

News at a glance

Swann to run for Pennsylvania governor

PITTSBURGH (AP) - Former Steelers star Lynn Swann, who declared his candidacy for Pennsylvania governor, says he is confident he will win the state GOP committee's endorsement.

However, if the committee endorses one of his three competitors next month, Swann said last week he may contest the party's candidate in the May 16 primary.



Swann

"If I need a primary to win, then I would have to take a serious look at being in the primary," he said.

Swann, 53, declared his candidacy in the city where he made his name in professional football. His announcement was no surprise: Swann's political committee has been raising money for his campaign for nearly a year.

He told The Associated Press in an interview that he made up his mind to run in the fall after spending months weighing support at events around the state.

Swann, a Hall of Fame receiver and longtime TV football commentator, faces three other candidates in seeking the Republican nomination for governor - his first run for political office. The winner of the May 16 primary likely would face Democratic Gov. Ed Rendell, who is expected to seek a second four-year term.

If successful in his first bid for political office, Swann would become Pennsylvania's first black governor.

The Steelers won four Super Bowls during Swann's nine-year pro career with the team. He has worked for ABC Sports since his retirement from football in 1983.

Swann said he hopes to convince blacks that he is a better candidate than Rendell, a former Philadelphia mayor.

The Democratic Party has "taken the African-American vote for granted," Swann said.

Police: MLK nephew set fire to own apartment in apparent suicide attempt

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) - Authorities say a nephew of slain civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. set fire to his own apartment in an apparent suicide attempt.

Derek King, 46, sought mental health counseling after Tuesday's blaze, said Bob Bowser, deputy chief of the Lawrence Police Department.

Bowser said Derek King endangered the lives of himself and others when he allegedly set the fire in his apartment, and then refused to leave when rescuers arrived.

"It could have been a tragedy," Bowser said. Arson investigators determined that the fire was intentionally set, and Bowser said King could face charges.

King, associate pastor at Ebenezer Missionary Baptist Church, declined comment to The Indianapolis Star when reached Friday. There is no published telephone listing for him in the Indianapolis area.

The Rev. Thomas L. Brown, pastor at Ebenezer Missionary, said he believed the fire was an accident and the alleged suicide attempt a misunderstanding.

"I say it's totally accidental," Brown said.

South Africa kicks off campaign

CAPE TOWN, South Africa (AP) - The African National Congress launched its campaign Sunday for local government elections, promising to do more for South Africans still disadvantaged from decades of apartheid and angry over widespread corruption.

In a speech to an estimated 25,000 people packed into a stadium in Cape Town - where the ruling ANC faces a tough challenge from the opposition Democratic Alliance - President Thabo Mbeki vowed to improve education and health care and ensure all houses have access to clean water and sanitation by 2010 and electricity by 2012.

Mbeki also declared that the ANC branches would be "front-line fighters against corruption, to ensure that nobody uses his or her position in government to steal from the people to line their pockets."

At the last municipal elections in 2000, the ANC won 59 percent of the vote and the Democratic Alliance won 22 percent, with the rest split between smaller parties. At national elections in 2004, the ANC swept to an overwhelming 70 percent majority.

Although it is expected to win in the March 1 vote given its support among the majority black community, it risks a backlash from people fed up with inefficient, corrupt local government.

Even though the government has built about 1.8 million new homes since 1994, the number of households living in shacks rose from 1.45 million to 1.84 million - a 26 percent increase.

Belafonte calls Bush 'terrorist'

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) - American singer and activist Harry Belafonte called President Bush "the greatest terrorist in the world" on Sunday and said millions of Americans support the socialist revolution of Venezuelan leader Hugo Chavez.



Belafonte

Belafonte led a delegation of Americans, including the actor Danny Glover and Princeton University scholar Cornel West, that met the Venezuelan president for more than six hours late Saturday.

"No matter what the greatest tyrant in the world, the greatest terrorist in the world, George W. Bush says, we're here to tell you: Not hundreds, not thousands, but millions of the American people ... support your revolution," Belafonte told Chavez during the broadcast.

Chavez said he believes deeply in the struggle for justice by blacks, both in the United States and Venezuela.

"Although we may not believe it, there continues to be great discrimination here against black people," Chavez said, urging his government to redouble its efforts to prevent discrimination.

Belafonte accused U.S. news media of falsely painting Chavez as a "dictator," when in fact, he said, there is democracy and citizens are "optimistic about their future."

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SUPER BOWL BLACKOUT?

Black businesses in Detroit getting few contracts for big game

BY BANKOLE THOMPSON
THE MICHIGAN CITIZEN

DETROIT (NNPA) - Detroit will host the 2006 Super Bowl in February, drawing thousands of visitors and celebrities to town.

A profit-making event, the Super Bowl, organized by the National Football League (NFL), awards millions of dollars in contracts to render services during the week of the football event.

But many black business owners in Detroit say the Super Bowl host committee, which is the official liaison between the NFL and metro Detroit, has yet to give African-American businesses significant contracts.

The committee launched the Emerging Business program as part of its overall contract with the NFL to teach new entrepreneurs how to get contracts.

On its Web site, the Super Bowl host committee described the business program as "a business procurement process benefiting local emerging businesses including minority and women-owned businesses in the State of Michigan."

Some local black businesses claim it is a charade.

"They talk a good game. I don't see how any of us are making money," said Valena Cade, owner of Big Fellows restaurant.

Cade said she bid on four different catering contracts for the Super Bowl but did not win one.

"The only one that I received for a possible confirmation was



Photo by Ronny Ding/Icon SM

Superbowl XL merchandise provided by All Pro Championships is displayed last month during a press conference to preview Super Bowl XL in Detroit.

for about \$4,000," Cade said. "When I thought about it, that is no money when I have to pay my staff. I called them back and told them I was not interested."

She said it was an "insult" for her to be given a Super Bowl contract with such low margins. According to Cade, she would make a \$1,000 profit.

Cade said she is a competent contractor. In the past, she provided similar food service for events such as the Tastefest, jazz festival and other Detroit summer activities.

"I'm capable of doing large contracts," Cade said. "I can feed thousands of people."

Visibly upset, Cade said, "I don't need any part of the Super Bowl."

She said she invested a lot of time and energy preparing RFPs (Request for Proposal) to bid for contracts that she did not get.

"You spend hours making

these proposals and don't see the money," Cade said.

Like Cade, Carolyn Hopkins owner of a therapeutic massage center, Be' Spa Elite, also said she submitted her credentials for contracts but to no avail.

Hopkins was later informed that NFL players would be flying in with their own massage therapists to perform spa service.

"It's a shame what they are doing to us in this city," Hopkins said. "The hotels I called told me that the NFL would not allow anyone to bring in businesses that they have not approved."

Hopkins said the workshops that were held under the Emerging Business program "(were) not even worth the time."

"We thought if we go there, we'll meet the decision makers, but that was not the case," Hopkins said. "I've been in business for 20 years and everybody in

the city knows our business." Loretta Watson, who runs Sparkle Janitorial, had similar complaints.

"The hype was that they were going to leave so much money in the city, but that is not true," Watson said. "Our concern is the amount of the contract, the amount of business they are leaving. I have bid on a number of the contracts. I did not get the contract with the Motown Winter Blast or the NFL Tailgate party."

According to Watson, the business that the Super Bowl was supposed to bring to the city is hype.

When contacted, the Super Bowl host committee's vice president for external affairs, Stacie Clayton, an African-American, denied the allegations.

"To date we have spent about \$1.3 million in total on contracts. Thirty percent have been with African-American businesses and about 90 percent of those come from Detroit," Clayton said. "We have worked with 67 emerging businesses that have received contracts. Of that 67, 25 are Detroit-based businesses."

Out of the 25 Detroit-based businesses that have received contracts, Clayton said 23 are African-Americans.

However Clayton would not disclose the dollar amount for each contract that has been let out to black businesses.

"We do not give out the dollar amount because some of the businesses have asked for confidential purposes - not disclose those amounts," Clayton said. "It is not true that black business are not getting anything."

She said her committee is

See NFL on A5

Wal-Mart explains MLK / 'Apes' link

BY MARCUS KABEL
AP BUSINESS WRITER

An offensive link between a "Planet of the Apes" movie and a film about Martin Luther King Jr. on Wal-Mart's consumer Web site was a mistake caused by a well-intentioned effort to promote a DVD about the black leader ahead of his annual holiday, the company said Friday.

Wal-Mart removed the link on its www.walmart.com retail site last Thursday after learning about the juxtaposition from reporters. Wal-Mart apologized and shut down indefinitely its entire online system for referring shoppers from one movie to others.

Carter Cast, president of Wal-Mart's online shopping division, told The Associated Press on Friday there was no racist motivation for a link that sent shoppers seeking "similar items" from the boxed DVD set "Planet of the Apes: The Complete TV Series" to four black-themed movies, including "Martin Luther King: I Have a Dream."

"There was nobody here who maliciously put together that combination," Cast said by telephone from walmart.com's headquarters in Brisbane, Calif.

Instead, Cast said, a business manager who wanted to promote the Martin Luther King Jr. DVD ahead of last year's holiday grouped it with three other movies - then

assigned them to an overly broad category of DVD boxed sets. He said the links may have existed for the past year.

"I know the person was well-intended in trying to get the 'I Have a Dream' speech out as a cross-sell. But by not containing it in one particular item display group - for example, African-American culture - the person put it in multiple display groups," Cast said.

groups," such as science fiction or African-American culture. Then the company's internally developed software generates links guiding shoppers to other movies in that group.

The group of four movies about King, actress Dorothy Dandridge, boxer Jack Johnson and singer Tina Turner were defined too generally as DVD boxed sets, Cast said.

That linked them to more than 260 boxed sets with all kinds of themes, from "Best of Hitchcock, Vol. 1 (Collector's Series)" to "Doctor Zhivago: Special Edition" and "The Avengers - The '67 Collection: Set 1."

"In my eyes, the fact that we didn't catch this was a failure. We should have caught it," Cast said.

"The problem is there are millions and millions of combinations of items

cross-sold against each other. We offer 25,000 DVDs. And then if you start going through, the different combinations of cross-sells, you're in the millions," he said.

Cast said walmart.com would only start cross-referencing movies again once it has a new system in place to avoid a repeat. That could be a technology more like what Amazon.com uses or another approach, he said.

"We are looking at a bunch of different solutions right now," Cast said.

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Wal-Mart said there would be no repercussions for the employee, whom the Wal-Mart declined to name, since the outcome was not intentional.

Wal-Mart.com uses a different system than many other big online vendors to create cross-selling links. Amazon.com, for example, bases recommendations on what a shopper has bought before and what other consumers who buy a certain item also purchased.

Wal-Mart.com manually assigns movies to specific groups, called "item display

New Name. New Location. Same People.

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