

# SA must swallow slowly to avoid choke

SAN ANTONIO — San Antonio Spurs General Manager Bob Bass gets "worked up" when his team is maligned for its past failures in NBA playoff series.

The Spurs lead their series with the Seattle SuperSonics 3-1 going into the next game Wednesday in Seattle. The sixth game, if necessary, will be played in San Antonio Friday.

"I get worked up about people calling this team 'chokers,'" said the eighth-year Spurs boss, who has seen

his team go up 3-1 before and lose.

"We don't get the call against Billy Paultz in the (1979) series against Washington and we beat the eventual world champions in the semis and play for the title," Bass said.

He did not mention in the same game — the seventh and deciding one — that the Spurs came up empty on five straight possessions in the final minutes to lose the game 107-105 and the series 4-3 after having a 3-1 lead.

Only once in nine playoff series over the past eight years have the Spurs won. They beat Philadelphia 4-3 in 1979.

Bass said constant local media criticism of the Spurs' dismal playoff record is unfair to current team members because most were not involved in losing the earlier series.

Indeed, only two Spurs — George Gervin and Mark Olberding — participated in the 1979 fold. Gervin remem-

bers but defends the work ethic of previous teams.

"Every year we played hard but we just didn't win," Gervin said. "The difference is that I think this year's team is simply a little better. We have more weapons to hurt people with."

Six other Spurs scored in double figures in Sunday's 115-113 victory over Seattle to offset Gervin's sub-par 19-point performance. One of them, Mike Mitchell, said he doesn't understand

the commotion.

"All I know is I heard they got in the playoffs every year and didn't go anywhere," he said. "I don't know about that. What I do know about is this year, this team made up its mind to go."

Center Dave Corzine's rebounding and free throws proved the winning edge in Sunday's game. Backup guard Mike Bratz won Game 3, a 99-97 decision, with a jumper in the last second.

# Rutherford says Indy rules will be tight

United Press International  
GRAND PRAIRIE — Three-time Indianapolis 500 winner Johnny Rutherford said Monday that he expected rules concerning the leaving of the pits at this year's race to be "chiseled in stone," to prevent a reoccurrence of last year's incident involving Bobby Unser and Mario Andretti.

"But whether things will actually be any different or not, I won't know until we get there," Rutherford said.

Rutherford's comments came during a visit to the Texas Sports Hall of Fame, into which he will be inducted in June.

Rutherford will leave Wednesday for Indianapolis for the month-long preparation for this year's race and he said his

own chances were a bit uncertain.

"When we were weathered out of the race at Atlanta we opted not to go back and race there," he said, "because we felt we needed time to prepare for Indy. We are in a bit of a gray area as to how we will do."

"We've done a few things to the bottom of the car and found some new horsepower. Practice opens Saturday and we will start finding out some things."

During last year's race, Unser

sped out of the pits while the caution flag was in evidence. As he exited the pits, the pace car and the rest of the field was rounding the first turn and heading up the short chute toward the second turn.

Unser drove his car past several of the slow-moving machines in order to move as close to the pace car as possible. After the race Unser was "fined" one lap, which made Andretti the winner.

That decision was later re-

versed by racing officials, however, and Unser was eventually declared the champion.

"Bobby Unser won that race," said Rutherford. Then, with a grin, he said:

"He couldn't help it if his throttle stuck and he passed all those cars. Actually, he didn't do anything that the rest of us haven't done. It was a vague rule. Mario got caught in the middle of a sad situation."

"I think this year it (the rule)

will be chiseled in stone," he said. "It will be like an 11th commandment. In the past they said you couldn't pass more than one or two cars and that was very vague."

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