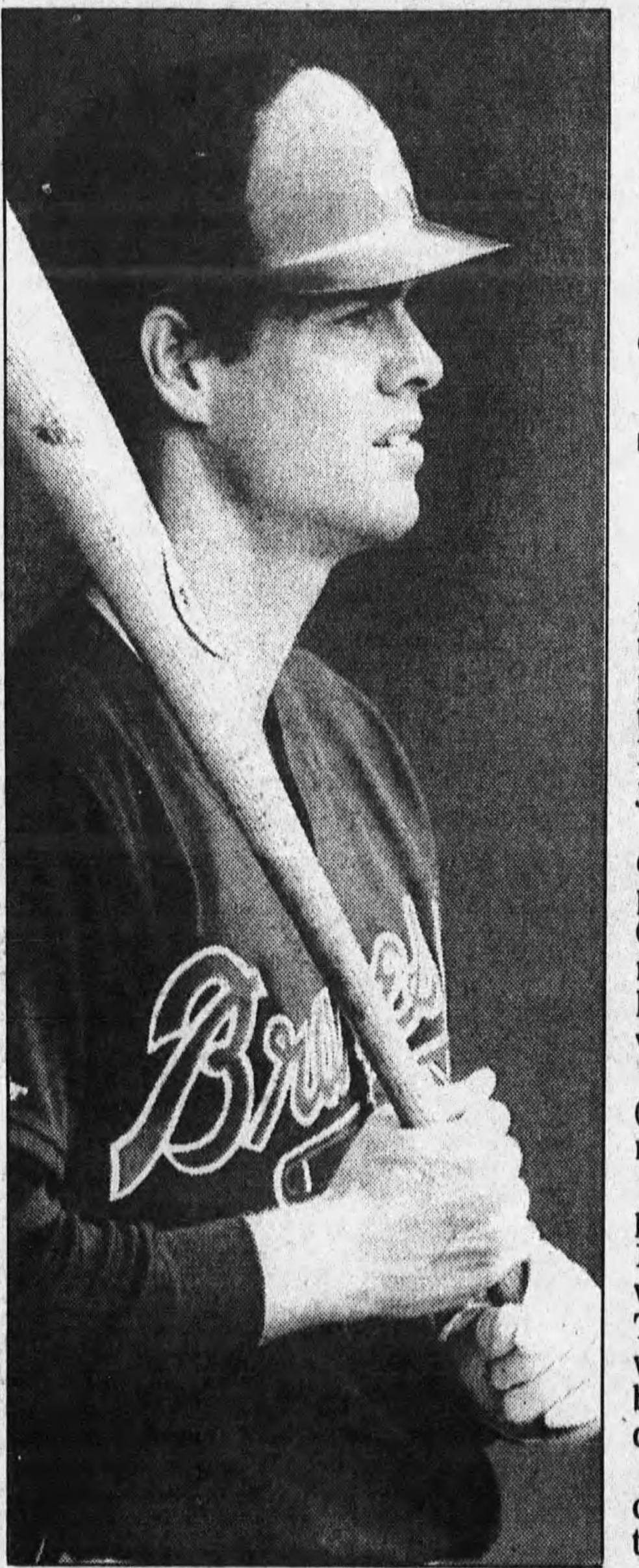
Despite the continuous violations, Norrell told Webb there was a difference between the arrests and Ingram's association with Walters and Bloom. "I believe the rules [concerning behav-

ior] are discretionary," the school official testified. "The rule involving sports agents is not. Mr. Ingram paid his price; he stayed in jail [on theft]."

Ingram, speaking in almost inaudible tones, had testified earlier in front of U.S. Attorney Anton Valukas that Michigan State was "strict" about rule adherance.

Later, after detailing Ingram's criminal activity in school and the rules, Webb wheeled and asked the player, "Is it still your testimony that the school followed strictly by the rules?"

Valukas objected and was sustained by U.S. District Judge George Marovich.



WILLIAM BERRY/Staff

Dale Murphy is working on coming back from last year's .226 season.

Murphy Moves Closer to Plate Seeking a Spring Rejuvenation

Batting Experiment Has Yet To Produce Positive Results

□ The Exhibition Report, Page 12F

By Joe Strauss Staff Writer

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. - Spring training, a time well-suited for experimentation and rejuvenation, is to be Dale Murphy's tonic. Subjected to trade rumors and the aftertaste of a season of batting .226, Murphy is attempting nothing short of adjusting his hitting style.

After a season fraught with sweeping one-handed swings and 125 strikeouts, Murphy is being tutored by hitting instructor Clarence Jones. The plan is for Murphy to move closer to the plate, making himself less vulnerable to the outside breaking ball which frustrated him last season.

As evidenced by Murphy's .143 average (4-for-28) and one extra-base hit, the adjustment is more than minor.

"I'm not comfortable right now," Murphy said Thursday after breaking an 0-for-10 slump against the Los Angeles Dodgers with a single during the Braves' 8-7 victory Thursday. "Right now, I'm not getting a whole lot of good swings, which I guess is to be expected when you're trying something different."

Murphy says he will not radically change his swing itself. However, the move toward the plate would necessitate fewer reaching swings that invited so many breaking pitches last year.

Murphy has long relied on his ample reach and quick hands to combat outside pitches. Crowding the plate carries the threat of becoming jammed, which Murphy has avoided at all costs.

The approach conspired last year with poor support lower in the lineup to expose Murphy to a steady diet of breaking balls outside the strike zone.

"Dale has quick hands, so he shouldn't have to worry about getting jammed a lot," said Jones, who suggested the adjustment to Murphy two weeks ago. "It's just something both of us agreed to try."

The results have been uneven. Murphy leads the club with nine strikeouts and has yet to produce a run with a base hit. Though insisting Murphy will be his No. 4 hitter on opening day, manager Russ Nixon concedes he is anxious for a positive sign.

"I'm concerned a little bit," he said. "I think Murf would like to get it going here. For us to become better offensively, he's going to have to rebound." Murphy daily addresses questions about.

a 45 percent decline in home runs, a 28 percent drop in RBI and his lowest hit total (134) for a full season since 1978, his rookie

"I had some good streaks last year," he said, "but there weren't enough of them. I need more of them, and I need them to last

Jones conducts his sessions during pregame batting practice, urging Murphy to gradually approach the plate instead of making the move at once. "There's no reason to rush into it," said Jones. "We talk about it every day. It's not something you can do at once."

□ Braves Notebook, Page 2F

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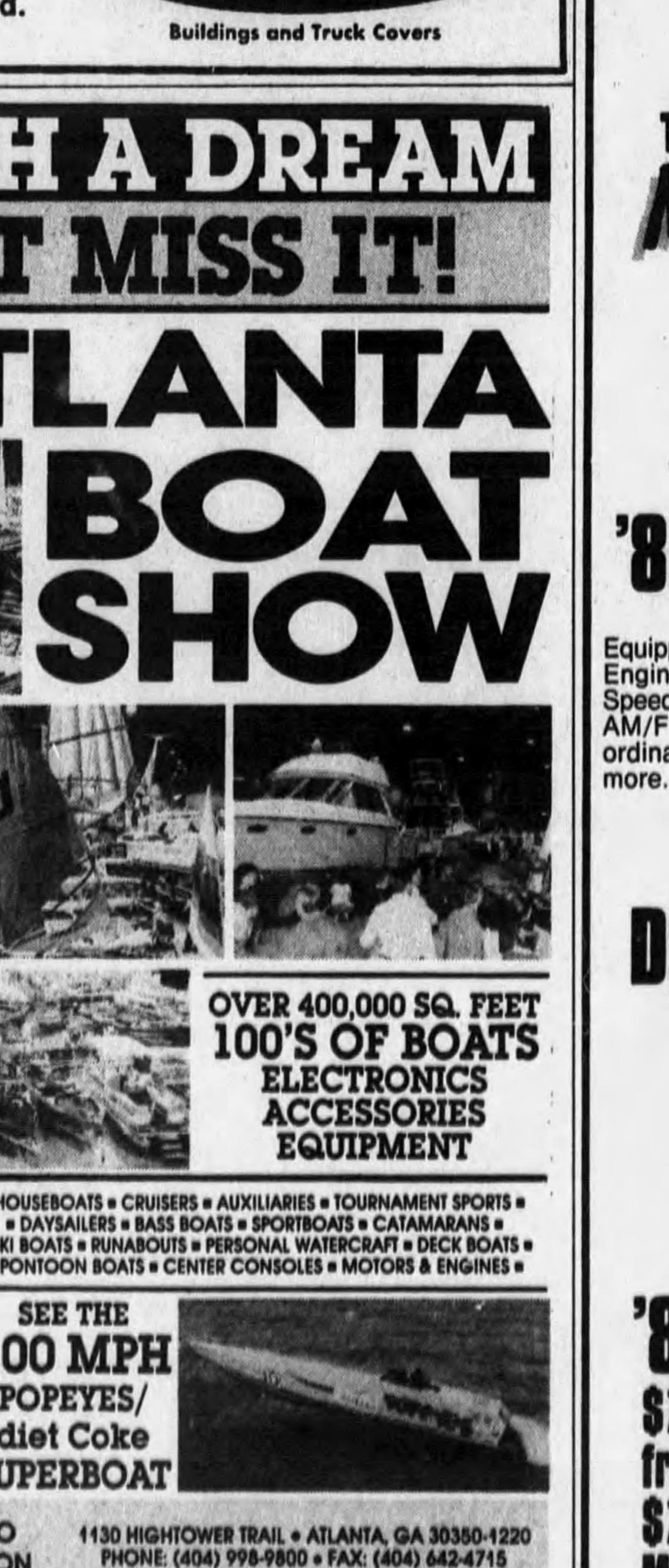


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