Tuesday, March 20, 1990



Milt Northrop

Bills' off-season news is bad, worse, worst

FF-SEASON IS WHEN memories of past disappointments grow dim and new hope arises among followers of sports teams. Even Cleveland Indians fans imagine the Tribe challenging for the pennant before

the harsh reality of spring and summer sets in. For Buffalo Bills fans, though, the suffering didn't stop after Ronnie Harmon dropped that touchdown pass in the playoff game at Cleveland Stadium Jan. 6. In some ways, the agony has become worse.

Can anybody name one positive development in the off-season for the Bills? For Buffalo fans, all the news has been bad.

Tickets? A second price increase in two years raised the cost as much as \$6 per seat. A sideline ticket that cost \$22 in 1988 will go for \$28 this fall unless you are a season-ticket holder. Then it's \$25.

Plan B? The score there is Opponents 2, Bills 0. Buffalo already has lost punter John Kidd to the San Diego Chargers and wide receiver Flip Johnson to the Green Bay Packers, and may lose nose tackle Fred Smerlas to the 49ers. Meanwhile, Gerald McNeil and Paul Frazier, the two players in whom Buffalo admitted having any interest, have signed with other clubs.

This doesn't come under Plan B, but the Bills lost a capable defensive assistant when line coach Ted Cottrell left to join the Phoenix Cardinals' staff.

More bad news: General Manager Bill Polian, the man generally credited with straightening out the Bills organization and setting it

The last thing the Bills need is a three-piece suit gumming up the works on football matters here.

on a course that made it a divisional champion, is being considered for an important league post of director of operations. His departure could lead to all sorts of misadventures.

More bad news: owner Ralph C. Wilson says he intends to get even more involved in the team's operations now that he has pared down

his other business holdings. Ralph is even talking about making some of the key personnel decisions usually left up to his football men.

Worse news: Because Wilson has consolidated his operations in Detroit, he may transfer one of the key executives there to the football front office here, presumably to give Polian a hand.

Even though relations between Orchard Park and Detroit have gone considerably smoother in recent years, the last thing the Bills need is a three-piece suit gumming up the works on football matters here.

Each time in their history that the Bills have enjoyed a little success, they have be-

come dangerous — to themselves. Right now, they are sitting on another public relations disaster.

After blaming Plan B free agency for last year's ticket increase, guess what the Bills

blamed this time? The public isn't buying it. It's perfectly understandable that increased bonuses and salaries for the fringe players and sunset veterans in Plan B are driving up salaries across the board. However, try explaining

that to fans who see no movement on the part

of the Bills in the Plan B market. Some even may buy Polian's argument that going after the few players in the free agent market that would help this team can backfire because it creates resentment and envy among other players. Then they pick up the paper and read that the Cleveland Browns signed veteran cornerback Ray Clayborn away from the New

England Patriots. You can't blame them for asking, "Why aren't the Bills in the market for a player like Clayborn, who could bring short-term help to

See Northrop Page D3

Baseball's best start long road back

Return of 'spring' helps cool Collins after Bisons lose

Special to The News

PORT CHARLOTTE, Fla. — Terry Collins may have been gracious in defeat because Monday's sunrise was accompanied by baseball's return to nor-

The Buffalo Bisons dropped their 1990 exhibition season opener, 10-3, to the Oklahoma City 89ers, but the owners and Major League Players Association finally had agreed on a new Collective Bargaining Agreement to save Commissioner Fay Vincent the dubious honor of attaching an asterisk to the season.

And the Pittsburgh Pirates' minor league camp shared Vincent's relief. "Everybody's spirits picked up a little bit today," Collins said.

Now that labor talks have ended, the Pirates' front office will hold its own discussions. The Bucs must decide how to disperse the 40-plus players entering camp. They also must decide what players will be invited to major league camp.

Teams routinely promise major league tryouts to veteran free-agent signees, but an abbreviated spring makes it unlikely all promises will be honored. The Bisons say at least 12 players not protected on the Pirates' 40-man roster were scheduled to attend major league

The Pirates' camp will officially open Wednesday, but coach Rich Donnelly said victims of the lockout may include the younger players fighting for roster spots — and who could end up in Buffalo. The shortened exhibition season means pitching prospects will get only a cursory look.

"This is going to hurt guys like (pitchers) Mike York and Rick Reed," Donnelly said.

The answers will emerge from meetings headed by General Manager Larry Doughty and Pirates manager Jim Ley-

"The way it sounds, we're not going to get raided," Collins said. "They may take three or four pitchers as long as those guys have been throwing, but they'll still keep their schedule and pitch in games here (with Buffalo). But don't know what Jim's (Leyland's) plans are. Who they're going to take and how they're going to use them, I don't know."

However, Pittsburgh's plans should take shape today and Wednesday, leaving the Bisons ample time to prepare for their April 6 American Association opener at Denver.



GETTING A JUMP: Oakland relief ace Dennis Eckersley gets in some early practice Monday under the watchful eye of pitching coach Dave Duncan, left, and starting pitcher Mike Moore at the A's Phoenix training camp.

The Herd will play an intrasquad game today and face the Rochester Red Wings at 1 p.m. Wednesday at Pirate

They opened their exhibition season just like their 1988 regular season with Bernie Tatis hitting a homer.

However, Tatis isn't a Pirates farmhand anymore. He's an 89er. And the home run was part of a 14-hit attack that carried the 89ers to a 10-3 rout of the formulating Herd at the Texas Rangers' spring training complex.

Outfield prospect Ed Yacopino drove in all three Bison runs with a double, triple and homer. He batted .264 with seven homers and 33 RBIs at Double A Harrisburg last season.

The Bisons totaled nine hits against a collection of Oklahoma City pitchers, committed a single error and drew the praises of Collins.

"We played well," Collins said. "Our pitching just got bounced around a little bit, but they had a pretty good team out there."

way into some adopted formulas

By JACK O'CONNELL Hartford Courant

NEW YORK — Negotiators worked furiously over the weekend to get a collective-bargaining agreement in place so that the 162-game regular season would not be victimized. Commissioner Fay Vincent said that he wanted to avoid an asterisk being applied to the 1990 season, as it was in 1981 because of a 50-day strike.

But asterisks worked their way into some of the formulas adopted Monday by the two major leagues and the players' union in setting guidelines for the

■ Pitchers need more time / D3 ■ Settlement at a glance / D3

start of regular-season play April 9, one week later than the original Opening

A decision on when games lost the first week of the season will be rescheduled is not expected until Wednesday at the earliest. The American and National leagues might announce today the revised exhibition schedule. Of the 410 spring games originally scheduled, 362 were canceled during the 32-day lockout that officially ended Monday as training camps opened throughout Florida and Arizona.

Several teams are trying to rework plans that had included road games in places such as Des Moines, Memphis and Oklahoma City.

The annual Freeway Series between the Los Angeles Dodgers and California Angels, scheduled March 30-April 1, has been switched to April 6-8. The Mets-Yankees' home-and-home series scheduled March 31 and April 1 was moved to April 7-8.

Several other items were established concerning roster size and rules changes during the early portion of the season.

Gene Orza, general counsel of the Major League Players Association, said rosters would expand from 24 to 27 players for the season's first 21 days.

With spring training reduced to three weeks, clubs were concerned that pitchers would not have sufficient time to get into regular-season condition. Increasing rosters would allow clubs to carry additional pitchers to help make up the workload.

Where the asterisk comes in is because of a rules change. For the first 14 games, starting pitchers do not need to

See Baseball Page D3

Parity reigns in a season of change

By JIM KELLEY News Sports Reporter



It has been a year of change for the National Hockey League. Consider:

For the first time since 1970-71, the regular season could end without even one

team totaling 100 points. Since 1970-71, when the schedule was bumped from 76 to 78 games (teams now play 80), there have been at least two teams each season to finish with at least 100.

The Norris Division teams haven't finished above .500 against non-division teams since the league went to its current divisional format

(1982-83); after Monday night's games (which included the Blues losing to the Flames), the Norris Division as a whole is one game below .500 against non-divisional opponents.

For the first time in three seasons, Mario Lemieux will not win the scoring championship.

For the first time since 1971-72, the Flyers may miss the Stanley Cup playoffs.

For the first time in anyone's memory, teams that finished atop their division standings the previous season (namely, the Washington Capitals and Detroit Red Wings) may finish last.

For the first time in a more than a decade, the league MVP is likely to be someone other than Wayne Gretzky or Lemieux.

What's going on here? In a word,

The NHL, which in past years has embraced change at about the speed of

dirt, now is becoming highly competitive. While playoff berths largely are determined, the final order and standings still are very much up for grabs with two weeks left in the season. Although the scoring championship almost certainly will be won by Gretzky, it's unlikely he or Lemieux will be the league's most valuable player. The rookie of the year still is anybody's guess. The Stanley Cup champion? Who knows?

What follows is a look at what's going on in the NHL as the season winds down, and what might happen when it's over.

At the Top: The Calgary Flames finished first overall last season with 117 points, but were in a race with the Montreal Canadiens (115) until the final day of the season. This season, only Boston (93) and perhaps Calgary (92)

See NHL Page D2

Little 3 series set to resume

By MIKE HARRINGTON News Sports Reporter

Some of the old spark will be returning to Little Three basketball next season. Officials are tight-lipped about

it, but it is almost certain that St. Bonaventure will resume a homeand-home series with Canisius and Niagara for the 1990-91 season.

"It looks real good, but we're waiting to finalize dates," said Canisius coach Marty Marbach. "It's not official, but there's reason to believe it's going to happen."

The teams played twice a season until 1983-84, when St. Bonaventure dropped one game with the others.

After three years as backup, Leon looking to seal job as starter

By VIC CARUCCI

News Sports Reporter

Leon Seals is ready to start at left defensive end for the Buffalo

The question is, are the Bills ready for Seals to be a starter?

Based on off-season phone conversations he has had with some of the team's decision-makers,

■ Johnson signs with Pack / D3

Seals doesn't expect the answer to come until the first game of the 1990 regular season.

"I'm going to have to come in there and just work and keep striving, trying to get that starting position," Seals said from his offseason home in Brandon, Miss. "I know I'm going to have to come into training camp and compete."

In other words, just because Art Still, the Bills' No. 1 left defensive end the last two seasons, no longer figures in the team's plans, Seals hasn't been given an automatic promotion.

summer at Fredonia State College

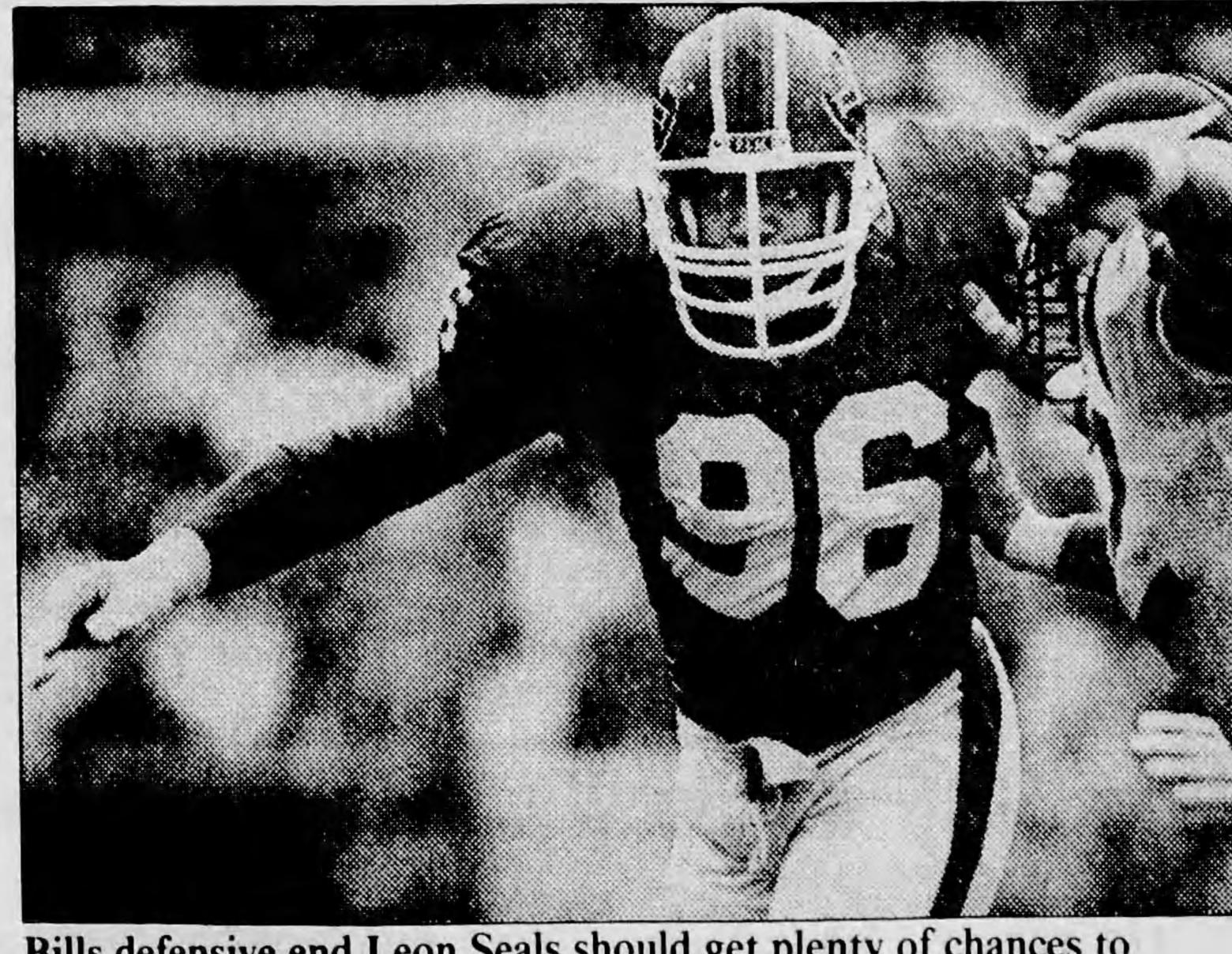
- providing, by the end of the preseason, he is promoted.

"I don't have anything against the coaching staff or anybody, but I don't see Leon Seals as a backup this season at all," Seals said. "Over the past years, I've become very dedicated to the game, as well as very knowledgeable about it, and I figure I am ready to start. I've been in the position where I've had to go in there as a starter, over and over, and succeed. You can do that and be humble for only so long.

"After a point, you want to say, 'Hey, I want to be in there for

Asked what his reaction would be if he wasn't picked to start, Seals said, "I want to cross that bridge when I come to it. But to be with the Buffalo Bills and not be a starter for the 1990 season ... that would be hard to swallow. can't even find the words to describe how that would feel.

"I've already talked to Gil Thompson (his agent) about it. And that's OK with him. He Would I ask to be traded if I isn't afraid of working hard this didn't start? Anything's a possibility. Right now, I just want to take



Bills defensive end Leon Seals should get plenty of chances to disrupt the flow of opposing offenses in 1990.

it one day at a time — and come paper, he does. into camp swinging."

But by next month's NFL draft, Given the fact he is entering his the paper could change, if the Bills fourth season in the NFL and has do as expected and use a high seen action as a starter, Seals choice for a defensive lineman. If would seem to have the inside they pick an end, Seals is certain track on replacing Still. And, on to be affected.

Seals started the first four games of the 1988 season while right end Bruce Smith served a suspension for substance abuse. Seals, who joined the Bills the year before as a fourth-round pick from Jackson (Miss.) State, held his own as the Bills went 4-0.

Seals didn't make any starts last year, but spelled Still frequently. He finished the season with 40 tackles, including four sacks. The performance apparently didn't convince the coaches Seals would provide them the strong pass rush they want from the left side to take pressure off

"I honestly don't know what the coaches could be questioning about me," Seals said. "I think I've done everything in my power to succeed and be where I am right now. And none of the coaches has come up to me recently and said, 'Leon, you need to do this and do that.' I've stayed on top of my game."

Seals made what he considers a move to enhance his physical conditioning by selling his Orchard Park home and moving to Missis-

sippi. He said it allows him to have more intense off-season workouts, because he runs the hills that surround Jackson with former Bills teammates Chris Burkett and Carl Byrum, who live in the area.

"We call them the Red Hills of Mississippi," Seals said. "They make you or break you, and lately they've been making us."

He is looking forward to working with Chuck Dickerson, who took over as the Bills' defensive line coach after Ted Cottrell left for a similar post with the Phoenix Cardinals.

"I'm very sad about Ted leaving us, but I'm excited to see Chuck Dickerson come in and get the job," Seals said. "I've seen him coach our tight ends, and he's a hell of a motivator. I like that in a coach. I think he'll be a big help in that position.

"Just like with any coach at any position, the players and the coach have to grow together. Establishing a good rapport doesn't just happen overnight."

Nor, in Seals' case, does becoming a starter.

Only the pitchers will suffer from short spring

Three weeks expected to be enough for position players to get into the swing

United Press International

NEW YORK - With the lockout ended, the question now facing baseball fans is if three weeks present enough time for players to be effective at the start of the season.

"Oh, I expect to be ready," said Texas Rangers outfielder Pete Incaviglia. "I think a lot of people expect to be ready. We've always said that spring training was too long. For a position player, it will be a lot easier for us to get ready."

Incaviglia made his comments after he and six other players stayed around until 5:30 a.m. Monday to wait for the union and management briefing about the end of the 32-day spring training lockout.

"The three weeks we feel is going to be adequate," American League President Dr. Bobby Brown said. "We recognize that perhaps all the pitchers and all the players may not be in as good as shape as they usually would be.

"But we are counting on the fact that we think that they (players) have been doing a certain amount of work during the winter and the spring. And so hopefully when April 9th rolls around, we will have a decent product — and I think we will."

Incaviglia said in response: "Well, I think this is a different class of athlete that comes to the park now. The players lift (weights), run all winter, and keep themselves in great shape.

"I think it's going to have some effect on the game, but I don't think you are going to see very much drop-off in the quality of play."

Paul Molitor, the Milwaukee Brewers player representative, said fans can expect some good performances when the season begins on April 9.

"No doubt about it," he said. "Most guys have had the luxury of not having to go through this (represent the players in the negotiations in New York). They have been doing things. They will be ready."

Some spring training camps opened Monday afternoon. Teams were expected to begin practice Tuesday or Wednesday. Exhibition games are tentatively set to start March 26.

Incaviglia tried to set a routine for the abbreviated practice time.

"I think that we will have three or four days of batting practice and getting ready," he said. "(We) will probably play some inter-squad games. And probably within a seven-day span, we will probably start to play two weeks of exhibition games."

Pitchers need more time to prepare for the regular season. Rosters have been expanded for the first 21 days from 24 to 27 players so teams can carry extra pitchers.

"Three weeks is about the minimum necessary to allow the starting pitchers to be reasonably certain they are going to avoid injury," union chief Don Fehr said. "Even after that, they are not going to be going as long as they otherwise would."

Oakland Athletics pitcher Scott Sanderson said: "We are just going to do the best we can. (The fans)

can expect our very best effort, every ounce of it." But Incaviglia realized the extra pressure put on pitchers.

"We will have to see what kind of condition the pitchers come in," he said. "The pitchers just take a little bit longer. They need the time on the mound they need the five innings here and the three innings there. They need to be broken in slowly.

"You can't just go in and say 'go out there and take the ball and go seven innings', it's tough."

Incaviglia and other players may finally get their chance to prove they do not need six weeks to get ready for the season.

Associated Press

SETTLEMENT AT A GLANCE

■ Salary arbitration eligibility for 17 percent of the players with between two and three years of service. Those players must have spent at least 86 days on the roster in the previous season.

A \$100,000 minimum salary for major leaguers, up from \$68,000, and a \$25,000 minimum for minor leaguers, up from \$22,700.

An annual \$55 million contribution by owners to the players' pension fund, up from \$39 million in the last year of the old agree-

Either side may reopen the contract on major issues after three years.

Rosters will stay at 24 players this season. They will expand to 25 in 1991 and stay that way at least through expansion.

Baseball will announce plans within 90 days to expand to two National League cities. Union will get triple damages if owners

are found guilty of collusion again. ■ The deadline moves from January to October for clubs to decide whether to arbitrate with former free agents, covered by repeater rights restriction.

Six-man study commission on the baseball industry.

Baseball: Waiver expected on consecutive game rule

Continued from Page D1

pitch the standard five innings to qualify for a victory. "Credit for a victory will be at the discretion of the official scorer, subject to the starting pitcher going three innings," Orza said.

That rule applies in the All-Star Game, where the starting pitcher is limited to three innings. Orza said that the change was necessary because pitchers with only three weeks of spring training could not be expected to pitch many innings at the start of the season.

"You don't see starters going four or five innings in the spring until about the fourth week of spring training," Orza said.

20-day rule by which clubs cannot schedule games on more than 20 consecutive dates. Games lost in the first week could be rescheduled on what had been off days and or adding double-headers.

If games were added at the end, it would push the post-season back. CBS-TV, which has contract rights for the playoffs and World Series, would have to give its approval.

BASEBALL CALENDAR

March 27 - Last day to request waivers to release player without having to pay his 1990 salary. April 9 - Opening day. Active roster reduced to 24 players. May 1 - Clubs may resume negotiations with their former players who became free agents.

whom they released following the end of the 1988 season. June 44 - Amateur draff. July 10 - All-Star Game, Wrigley

May 15 - Clubs may re-sign players

Field, Chicago, 8:35 EDT. Aug. 5 - Hall of Fame Induction ceremonies, Cooperstown, N.Y. Aug. 4 - Hail of Fame game, Montreal vs. Baltimore, Cooperstown, N.Y.

Aug. 31 - Deadline for post-season ros-Sept. 1 — Active rosters increased to 40 players.

Oct. 1 - All players an optional assignment must be recalled. Oct. 2 - National League playoffs begin, city of West division winner. Oct. 3 - American League playoffs be-

gin, city of East division winner. Oct. 13 - World Series begins, city of National League champion. Dec. 1-6 - Winter meetings, Los Angeles.

"We're all trying to work together for the best possible solution," CBS' Susan Kerr said. "We are an element of the puzzle."

Either way, the season will start in Fenway Park, with Detroit playing Boston. The Cincinnati Reds, who traditionally start the major league season at home, will open on the road for the first time since 1966.

The critical issue of salary-arbitration eligibility, which had held up the agreement, was settled by a compromise that allows some players with fewer than three-years experience to qualify for the process, in which an independent arbitrator decides a player's salary.

Management wanted to main-The union was prepared to co- tain the three-years eligibility it operate with the leagues in waiv- bargained for in the 1985 negotiaing — on a moderate basis — the tions, but the players wanted a rollback to two years. What broke the deadlock was management's acknowledgment that players sometimes were cheated out of service time when clubs optioned them to the minors.

Two examples were Darryl Strawberry of the Mets in 1983 and Ellis Burks of the Red Sox in 1987. They started those years in the minors despite outstanding springs and were recalled early in the season, losing service time that would have made them eligible a year earlier.

"Perhaps clubs were using the system in a way it was not designed," management negotiator Chuck O'Connor said. "There was a question of whether the structure was manipulated so that through this again." three-years eligibility became four. We found a basis to bridge the

The compromise is to have 17 percent of the players with twoplus years service time qualify for arbitration, providing they are on the major league roster at least half (86 days) of their third season. Fehr estimated 14 more players have been eligible for arbitra-

tion in 1989. "Let's hope this is the start to a reasonable and more mature relationship between the clubs and the union," said Milwaukee Brewers owner Bud Selig, chairman of the owners' Player Relations Committee. "I don't want to have to go



WE GOT OURS: Robin Wade of St. Petersburg, Fla., and her 15-month-old son, Elliott, leave Al Lang stadium after buying six tickets for an exhibition game between the St. Louis Cardinals and Philadelphia Phillies.

The four-year agreement also good deal." called for a \$32,000 raise in the minimum salary to \$100,000 and an increase in the owners' annual contribution to the players' benefits-pension fund from \$39 million to \$55 million. Anti-collusion language called for triple damages against owners found guilty of such an infraction.

Fehr said that ratification ballots would be mailed out to players this week, with a decision of the vote expected April 20. A majority is required for ratification.

"There shouldn't be any problem," American League player representative Paul Molitor of the Milwaukee Brewers said. "We all

want to play, and we negotiated a

Players were anxious to get back to work, even though equipment trucks had yet to arrive.

Ron Darling, Mike Marshall and Bob Ojeda were among the 20 Mets who showed up Monday at an empty clubhouse. Baltimore's Gregg Olson, Seattle's Ken Griffey Jr. and Atlanta's Tom Glavine were among the early arrivals else-

Mike Norris, trying to make a comeback at age 35, joined Dennis Eckersley, Mike Moore and Stewart at the Athletics' camp.

"It feels great to be back," Norris said. "Today is my birthday, and this is a great present."

Strawberry in camp early, vows no more controversy

Outfielder's off-season filled with trouble

Associated Press

PORT ST. LUCIE, Fla. — Darryl Strawberry was one of the first New York Mets to show up for work after word came the lockout had ended.

He says he isn't going to cause controversy anymore.

Strawberry is coming off nearly a month of alcohol rehabilitation. He also threatened his wife, Lisa, with a gun in their home.

The 28-year-old outfielder had the worst year of his career in 1989, and said on more than one occasion he wanted to leave the club.

"I look back at last year, and I really didn't have much motivation," Strawberry said. "I couldn't handle the pressure." Strawberry hit .225 last season

with 29 homers and 77 RBIs. Certainly not bad numbers, but not what the Mets expect from their clean-up man. "I locked myself in a corner

and let my life get out of control. Never let anyone get close to me," he said. "But I've accepted what's happened. Now I'm prepared to help the Mets win a championship."

Strawberry was one of a few Mets who took batting practice on a damp Monday at the Mets' spring training complex.

He doesn't want to talk about his time at Smithers, or about his marital problems.

"I'm not a controversial person anymore," Strawberry said.

At the start of spring training last year, Strawberry told the Mets he wanted to renegotiate his contract. The Mets said no, and he walked out for a couple of days. Prior to his walkout, Strawber-

ry took a swing at teammate Keith Hernandez just before the team picture was taken. Strawberry's contract expires at

the end of this season and he is eligible to become a free agent. Mets General Manager Frank

Cashen said in order for Strawberry to join the \$3 million club, he has to prove he deserves it. "I'm just going to play the 1990

season and see what happens,"

MAJOR LEAGUES

Strawberry said. "I just want baseball to be fun again."

Strawberry isn't promising a monster year, just a good one.

"One thing I can say," Strawberry said, "is that the guys who wrote me off last year, the guys who said I would be traded, they'll be in for a big surprise. I'm not going to say anything else. But they'll be surprised."

Yanks opener unsettled

Yankee owner George Steinbrenner said no decision has been made on the official opener for the Yanks. The consensus is the Yanks will open at Cleveland April 10, but Steinbrenner said there is consideration the Yanks might meet the Indians for one game at home April 9.



SHERIDAN

NORTH TONAWANDA Pagano Tractor **Tully Heating** Route 20, Main Road 44-46 Webster Street **NIAGARA FALLS:** LITTLE VALLEY Ahler's Lawn Mower Stoelting Machine Napoli Road 2285 Niagara Falls "ALL HECTOR'S HARDWARE LOCATIONS"

Northrop: Bills' good will is threatened

Continued from Page D1

Buffalo's questionable secondary?"

If the Browns can risk denting player morale to upgrade the team, why can't the Bills take the same gamble? Assuming the Bills sell another 45,000 or so sea-

son tickets, and sell out seven of eight regular-season home games again in 1990, gross gate receipts will increase by roughly \$250,000 each of those weeks. On top of that, the Bills' share of network television revenues will increase this year by almost \$10

million to \$26.7 million and will keep on escalating

to \$28.2 million in 1991, \$34 million in 1992 and

\$39 million in 1993. Between increased TV revenue and higher ticket prices, the Bills' gross revenues figure to jump in the

neighborhood of at least \$12 million in 1990. Some of that largess, of course, will pay for the fat, new \$3-million-a-year contract quarterback Jim Kelly reportedly will sign one of these days. Linebacker Shane Conlan and wide receiver Andre Reed also have made their pitches for hefty increases that would put them in the \$1 million club with defensive end Bruce Smith, and it won't be long before linebacker Cornelius Bennett and running back Thurman Thomas, two more of the team's young stars,

make grabs for the cash. At the same time, the Bills are losing some healthy

salaries: Art Still (\$715,000), Joe Devlin (\$380,000), Derrick Burroughs (\$355,000), Kidd (\$225,000), Johnson (\$170,000), and perhaps Smerlas (\$650,000), Harmon (\$275,000), Tim Vogler (\$302,500) and James Lofton (\$320,000). That's more than \$3 million in savings.

Little wonder then that lots of Bills fans are in foul moods. They got angry early last season over the internal bickering and seethed the rest of the way as they watched games against the Falcons and Patriots get away. The picture they see right now is that of a team

adding punting and the defensive line as problem areas when it should be trying to upgrade questionable positions. They see a team making no bold off-season moves in the player personnel area to make the breakthrough to Super Bowl caliber, while the San Francis-

co 49ers, the defending NFL champions, jumped right into the Plan B pool with both feet. They perceive a franchise, which did warm-up grumbling before last season about needing a better stadium by the end of this decade, raking in more money from television and asking its ticket buyers to

A lot of the hard-earned good will and respect the Bills gained over the last three seasons is threatening to disappear just as it did in 1967, 1976 and 1982.

to 2-year pact with Green Bay

left unprotected by the Buffalo Bills, has agreed to a two-year contract with the Green Bay Packers.

as a free agent from McNeese State in 1987, became the second player to leave the Bills this year in the Plan B free-agency system. Punter John Kidd signed with San Diego last week.

three starters opposite Andre Reed last season, giving way to James Lofton late in the year. He finished with 25 receptions for 303 yards and a touchdown.

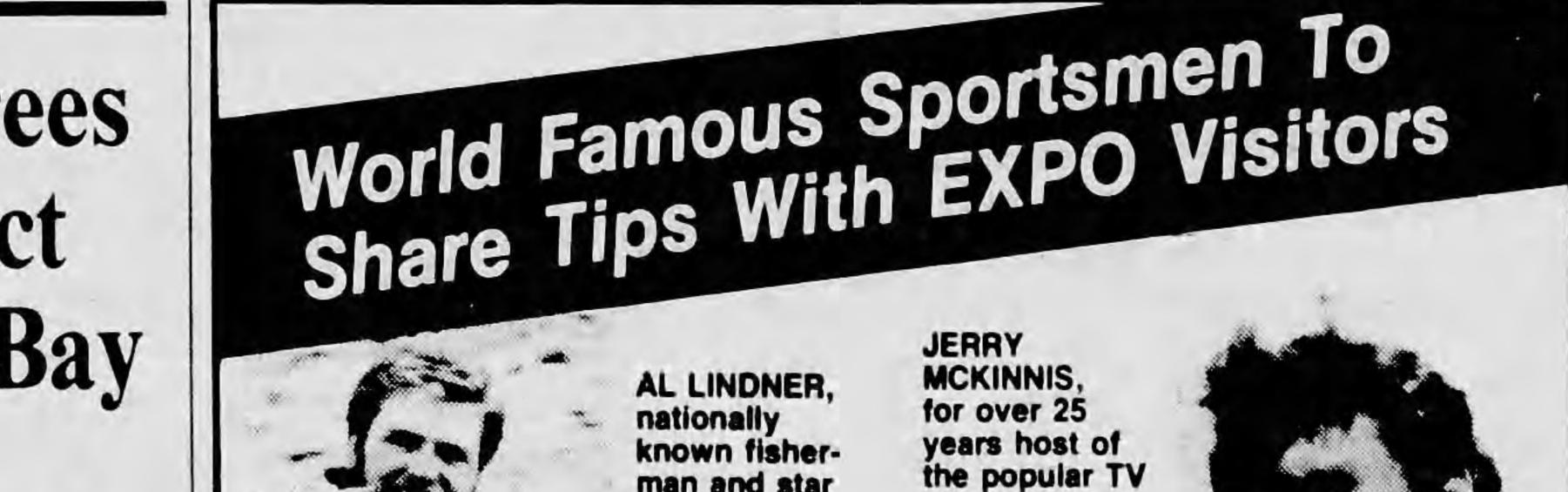
another team, Johnson told the Bills he wouldn't return to them after his Plan B exposure ended April 1. Although his Buffalo contract expired, the Bills still would have retained his rights.

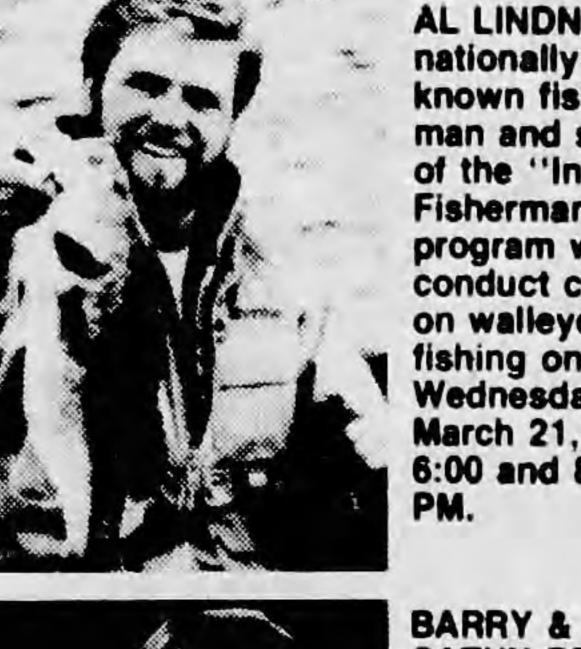
ed to compete with Perry Kemp and Jeff Query for the starting job opposite Sterling Sharpe.

"Green Bay was pretty competitive financially, but the opportunity was the main thing," Johnson said. "If you're on the field, you'll make money. And I really wanted

Johnson said his production waned with the Bills, because grew out of a 1987 incident in seemed like a way to justify get-

Meanwhile, the Packers also agent with fake Social Security signed Paul Frazier, an unprotectand resident alien cards on behalf ed running back from New Orleans whom the Bills had pursued.





Adults: \$5.00

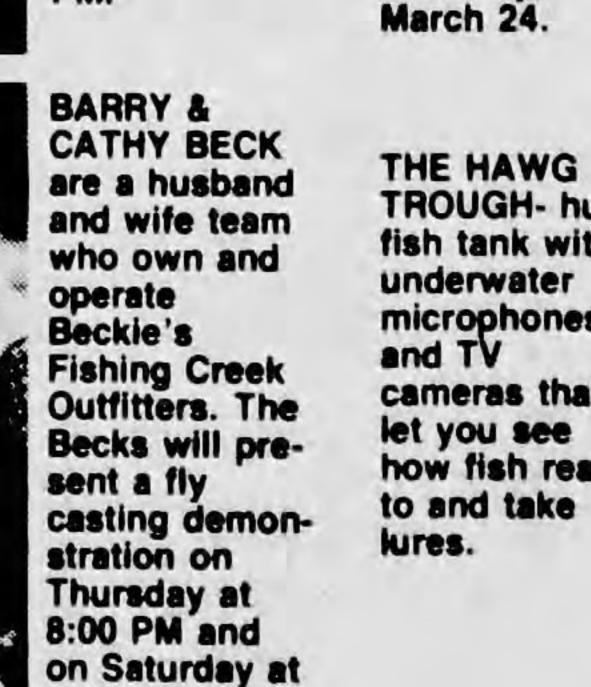
Child under 12: \$2.00

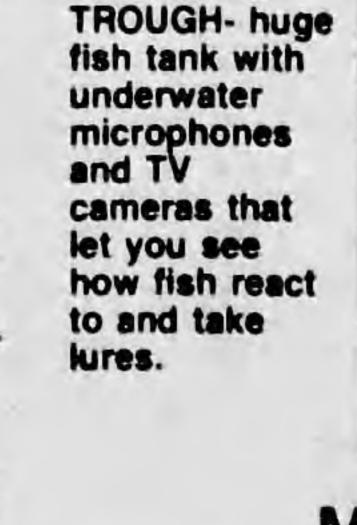
man and star of the "In-Fisherman" TV program will conduct clinics on walleye fishing on Wednesday, March 21, at 6:00 and 8:30

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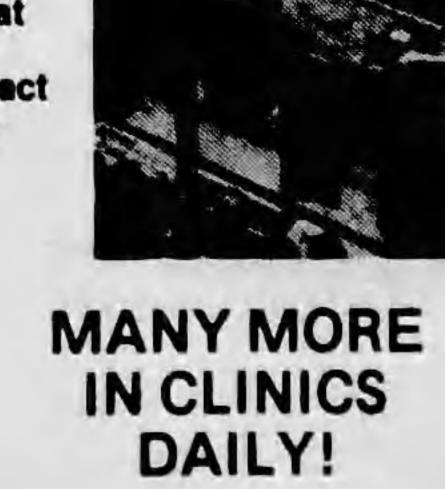
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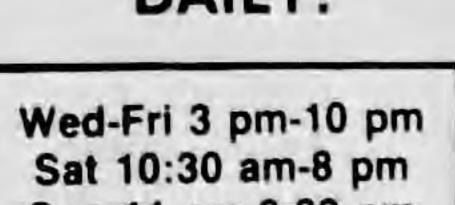
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MANY NEW Sun 11 am-6:30 pm FEATURES! March 21-25 nual Great Lakes The charges against Hutchison "they stopped throwing my way. It sew out of a 1987 incident in seemed like a way to justify get-ALL THE ADVENTURE OF THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Former Bill Anthony Hutchison sentenced

United Press International

HOUSTON — Former Buffalo Bill Anthony L. Hutchison and a colleague have been sentenced to 60 days in jail in one of the nation's first prosecutions for knowingly hiring illegal aliens.

U.S. District Judge Kenneth Hoyt Monday also ordered Hutchison to serve eight months home detention and five years probation and to pay a \$2,000 fine.

Hutchison was convicted last December of bribery, conspiracy with intent to commit bribery, two

counts of presenting counterfeit government documents and one count of harboring illegal aliens.

fork over more, too.

The case is believed to have been the first federal prosecution in Texas under the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act, which prohibits an employer from knowingly hiring illegal aliens.

Five counts against Hutchison were dropped after he agreed to pay a \$5,000 fine in a related civil proceeding.

A former Texas Tech University running back, Hutchison played

with Buffalo in 1985 and Chicago from 1983-84.

Stanley Wayne Evans, a supervisor in Hutchison's landscaping company, was convicted of bribery and sentenced to 60 days in jail, four months home detention and three years probation.

which he presented an Immigra- ting James in there." tion and Naturalization Service of an employee.

By VIC CARUCCI News Sports Reporter

Wide receiver Flip Johnson, Johnson, who joined the Bills

Johnson was the second of

Seeking a chance to start with

With the Packers, he is expect-

to play on grass."