

ACROSS THE BOARDS

Jazz forward Kirilenko plans to leave NBA, according to report

Utah Jazz forward Andrei Kirilenko is set to walk away from the US\$63-million remaining on his NBA contract, the Salt Lake Tribune reported yesterday.

"This is a lot of money, even for an NBA club. So what? Maybe this money could go to pay for more players or for something else.

Ex-mobster scares rookies straight

NBA GAMBLING LECTURER

By Howard Beck

Michael Franzese has never had much trouble spooking athletes about the perils of gambling and the insidiousness of organized crime.

But Franzese, who makes a living on the lecture circuit these days, got an unexpected assist this summer: the arrest of Tim Donaghy, a veteran NBA referee.

To Franzese, it was a familiar story line. To the young NBA players that Franzese addressed Thursday afternoon, it was a spectacular, tangible example of everything that he warns them against.

"It definitely hits home, because it's somebody that's in our league," Sean May, a Charlotte Bobcats forward, said in a telephone interview after attending the lecture.

May is among nearly 70 players, most

of them drafted in June, who are attending the NBA's annual rookie transition program this week in Rye Brook, N.Y.

The Donaghy scandal was not the focus of Thursday's session, although Franzese discussed it, because "it would be irresponsible not to mention it."

The session was closed to reporters. Franzese spoke by telephone afterward. Franzese, 55, has long relied on his experiences in the mob to educate players at both the collegiate and professional levels.

His message to players is always the same — that professional gamblers are "always on the hunt and on the lookout to make targets out of these guys."

"That's what I did when I was on the streets," he said. "And really make them understand that there's no upside for them to get involved in gambling."

In the past, Franzese illustrated his point by talking about the athletes he ensnared in the 1980s, when he was a member of the Colombo crime family. Players who could not pay their gambling debts were threatened with physical harm unless they complied with Franzese's orders.

But those players remain anonymous,

and those examples remain trapped in a pre-Court TV era. The Donaghy case provides a vivid new portrait of the consequences of associating with gamblers.

"Look at the cloud it puts over the game, because you got one guy who went off-kilter like this," Franzese said. But based on his experience, and his familiarity with the NBA, Franzese is convinced that the scandal will end with Donaghy.

"In my opinion, this guy is an isolated incident," he said. "He got himself involved with the wrong people. I don't think you're going to see much more of it."

Franzese also said he was not shocked when the case came to light in July — "because my experience with gambling in general is that nobody is immune from it."

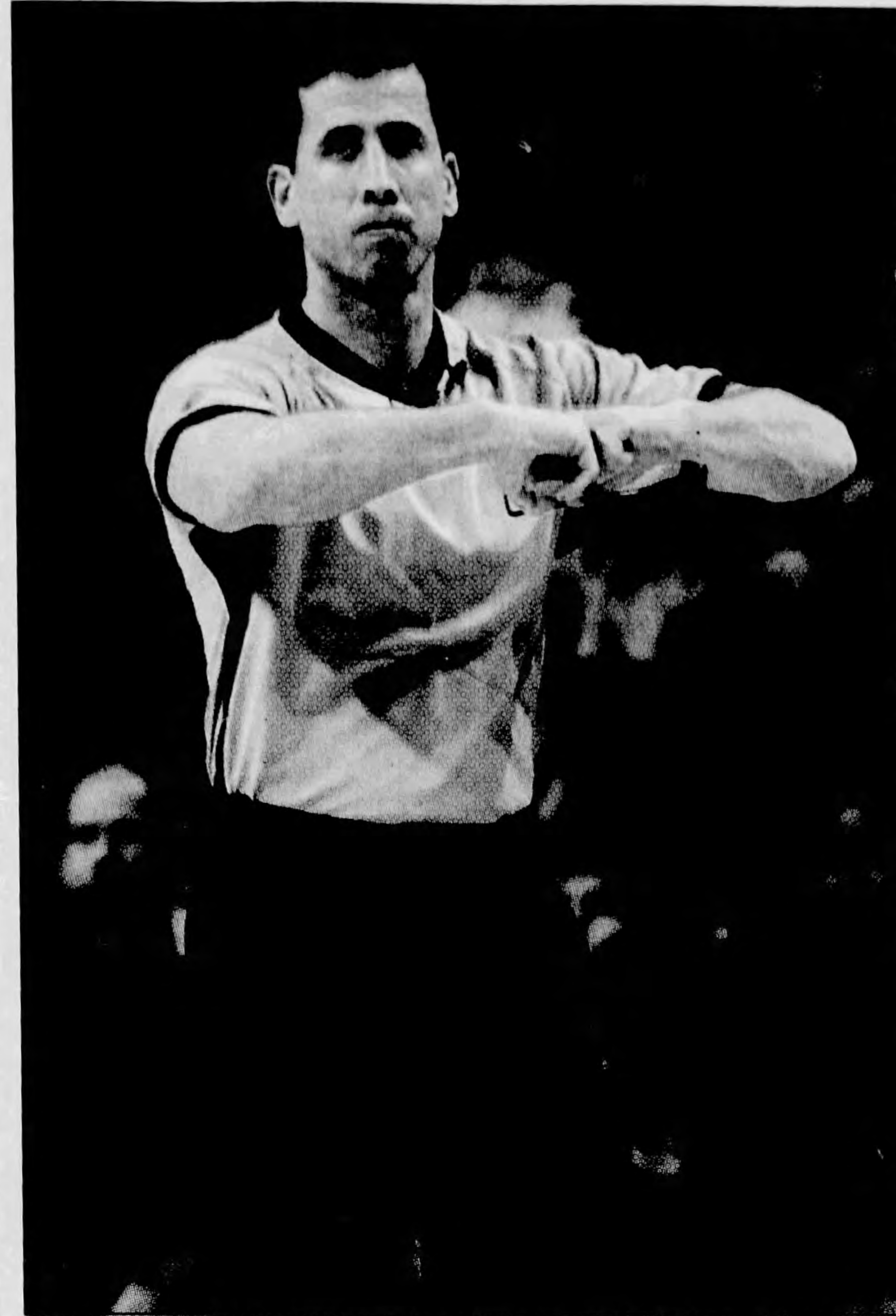
Franzese commended the NBA and other professional leagues for their anti-gambling efforts. He cited the extensive background checks and educational programs the leagues all conduct. But, he said: "At some point, you've got to rely on the integrity of the person. Unfortunately, this guy, he didn't have that kind of integrity."

Gambling education has been part of the NBA's rookie program since its inception in 1986. Veteran players get refresher courses at least every other season.

The challenge of steering players, or anyone, away from gambling has only increased in recent years, Franzese said. He cited the proliferation of online gambling sites and the explosion of competitive poker, which is now marketed as a sport. He told the story of a professional athlete who had his identity stolen while gambling online. That player soon "got a visit" from a professional gambler who threatened to use that information to commit fraud in the player's name.

Those are the kinds of stories that grab a young athlete's attention.

The New York Times



JOE MURPHY / NBAE VIA GETTY IMAGES

Former mobster Michael Franzese said the gambling controversy surrounding Tim Donaghy scarred the entire NBA. "Look at the cloud it puts over the game."

NATIONAL POST WEATHER

For updated weather reports check out National Post Online www.nationalpost.com

LEGEND

Abbreviations for 4 day forecast: daytime high, overnight low and conditions. c - cloudy, fg - fog, fr - freezing rain, hz - haze, na - not available, pc - partly cloudy, rs - rain/snow, s - sun, sb - snow, sf - snow flurries, sh - showers, t - thunderstorms, w - windy. All temperatures in Celsius.

USA

Table with 4 columns: City, Today, Sun., Mon., Tue. listing weather forecasts for major US cities like Atlanta, Boston, Buffalo, Chicago, Dallas, Denver, Honolulu, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, Myrtle Beach, New Orleans, New York, Orlando, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Salt Lake City, San Diego, San Francisco, Seattle, Washington.

INTERNATIONAL

Table with 4 columns: City, Today, Sun., Mon., Tue. listing weather forecasts for international cities like Amsterdam, Athens, Auckland, Bangkok, Barbados, Beijing, Beirut, Berlin, Brussels, Budapest, Buenos Aires, Cairo, Cape Town, Dublin, Edinburgh, Geneva, Hong Kong, Jerusalem, Johannesburg, Kingston, Lisbon, London, Madrid, Manila, Mexico City, Moscow, Nairobi, Nassau, New Delhi, Paris, Prague, Rio de Janeiro, Rome, Singapore, Stockholm, Sydney, Tokyo, Vienna, Warsaw.

AIR QUALITY

For 2 p.m. Friday. A reading of less than 32 is acceptable; More than 100 is dangerous:

Table with 2 columns: City, Reading. Listing air quality index for Toronto, Downtown, East, Mississauga, Oakville, Hamilton, Niagara, Kitchener, London, Sarnia, Oshawa, Kingston, Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury, Thunder Bay, Windsor.



TORONTO AND AREA SEVEN-DAY FORECAST

Table with 7 columns: Today, Tomorrow, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday. Each column includes a weather icon and a brief description of the forecast for Toronto and the surrounding area.

ONTARIO

Table with 4 columns: City, Today, Sun., Mon., Tue. listing weather forecasts for Ontario cities like Hamilton, Kingston, Kitchener, London, Muskoka, Niagara Falls, North Bay, Ottawa, Oshawa, Owen Sound, Parry Sound, Peterborough, St. Catharines, Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury, Thunder Bay, Timmins, Toronto, Windsor.

EAST-WEST

Table with 4 columns: City, Today, Sun., Mon., Tue. listing weather forecasts for cities like Banff, Calgary, Charlottetown, Churchill, Edmonton, Fredericton, Halifax, Iqaluit, Kelowna, Moncton, Montreal, Quebec City, Regina, Saint John, Saskatoon, St. John's, Vancouver, Whitehorse, Winnipeg, Yellowknife.

COTTAGE COUNTRY

Table with 2 columns: City, Forecast. Listing weather forecasts for Bobcaygeon, Collingwood, Goderich, Gravenhurst, Huntsville, Parry Sound.

TORONTO ALMANAC

Table with 2 columns: YESTERDAY, TODAY'S RECORDS. Listing high, low, precipitation, barometer, and last year's records for Toronto.

CANADIANS HOPING TO FINISH WITH A WIN

RUGBY WORLD CUP

By Barnaby Chesterman

BORDEAUX, FRANCE • Canada team ambassador Al Charron said the extra rest his side has had ahead of its match against Japan here on Tuesday should count in its favour.

Canada has been resting and training this week while Japan were thrashed 72-18 by Wales on Thursday night.

And Charron believes that should give his squad the edge in the match to avoid the Pool C wooden spoon.

"They're always quite shifty, a little erratic in their play but I imagine with [coach] John Kirwan things are going to be a little more stable," he said of Japan.

"Certainly the schedule favours us in that we have nine days between our games."

New Zealander Kirwan, a World Cup winner in the inaugural tournament in 1987, had admitted before the Wales match that there was not enough time to recover ahead of the Canada game.

However, he is remaining positive.

"It is important we learn that lesson [from the Wales match] and take it forward to our final match against Canada, which is our most important game in this World Cup," he said.

"We came here aiming to win two games and we should have won the Fiji game (a 35-31 defeat). Now it is taking what we can out of this game and getting out there and beating Canada. It will be a positive World Cup if we finish with a win."

Canada, too, believes it will be a positive World Cup if it finishes with a victory, despite setting their sights much higher before the tournament began.

Charron said they had hoped to reach the knock-out stages.

"If we say we want to go there and just perform that's a loser's attitude. We wanted to at least get to the quarter-finals," he said.

"It was a somewhat realistic goal, obviously we were playing against three teams in our pool ranked ahead of us ... so if you go by that textbook, we should only come out with one [win], but it's quite possible we won't have any."

"Our goal was to advance to the quarter-final, that's no longer the case now but we're trying to get the win that we're seeking against Japan."

"It's easier said than done, it will be a hard game for us, then we'll take the Australia game [on Sept. 29] as it comes."

"As long as we're developing the players and the players are learning from the experience ... We've picked a young squad, a lot of these guys will be around for 2011."

Agence France-Presse