

Report says Kenny Anderson is Blazers' new point man. Page D3.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 17, 1996

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The Butler era means done deals by training camp

When John Butler showed up alone at Tuesday's Rich Stadium news conference to announce the signing of the Buffalo Bills' No. 1 draft pick, Eric Moulds, the first reaction was: Uh-oh. Something must have gone wrong.

Such as back in 1979, when talks between Tom Cousineau and the Bills broke off and the Ohio State linebacker, the No. 1 pick overall in that draft, walked off to Canada.



back Ronnie Harmon's agent, Lloyd Bloom, reached agreement on a contract with Bill Polian, then the Bills' general manager. Bloom had one last request — throw in a luxury car, a Mercedes or Rolls-Royce, for his client. Exasperated by Bloom's

Or 1986, when running

last-minute display of chutzpah, Polian angrily shut down NORTHROP the talks. Once Bloom had to explain to Harmon how he had torpedoed a done deal, Harmon turned around and hired a family friend,

Martin Rauch of Springville, to finish the negotia-Then there was 1975, when Buffalo's two top picks, Nebraska linebackers Tom Rudd and Bob

Nelson, were held out of training camp and beyond by their agent, Howard Slusher. Butler's solo arrival on Tuesday was no reason

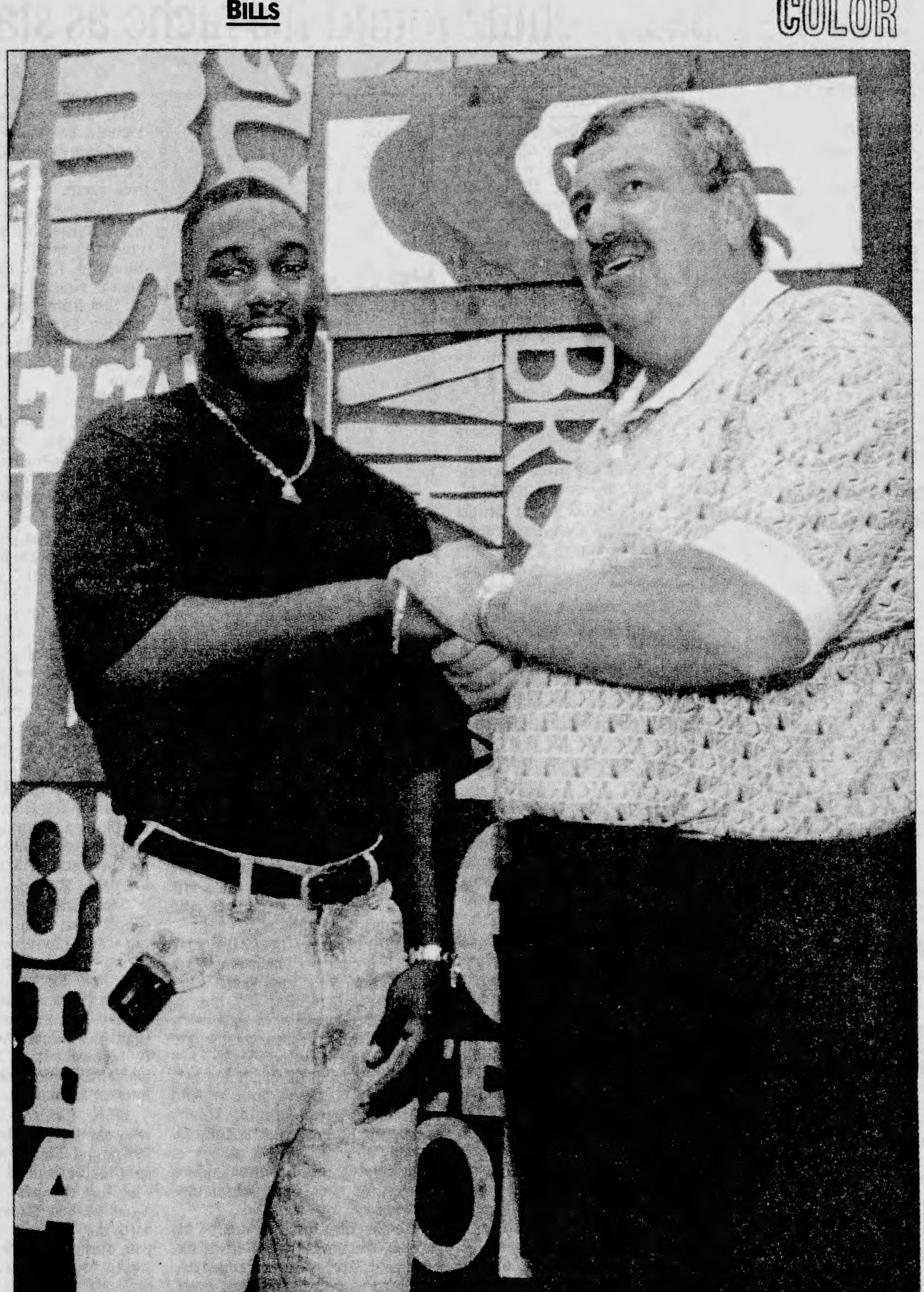
for alarm. It was simply a case of the GM arriving at the podium a few minutes ahead of Moulds, the player's agents and his mother, Mae Boulton. The wide receiver from Mississippi State had indeed signed a five-year contract, worth an estimated \$5 million, including a \$1.5 million signing bonus. Bills fans used to go into high anxiety if the

team's No. 1 pick wasn't signed by the time they handed out jocks and towels at training camp. For good reason. Buffalo's history of training camp holdouts goes back to O.J. Simpson's rookie year and beyond.

Not any more. When No. 2 pick Gabe Northern signed today, it kept Butler's slate clean. In the four years he has been the Bills' GM, every Buffalo draft pick has been signed before camp.

Besides Butler's skill in working a deal, the NFL salary cap and the limited pool of money available to sign draft picks has helped. No longer is it a matter of how much a player is going to get. That is almost predetermined by the money pool and the slotting that goes on. Now, the only real

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MIKE GROLL/Buffalo News

Bills GM John Butler welcomes first-round draft pick Eric Moulds into the fold.

Six stars-in-waiting look ready for prime time

Bills players climbing the ladder to Pro Bowl status:

Cornerback Thomas Smith: Excels in man-to-man coverage.

III Free safety Kurt Schulz: Has a nose for the ball.

(This is the fourth of four stories previewing the Buffalo Bills' 1996 training camp. Today's installment focuses on players who are ready to step up to Pro Bowl status.)

By VIC CARUCCI

News Sports Reporter

They are turning the corner from players with promise to those who must be given consideration for a Who's Who list at their respective positions.

They have yet to be selected to the Pro Bowl, although, for some, that could change this season.

Cornerback Thomas Smith, free safety Kurt Schulz, defensive end Phil Hansen, nose tackle Ted Washington, offensive tackle John Fina, and offensive guard Ruben Brown are ready to step up to big-time status.

When the Bills open training camp Thursday at Fredonia State College, these players will resume their climb up the ladder of recognition.

Defensive end Phil Hansen: Can sack 'em and stuff 'em. M Nose tackle Ted Washington: Will have "bigger" role this season. III Offensive tackle John Fina: Earned franchise-player label.

ON THE RISE

■ Offensive guard Ruben Brown: Had outstanding rookie season.

in 1994, he established himself as the four-year contract worth \$6.8 million. most consistent performer in Buffalo's secondary, which played exceptionally well in the face of several injuries.

Smith finished with only two interceptions — one more than he had in '94 but he was extremely effective in breaking up passes and stuck to receivers level.

Smith's stock soared last season, his closely enough to discourage quarterthird in the NFL and second as a start- backs from throwing his way. In Februer. After struggling at right cornerback ary, the Bills rewarded him with a new

> "Thomas is a big-time player," defensive coordinator Wade Phillips said. "Last year gave him the confidence he needs going in. I think he had some confidence, but he hadn't played to that level yet. Last year he played to that

"We played a lot of games where receivers just didn't catch many passes, or hardly any, in his area. You can put Thomas man-to-man and not give him any help. As a corner, you've got to have short-area quickness, but you also have to have speed. He has both."

Smith's physical skills obviously play a major role in his success. But the coaches also see special psychological qualities that help him extract the most from his talent.

"Besides ability, you've got to be a great competitor," Phillips said. "And I think that's what's helped him to play really well because he's so competitive. He just doesn't want anybody to catch it on him in practice or anywhere else."

"He has a very good temperament for a corner," coach Marv Levy said. "If he gets beat, he has the attitude that he maybe lost the skirmish, but he hasn't lost the war. He comes back and makes

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Irvin awaits word from league

By DENNE H. FREEMAN

Associated Press

IRVING, Texas — Now Michael Irvin awaits judgment from the NFL.

While he gets away from football to reorganize his life after apologizing for his part in a scandal involving drugs and topless dancers, the Dallas Cowboys wide receiver has a decision by NFL commissioner Paul Tagliabue hanging over his

Sources say Irvin could be suspended for at least four games, costing him more than \$400,000.

The NFL hasn't said when Tagliabue's decision will come down, but it was expected either late this week or next week. Irvin apologized Tuesday to everyone he knew, including his late father, for his

mistakes. Agonizingly, he faced almost as many cameras and reporters as Cowboys owner Jerry Jones did the night he fired Tom Landry. More than 30 mini-cams and 100 media members watched as Irvin talked without notes about his mistakes. There

were no questions. "I hurt to the bone," Irvin said while members of his family, including his mother Pearl, wife Sandi and his two daughters looked on. Baby Chelsea, still being bottle fed, provided the only light moment for her moist-eyed father, who was interrupted several times by her jab-

"There's no getting around it," he said. "I was wrong. I was wrong."

The star receiver was 40 minutes late for his own news conference at the Cowboys' Valley Ranch headquarters hours after a judge sentenced him to four years' probation and 800 hours of community service for his no-contest plea to a felony cocaine possession charge.

"I'd like to apologize to my family," Irvin said. "I shall work on being a better father. I shall work on being a better hus-

The center of a scandal involving topless dancers, allegations of drug and sex parties and a murder-for-hire plot, Irvin said he will not report to Cowboys training camp when it opens today in Austin. Instead, he said, he was going to Miami

to be with his wife and children. "I'm going home to talk with my wife, and we're going to decide what we'll do

from there," Irvin said. Irvin did not say when he would join the team and left Valley Ranch carrying Chelsea without answering reporters' questions. He cited a gag order imposed by state District Judge Manny Alvarez in explaining why he would not discuss the

particulars of his case. In sentencing Irvin, Alvarez warned that violating terms of his probation could result in a far stiffer sentence, including a maximum 20 years in prison. Alvarez also imposed a \$10,000 fine — about what Irvin earns in six minutes on the football

Alvarez said he had heard enough evidence to find Irvin guilty on the cocaine charge and warned of stiff punishment if he gets into further trouble.

"If you come back before me . . . I will find you guilty of this offense and you're looking at 20 years in the penitentiary," Alvarez told Irvin.

Asked if he understood, Irvin replied, "Yes, sir."

EMPIRE STATE GAMES

Marchant to headline Opening Ceremonies

By MARY JO MONNIN

News Sports Reporter

Todd Marchant makes his living with the National Hockey League's Edmonton Oilers, but it wasn't that long ago that the Williamsville native was a member of the Western Region Empire State Games team.

Marchant will share those experiences as keynote speaker at the Opening Ceremonies when the Games begin a five-day run in Buffalo on July 24.

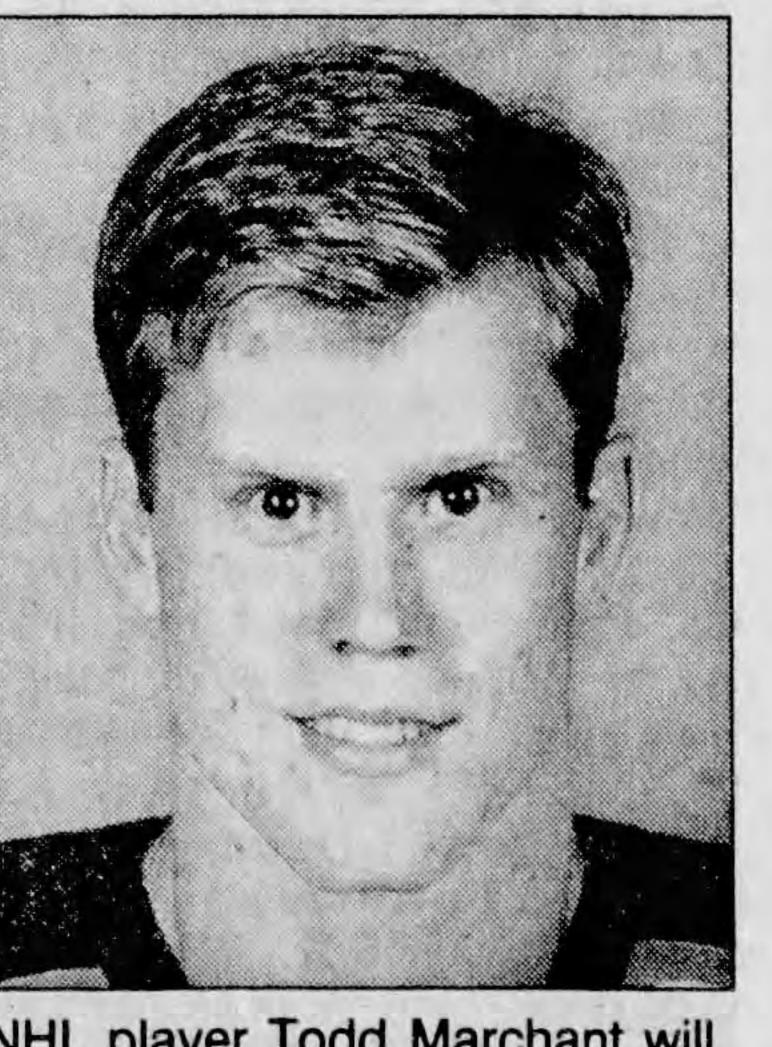
Nearly 7,000 athletes, representing six regions across New

York State, will participate in the 19th annual Games. Marchant's planned speech at

North AmeriCare Park was one of many announcements made Tuesday during an ESG luncheon at the Aud Club in Memorial Auditorium.

Marchant, who begins his third season with the Oilers in October, played for the Western Region in 1989 and 1990. His experiences were mixed — the 1989 team failed to medal and the 1990 team won the gold.

"It was very exciting," said Marchant. "For some kids it's a chance for them to showcase their



NHL player Todd Marchant will give the ESG keynote address.

talents. You had to be a very good underage player to get a tryout, much less make the team. I grew up playing against kids a

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BISONS

Losing streak ends at eight games

Special to The News

DES MOINES, Iowa — The breeze blowing through Western New York this morning originated Tuesday night in Iowa, where the Buffalo Bisons let out a collective sigh of relief after putting their eight-game losing streak to rest.

The Herd got three hits from Ryan Thompson, including a monstrous two-run homer, and topped the Iowa Cubs, 6-3, at Sec Taylor Stadium.

"It was one of those things," Thompson said of the streak. "Regardless of how good you are you're going to go through a period where you're just

The win was the first since July 5 for the Bisons, who were coming perilously close to matching the franchise American Association record of 10 straight defeats set at the end of the 1994 season.

What the Herd has been needing is a hitter to fill the hole in the order left by an injury to Herbert

Perry and the departure of Brian Giles. Thompson became that player as his second homer in as many games highlighted a three-run fourth inning that provided Buffalo a 4-0 lead. He has 11 homers on the season.

What the Bisons also have been needing is a rock-solid pitching performance, or two. They got them from spot starter Jimmy Williams and reliever Darryl Scott.

Williams went seven innings, allowing four hits and one walk, to pick up his staff-high eighth victory against three defeats. Scott closed out the win with a strikeout that capped two perfect innings of work. He has three saves.

"Pitching's been the key to our success and Jimmy Williams came up with a tremendous outing today," manager Brian Graham said. "Tonight we were sound. When we're sound we give ourselves a chance to win."

Albie Lopez (7-2) will start tonight's series finale (8:15, Radio 550) against Dave Swartzbaugh (4-7).