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Jury selection to begin in alleged animal cruelty case Monday

WACO (AP) — Jury selection was set to begin Monday in the trial of a former Baylor University baseball player accused of shooting, beheading and skinning a stray cat a year ago.

Derek Brehm, 20, of San Antonio is charged with animal cruelty, a Class A misdemeanor.

In response to the interest the case has generated in the media and with animal rights groups, McLennan County Court-at-Law Judge Mike Gassaway has ordered 50 prospective jurors to report Monday, instead of the usual 15.

Brehm's co-defendant, former Baylor baseball player Clint Bowers of Robinson, is set for trial April 1.

Waco police arrested the two March 9 shortly after receiving a report that someone shot a cat near the Baylor campus and fled in a sport utility vehicle.

Police stopped Bowers' Chevrolet Tahoe nearby and noticed blood on the door and steering wheel, according to police reports. While searching the truck, police found a severed, skinned cat's head in the back.

They also found a pellet gun, a knife and a golf club that appeared to have cat hair on it.

The cat reportedly was named "Queso" by some employees of a Taco Cabana restaurant near Baylor, where the animal often ate food scraps.

Prosecutors Crawford Long and Melanie Walker have offered

no plea bargains to either defendant, saying the case should be decided by a jury.

Both men, through their attorneys, have indicated that they would plead guilty if their sentences would keep them out of jail.

"I think it is unfortunate that we have to go to trial," Brehm lawyer, Russ Hunt, told the Waco Tribune-Herald for Sunday's edition. "I think the boys did something that showed a lack of judgment, but I don't think they violated the law."

Baylor baseball coach Steve Smith suspended both players eight games about two weeks after their arrests. They have both left the team.

Brehm, 20, was kicked off the team after being arrested September on drunken-driving charges and has since moved to San Antonio. Bowers, 22, remains a student at Baylor.

Sources told the newspaper that prosecutors are considering calling Bowers a witness in Brehm's trial. Bowers might offer "testimonial immunity," meaning his testimony would be used against him at his own trial.

In January, Brehm was arrested after failing to show up for a pretrial hearing. He surrendered that afternoon and was released soon afterward on a \$2,000 bond.

If convicted, Brehm faces up to a year in the county jail and a maximum \$4,000 fine.

Animal rights groups have picketed the courthouse, called Baylor officials to expel the students and have established a fund for raising efforts in memory of the cat.



DEREK BREHM

NEWS IN BRIEF

Former Chrysler CEO wants to come back

DETROIT (AP) — Former Chrysler Corp. chairperson Lee Iacocca wants to return to the company he once helped lead, but said DaimlerChrysler AG chairman Juergen Schrempp has shut him out.

Schrempp and Iacocca have talked over the past few years about Iacocca's possible return to the automaker, *The Detroit News* reported Sunday.

Iacocca said Schrempp, the mastermind behind Daimler-Benz's 1998 acquisition of Chrysler, led him on for months about a possible role in reviving Chrysler. The company has struggled

with sinking sales and profits since it was acquired by the German carmaker.

"I'd give my right arm to do it, to be honest," Iacocca said in the interview at his Los Angeles home. "Chrysler was my life. I really feel bad it is where it is today. People say well, it's just another German company. No. This was a great American company."

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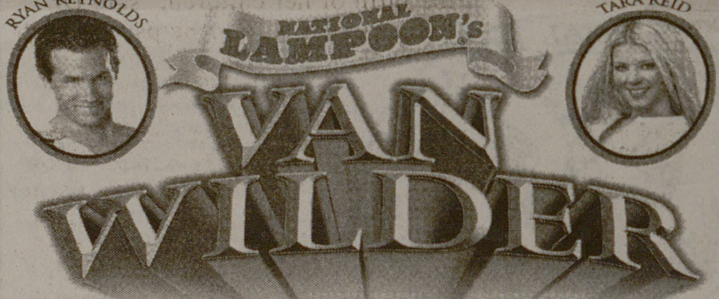
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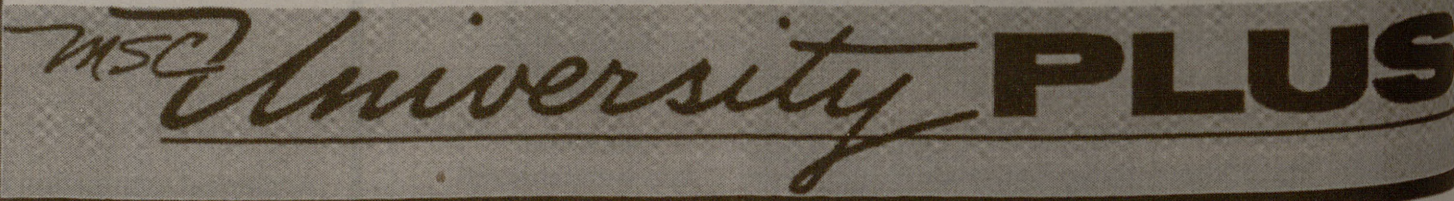
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