



SPORTS BRIEFS

NFL Draft Analyst Says Underclassmen Mistaken

NEW YORK — When Dave Te Thomas looks at the group of underclassmen in this year's NFL draft, he sees up to a dozen question marks, including the two North Carolina players.

Thomas, editor of the NFL Draft Report, thinks Penn State tailback Ki-Jana Carter, Michigan cornerback Ty Law, Miami defensive tackle Warren Sapp and Notre Dame safety Bobby Taylor are sure-fire pro stars.

But he feels some others who came out early made a mistake. Thomas said that group includes Auburn defensive back Brian Robinson, Ohio State linebacker Craig Powell, Pittsburgh running back Curtis Martin, North Carolina tailback Curtis Johnson and defensive tackle Greg Black.

"They all would have been better off playing another year in college," Thomas said. "They would have gone higher in the draft and made more money with another year of experience. They came out for a dollar, but left five dollars on the table."

Cowboys Talk the Talk

SAN FRANCISCO — Michael Irvin guarantees a win. James Washington says the Dallas Cowboys will hit Steve Young as hard as they hit a running back.

The teams matchup for their third consecutive NFC title game Sunday in San Francisco.

"That's the sign of an insecure team," says William Floyd, the 49ers' rookie fullback, who played at Florida State, where trash talk is an art form.

Even before the Cowboys beat Green Bay 35-9 last week, Irvin was predicting they would become the first team to win three consecutive Super Bowls. Washington, who could easily have been the MVP in last year's Super Bowl, took note that San Francisco quarterback Steve Young ran for 60 yards in the 49ers' 21-14 regular-season win at Candlestick, most of it on bootlegs.

"The last time we treated him like a quarterback," Washington said. "This time we'll treat him like a running back. If he doesn't slide when he's supposed to he's going to get connected."

"We're going to bang him every time he tries to run. We're going to attack him. We're not going to sit around like we did last time and wait on him to make a play."

FROM WIRE REPORTS

Drop the Puck: NHL Players Agree to Offer

48-Game Hockey Schedule To Start Late Next Week As 103-Day Lockout Ends

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
NEW YORK — The NHL season was saved Wednesday when players gave in to a management ultimatum and sacrificed some freedom to play hockey again.

Leaders of the NHL Players Association accepted the owners' take-it-or-else proposal, effectively ending the 103-day lockout and pulling off the biggest save in hockey history.

Had they rejected the 6-year contract, the NHL would have gone major-league baseball one worse by becoming the first sports league to shut down an entire season in a labor dispute.

"Are we happy about the scars that have been created for the game of hockey?" asked union president Mike Gartner. "Are we happy about losing millions of dollars? Are we happy the relations between owners and players have been severely hindered?"

"No, we're not happy about that. But we're happy that hockey is hopefully going to be played very soon."

The NHLPA executive committee sent the contract to the union's 700-plus members for ratification by management's noon Friday deadline. And though it is expected to receive the necessary 51 percent ap-

proval, "there will be a lot of guys with discontent," said Mick Vukota of the New York Islanders.

"There have been hard-liners in our union who have stepped aside for the good of the game," Vukota said. "Some relationships between players and owners were in bad shape even before this started."

Although they managed to sidestep the salary cap and payroll tax favored by the owners, the players made most of the concessions in the often nasty negotiations.

Nevertheless, most seemed happy that they'll be practicing Friday afternoon for the first time since Sept. 30.

"It's our livelihood. This is what most of the guys have done their whole lives. All we know is hockey," said Eric Weinrich of the Chicago Blackhawks. "We want to play hockey because that's what hockey players do."

NHL commissioner Gary Bettman, who on Tuesday night delivered the owners' take-it-or-leave-it offer to union head Bob Goodenow, said the season would start late next week, possibly Friday.

The regular season, probably 48 games, will be followed by four best-of-7 playoff rounds. The NHL normally plays an 84-game schedule, and most owners have said recently that any season shorter than 50 games wouldn't be "legitimate."

In the end, the owners felt losing 36 games from this season's schedule was a small price to take back some of the control they lost in settling the 10-day strike before

the 1992 playoffs.

"I think players realized that something had to change," said Edmonton general manager Glen Sather, who had to gut a championship team that once included the likes of Wayne Gretzky, Mark Messier and Jari Kurri to keep Oilers owner Peter Pocklington in business.

"The deal the union had been working under was better than terrific — so good that the league couldn't survive," Sather said. "That's why we did what had to do in Edmonton. Now we can survive."

Bettman, who spoke briefly, didn't answer questions from the media and had to be asked by photographers to smile, said he was "thrilled that this is over."

"It was important that the league come together with the players ... to take this league to the great heights that it can come to," he said. "I retain the optimism that

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GARY BETTMAN
NHL commissioner



BOB GOODENOW
NHL union president



"This has been a long, difficult process ... It's important that we get the focus where it belongs — the competition."

I've always had for the future of this sport." Bettman said some "transitional issues" had to be completed.

Goodenow also had little to say, answering only a few questions.

"This has been a long, difficult process, one that has come to a conclusion that both sides can live with," he said. "It's important that we get the focus where it belongs — the competition."

Blue Devils Deal With Life Without Laid-Up Coach K

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
DURHAM — Mike Krzyzewski was trying to guide a young Duke team through the treacherous course of an early-season schedule. Now, there's uncertainty over how much of the trip he'll be able to make.

Krzyzewski has been released from Duke University Hospital for treatment of a back problem which has plagued him since the fall. He underwent surgery for a displaced disc on Oct. 22, missed 10 days of work and then went back to practice far ahead of the normal recuperation time of up to six weeks.

Last week, the 47-year-old Blue Devil coach complained of fatigue and mild discomfort. He also told doctors he was having trouble sleeping. On Friday, two days after his team had lost to Clemson and not long after he'd said his back was fine, Krzyzewski received a regular checkup and was admitted to the hospital.

When he will return to the bench has

not been determined. A team of physicians will oversee his rehabilitation. Dr. John Feagin, who heads the team, says keeping Krzyzewski away from basketball and his peripheral duties will speed his return.

Krzyzewski's health problems are the latest to strike college basketball coaches. Before the start of this season, George Raveling was forced to resign at coach at Southern Cal after being seriously injured in a summer traffic accident.

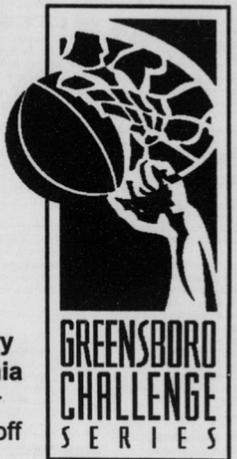
Meanwhile, two of the three freshmen he's relied on to get the team to its 9-4 start are beginning to feel the effects of his absence. Krzyzewski missed his second game Wednesday night when 16th-ranked Duke went to play No. 14 Wake Forest.

"I consider coach the best coach in the country," forward Ricky Price said Tuesday. "When we have him on the sidelines, that's at least a five-point advantage for us, home or away. It's kind of tough with him not being here."

UNC Will Be Challenged January 21.



The Tar Heels travel to the Greensboro Coliseum on January 21 to face the Hokies from Virginia Tech. The Hokie squad, returning five of their six leading scorers from an 18-10 season, is off to a tremendous start this season. And ACC champion North Carolina, with super sophomores Jerry Stackhouse and Rasheed Wallace, has been at or near the #1 spot in the country all season.



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