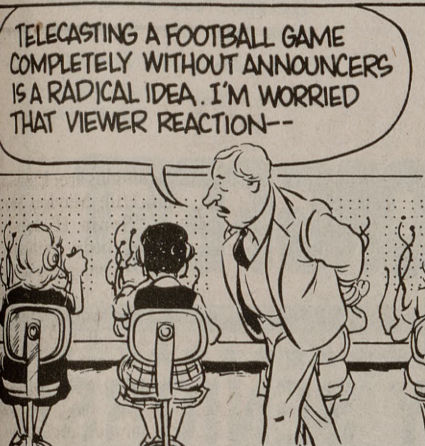


# TANK McNAMARA

by Jeff Millar & Bill Hinds



## NFL coach, team players back Gilbert

United Press International  
SAN DIEGO — When the announcement of the firing of San Diego State football Coach Claude Gilbert was made, the only man angrier than Gilbert was San Diego Chargers' Coach Don Coryell.

Gilbert, the nation's sixth winningest college football coach, was fired Tuesday as head coach of the Aztecs, effective at the end of the season.

The once-powerful Aztecs were suffering through their worst season since 1946 with a 2-8 record. Athletic Director Gene Bourdet fired Gilbert, who has compiled a 59-26-2 record over seven-plus seasons, after the coach refused to sign a letter of resignation.

"I am now going to go up to the mountains and sit and think," Gilbert said in an emotional news conference announcing his firing. "I'm somewhat angry," he told reporters earlier. "The staff did a great job. It's a shame to see men of that caliber suffer the hurt and shame they've had this year. And it hurts me deeply. This is somewhat painful but, at the same time, I feel that we — myself and the entire staff — can hold our heads high."

Coryell issued an angry blast at the university's administration.

"When I picked up the paper I was shocked," Coryell said of a story predicting Gilbert's ouster.

"I can't believe how blind and stupid people are," Coryell said. "They have the best coach in the nation and they fired him. I can't understand how an administration can be so blind. They're heads are so far in the ground they can't see."

The news conference at San Diego Stadium featured a mass turnout by the Aztecs football team, who had signed a three-page petition asking that Gilbert be retained and accepting much of the blame for the team's poor record.

Receiver Johnnie Moore said, "If I was coach Gilbert, I would just leave because I don't have anybody backing me up. But he isn't the one who is leaving. We are. Fire us. Take our scholarships away."

Insiders said Bourdet was under pressure to fire Gilbert because of sagging attendance at a school where football pays the bills of the athletic department. Bourdet said the football program could come up \$300,000 shy of conservative pre-season estimates.

The average attendance for Aztecs games this year has been 28,000, down from 39,500 a year ago.

## Bench tired of catching, wants to stay with Reds

United Press International  
CINCINNATI — Johnny Bench has proved to the baseball world he's one of the finest catchers ever. But his problem today is proving to the Cincinnati Reds he's also a decent infielder or outfielder.

Bench, who had been considering asking the Reds to trade him after they refused to guarantee him a different position, announced Tuesday that he had decided to stay with the Reds and win a new position.

Bench, who has played his entire 14-year major league career as the Reds' catcher, said he has had it with catching and will refuse to catch any more than twice a week next season.

"The mental and physical strain of catching will make you become a bartender, almost," he chuckled.

So, Bench said, he will go to spring training and try to play first or third base or left or right field. He refused to state a preference, figuring, "It's up to the Reds to tell me what glove to bring."

"I'm going (to spring training) with the thought of winning a job," he said. "I still believe in myself. So, I've got to go after somebody and I'm afraid that's going to happen. If I go down and take a position from somebody, that's the way it's got to be."

Reds' President Dick Wagner said earlier this week he has good players at all positions and noted Bench might not be able to beat anybody out.

But Bench said, "I really believe Dick Wagner wants to keep me. I think he has to realize I am somewhat of a drawing card within the National League and even in Cincinnati."

"Cincinnati has really become too much a part of me for me to ask to be traded," he added. "I value the friends I have here. I'm pleased to be a part of Cincinnati."

Wagner has said he hopes Bench will relent and catch more than twice a week. But Bench said absolutely not.

## Rangers get Saucier as Lyle trade-off

United Press International  
ARLINGTON, Texas — The Texas Rangers announced Wednesday the acquisition of Philadelphia relief pitcher Kevin Saucier to complete the Sept. 13 trade that sent pitcher Sparky Lyle to the Phillies.

Saucier, who went 7-3 with Phillies in relief, is a 24-year-old left-hander with a 3.42 ERA. He permitted 50 hits in 50 innings and collected 25 strikeouts.

Ranger executive vice president Eddie Robinson said he was pleased with the trade because Saucier "challenges the hitters."

"He's a good competitor, very aggressive, and should be a valuable addition to our bullpen."

The Rangers also announced shortstop Wayne Tolleson a lefthander who hit .250 last season, was being sent outright to the Ranger's Charleston, W.Va., farm club.

At baseball winter meetings in Dallas Dec. 6-12, the Rangers will switch their affiliation next year from the Charleston team to a Wichita, Kan. team in the American Association.

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## SMU wins in exhibition

United Press International  
DALLAS — SMU guards Dave Piehler and David Gadis each scored 24 points and center Johnnie James added 12 to lead the Mustangs to an 85-72 win over the Australia Bankston Bruins Wednesday in an exhibition basketball game.

Piehler, a sophomore from Newton, Kan., hit on 11 of 25 from the floor and 2-of-3 from the line. He also had five assists.

Gadis hit 11 of 18 from the field and connected on all three of his free throws. James also led the Mustangs in rebounding with a total of 11.

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