

The end of the line(s) for Micheal Ray

"This is a tragic day for Micheal Ray Richardson. What we have seen here is nothing less than the destruction by cocaine of a once-flourishing career." — NBA Commissioner David Stern

When David Stern signed the agreement with the NBA Players Association on Sept. 28, 1983, calling for any player found using drugs three times to be banned from the league, the pact raised some eyebrows. Stern's tough stance on drugs was the first of its kind in major professional sports in this country. It was a radical approach which had won the attention of many in the sports hierarchy, if not the acclaim. What the plan needed was a guinea pig. On Feb. 25, 1986, Micheal Ray Richardson became that guinea pig.

Richardson was the first active NBA player to test the boundaries of Stern's drug plan, and as a result, the troubled former New Jersey Net will not be dribbling a league ball again; at least for two years. (Stern's pact allows for an appeal after two years, offering possible reinstatement with the approval of the league and the Players Association.)

Richardson's ordeal began in 1983, when after undergoing two drug treatment programs in May and August of that year, the Net guard informed his coach and team on Oct. 7 that he had suffered a drug relapse and would be prepared to go through rehabilitation. According to Stern's plan, Richardson continued to receive his salary while undergoing treatment at the team's expense. After a mysterious three-day disappearance, he began rehabilitation on Oct. 14 at Regent Hospital in Manhattan. Two and a half weeks later he was released and after serving a two-month suspension, Richardson finished the 1983-84 season in the Nets' backcourt.

The following season was a crucial

Tim Crothers Opinion

test for the man known as "Sugar Ray." The man and the guard passed the test brilliantly. Richardson not only steered clear of drugs, but his 20.1 points per game, league-leading 2.9 steals and 8.2 assists earned him Comeback Player of the Year honors. It was a dream come true for Sugar Ray, the Nets and for Stern.

But for a drug addict, dreams can turn to nightmares in the time it takes to dribble a basketball. The temptation of cocaine began to destroy Sugar Ray during another three-day disappearance in the middle of the current season. On Dec. 31, Richardson contacted the Nets with news of another relapse. Stern's policy for the second offense is suspension without pay and further drug rehabilitation. Richardson was treated at Adult Substance Abuse Program in Van Nuys, CA, and released to the Nets after 18 days.

The pressure of a pro basketball career, a failing second marriage, a lingering desire for cocaine, and the eyes of many vultures waiting for him to slip up led Sugar Ray into exile from his sport and his career. The third offense in February led to the realization of the commissioner's ultimate threat and his subsequent grim sentence.

The jury is still out on the success or failure of Stern's drug program. Many questions remain.

First of all, the case of Micheal Ray Richardson is far from closed. Richardson's actions will continue to be monitored by the NBA and especially the New Jersey Nets, who have offered to fund more treatment. "We want to do

whatever is possible to support him, even if he can't play for the team," Nets' vice president Lewis Schaffel said. "We will pay for counseling, for rehabilitation. Simply because he's not playing, we haven't forgotten him."

So Richardson's saga remains on hold until the victim himself charts his future course. In the meantime, few argue that his treatment has been anything but fair. Sugar Ray certainly had plenty of chances to right himself. "We have a term called 'enabling,'" said Dr. David M. Lewis, medical director of Adult Substance Abuse Program. "We ask ourselves, 'Are we helping a person remain addicted?' If you allow somebody more than three chances, are you contributing to his destruction?"

The arguments do not stem from the amount of rehabilitation sessions, but in the length of these treatments and the subsequent "healing" periods. In both cases, Richardson's rehabilitation programs inside the clinic lasted less than three weeks, and in each instance he was on the basketball court again before the end of the season.

For Richardson's sake and that of his teammates, the second offense should have carried a suspension for the balance of the season. Sugar Ray was not suitably threatened by a penalty that allowed him back on the court less than a month after his relapse.

The effect of Richardson's ordeal on his teammates has been obvious. Before the star guard's relapse in December, the Nets had won nine of their last 10 games and had a 19-13 record. The team seemed poised to finally join the Boston Celtics and the Philadelphia 76ers in the elite of the NBA's Atlantic Division. After Sugar Ray's departure, the team's harmony disintegrated into sporadic squabbling on the bench and in the locker room and a 13-19 stretch. "We're supposed

to go out there and play basketball, but you just can't wipe something like this out of your mind," Net forward Albert King said.

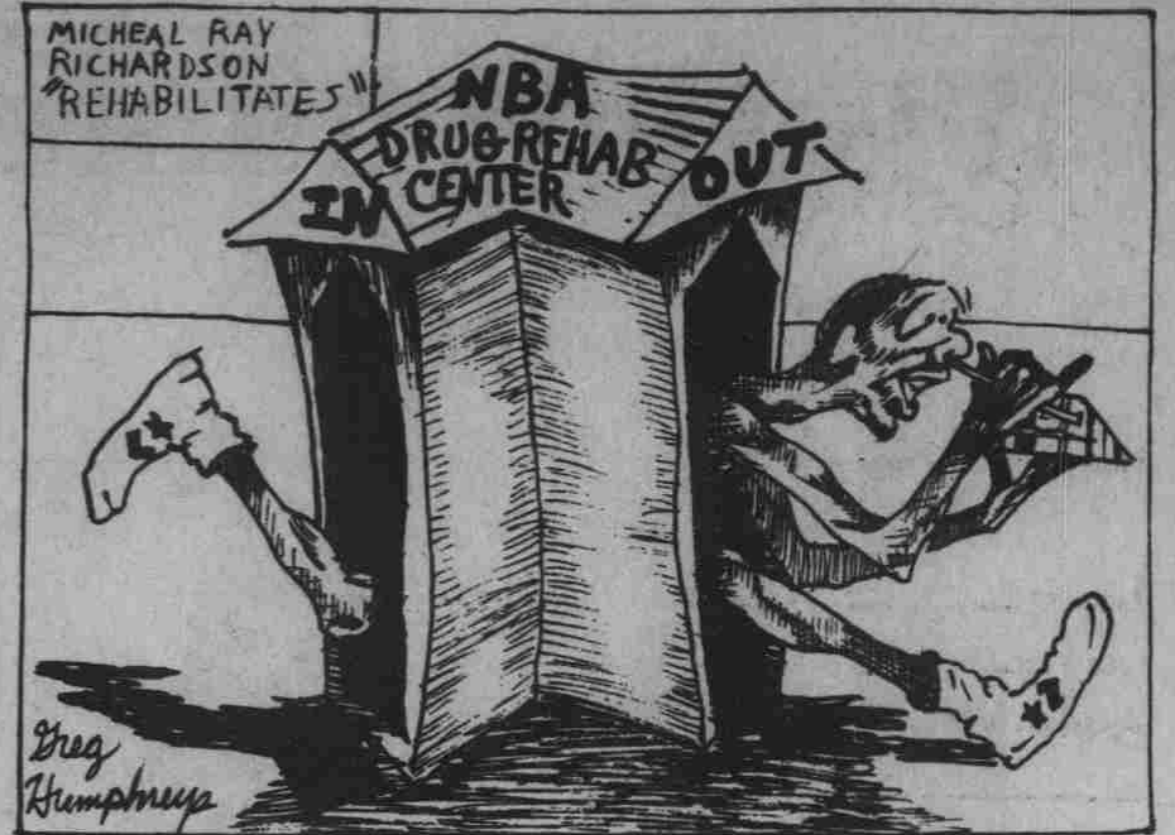
Only after Richardson's banishment have the Nets gathered themselves. Since the matter was closed, the team is 5-5 including a 130-102 victory over the Washington Bullets on Monday night.

The mood among Richardson's teammates is one of sorrow for their colleague, but relief that a final decision has been made. "You hope and pray, especially in Micheal Ray's case that he pulls himself together," Net guard Kelvin Ransey said. "We won't be able to replace him, but maybe this will settle us."

The players did not express concern over the severity of their teammate's penalty. The general approval of Stern's handling of the matter may have encouraged Baseball Commissioner Peter Ueberroth to take similar strong action against players implicated in last year's baseball drug trials.

Still, Richardson feels that commissioner's threats are less valuable in solving drug problems than a player's personal feelings. "Rules won't do it," Richardson said. "It's an illness and only the player can cure it. The big problem is that people who are on drugs are afraid to admit it. They have this terrible fear of getting up in the morning and seeing a newspaper headline that so-and-so is on drugs." Ironically, this fear of media exposure that encourages players to keep their drug problems to themselves, is also a very effective deterrent. Bad press can act as a sufficient threat to a player on the verge of temptation.

Only a combination of authority and players' fears can bring a solution to the growing drug problem in professional sports. Even these incentives may not be enough. Whatever the future holds for Micheal Ray Richardson, the guinea pig will stand as proof.



Sports

Ogden leaves Smith with Rocky Mt. high

By SCOTT FOWLER
Sports Editor

In a quiet ski lodge in Utah last weekend, Kenny Smith got away from the hysteria that overcomes North Carolina annually this time of year. He also was removed from the criticism that had been leveled at his performances at point guard during three UNC losses in four games.

And his teammates gave him what Carl Rogers labels unconditional positive regard, something that comes to high-profile college athletes once every Halley's comet or so.

The result was the return of the deadly Smith jumper and the realization of an extremely important fact that Smith had forgotten.

"Basketball is fun. When you're growing up in New York, you're just happy to play," he said at Tuesday's press conference at the Carolina Inn. "When there's 20 guys waiting for the next game on the court and you're 21st and you finally get to play, you're just happy to be there."

Smith might be forgiven for overlooking that fact in the past weeks. "He has been pretty maligned by opponents and reporters," said running mate Steve Hale. "It's been a tough year for him. But he has really taken on a leadership role, which is needed with him in the

point guard slot." Smith scored 33 points in the two games in Ogden, Utah. But UNC will need another solid game from him if it is to beat Louisville (9:09 p.m. tipoff Thursday, Channel 5). Smith will probably be matched up against Louisville's standout guard and leading scorer Milt Wagner for most of the contest. The defensive improvement that Smith has shown this season will be needed. But let's go back to the pre-ski lodge days of the last few weeks. "The team was playing a little bit tentatively," Smith said. "A lot of the guys were taking things too seriously that people said about us."

Smith was pressed. Were you one of the ones taking it too seriously? "Definitely," he said. "When you're playing point, criticism comes with you and praise comes with you. But being out west with your teammates makes you realize how much they appreciate you."

And that led to Smith's peace of mind. "Everyone is together and really has confidence," he said. "We're playing comfortably."

But you've got to keep winning on the blacktops of New York to keep playing comfortably. Maybe it would be a good idea for UNC to stay in that Utah ski lodge again and commute in to Houston.

TV hoops off prep nights

UNC will no longer compete in televised regular-season basketball games on Tuesday or Friday nights to avoid conflicts with in-state high school basketball, according to athletic director John Swofford.

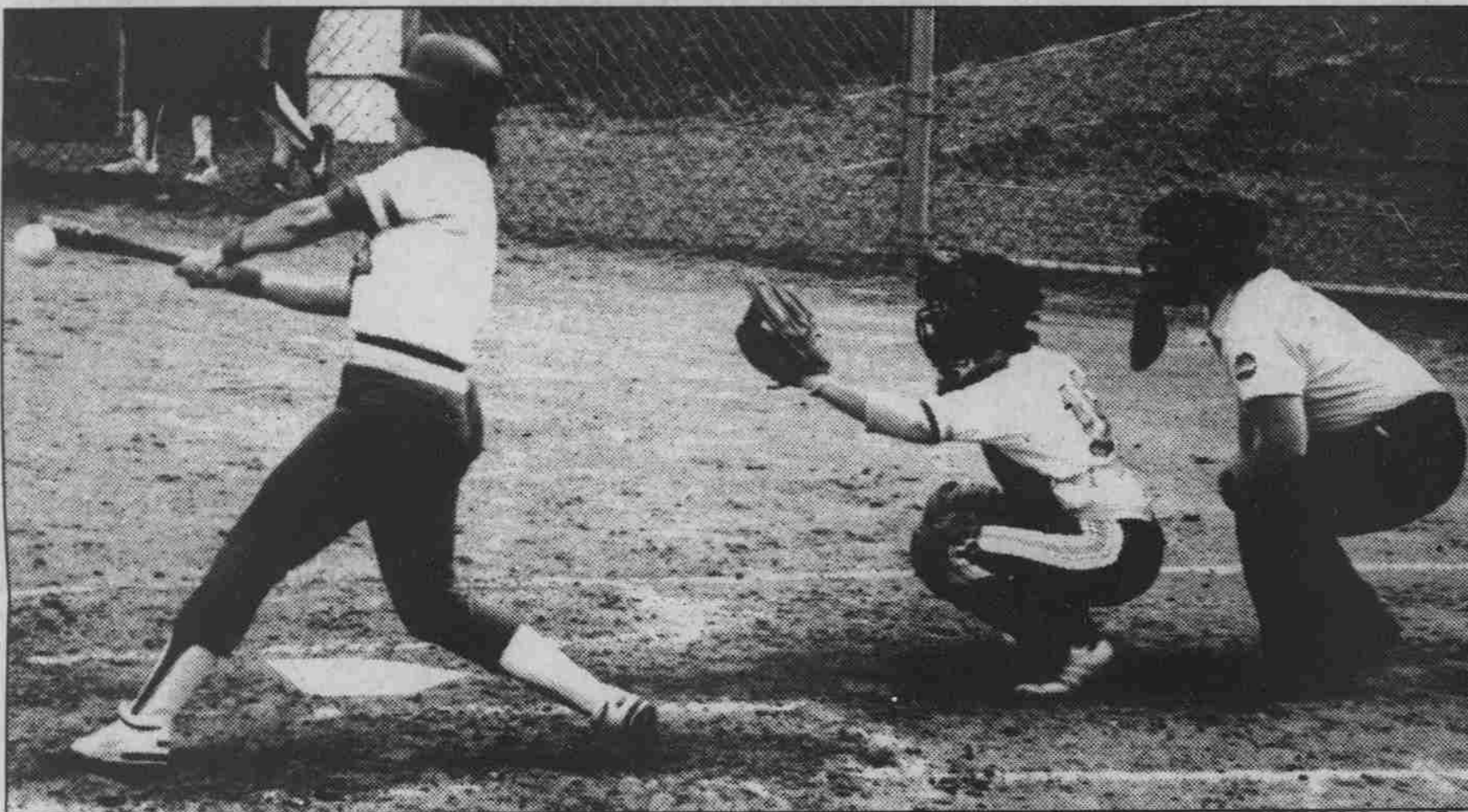
High school officials expressed some concern during the past season when some local college games were televised on those nights, thus lowering attendance. ACC schools participated in five televised Tuesday night games this season, but the one that drew the lion's share of attention was the UNC-Georgia Tech rematch in Atlanta. That game, played on February 4 between the No. 1 and 2 teams in the polls and won by UNC in overtime 78-77, caused a sizeable drop in high school attendance around the state.

"The attendance and revenue derived from the high schools' Tuesday and

Friday night games are very important to them and their athletic programs at a time when the financing of high school athletics is difficult," Swofford said in a release. "Based on reaction to the televised night game this past season, it has become increasingly evident to me that when Carolina is on television on Tuesday or Friday nights there is an impact on the high schools in the state."

"We do not want to be a contributor to anything that hurts high school athletics," he said. "Having five other days of the week to televise should certainly provide adequate times for our television needs and we will encourage some Monday night games."

— SCOTT FOWLER



DTH/Kerstin Coyle

North Carolina's softball team recorded two impressive home victories Tuesday afternoon behind strong pitching

Softball shuts out UNC-W, Seton Hall

By KATHY MULVEY
Staff Writer

Take a bushel of powerful pitching, add a dash of timely hitting and a chunk of solid defense and stir it together in a breezy spring afternoon. These ingredients came together yesterday at Finley Field for the North Carolina softball team, as the Tar Heels swept a doubleheader against UNC-Wilmington and Seton Hall. The victories upped the team's overall record to 10-4, after a 5-4 Spring Break that included big wins over Northern Illinois and Indiana State.

Pitcher Virginia Augusta excelled in yesterday's opener, striking out 17 while firing a perfect game. Her repertoire of drop pitches, risers, curveballs and tricky change-ups dazzled the UNC-W hitters, keeping the ball out of the hands of the Tar Heel defense except for the quick toss around the infield after each "K."

Unfortunately, the Tar Heel bats were suffering a power shortage of their own, but for the opposite reason: the UNC-W pitcher's off-speed stuff threw off the timing that the UNC players have developed from hours of practicing against fast pitching. "We were hitting the ball, but we were hitting it right to people," Coach Donna Papa said. "It kind of lulled us to sleep."

The Tar Heels had planned to play under the ten-run rule against their rivals from the shore, figuring that a blowout was possible. However, it was not until the bottom of the sixth inning, as thoughts of an eighth-inning tie-breaker and Harvey Haddix's 12-inning no-hitter loomed, that the UNC batters

awoke from their slumber. Even then, the rally didn't knock down any fences: Augusta advanced her own cause by bringing home the lone run on a sacrifice bunt by Tracey Beine. When Augusta retired the last three UNC-W batters in order, the Tar Heels had a hard-earned 1-0 victory.

North Carolina came alive with a barrage of runs in the second game, downing Seton Hall by an 11-0 margin. "We really picked up offensively, and continued the good defensive play," Papa said. The pickup included a three-

run first inning and Tar Heel tallies in every inning but the third, leading UNC to a welcome laugh.

Regina Finn backed up the offensive burst with a solid performance on the mound, weaving a one-hit shutout. She also went three-for-three at the plate. Augusta drove in two runs on two-for-four hitting, and first baseman Pam Long also picked up two RBI on a triple ripped down the left field line. If the Tar Heels can put together a string of afternoons like Tuesday's, they are apt to bring home a batch of victories.

Nancy Hyar
of the Business School
Monday, March 24
7:30 pm
106 Carroll Hall

Presented by the
Special Projects Committee

TAR HEEL SPORTS SHORTS

THURSDAY
Baseball vs. Vermont
3:00 pm — Boshamer Stadium
Softball vs. Virginia (DH)
2:00 pm — Finley Softball Field

FRIDAY
Women's Tennis vs. Furman
2:00 pm — UNC Tennis Center

Hardee's

**KEEP WATCHING US—
NEW JEWELRY STYLES
are arriving now!**

T'boli
University Square Chapel Hill 967-8935

**UNC
YEAR AT
SEVILLA**

For information &
application for 1986-87
See: Program Secretary
UNC, Dey Hall
962-0154
**Application Deadline
April 1, 1986**

*"Voices in resistance against racism,
lynching, slavery, rape... discrimination,
hunger and unfair housing expressing the
commitment of being Black... women...
people... and the world human family."*

Sweet Honey In the Back

Thursday, March 27
8:00 pm
Memorial Hall

Student tickets \$3.50
Available at
Union Box Office
Presented by the
Performing Arts Committee
in conjunction with
Black Women's
Leadership Symposium

**TAR HEEL SPECIAL
LEADING EDGE
Model D Computer
\$1495
Nota Bene \$390
DATAWAY**

CarrMill Mall
Carrboro, NC
967-7499