

Commissioner for eight years

O'Brien resigns as NBA boss

United Press International
NEW YORK — Lawrence O'Brien, admitting he was beginning to feel like he was riding a "merry-go-round," jumped off the carousel Wednesday and resigned as commissioner of the National Basketball Association, effective Feb. 1, 1984, at the expiration of his contract.

The 66-year-old O'Brien, who has served as NBA commissioner for more than 8 1/2 years, made it clear that he was not quitting under pressure from the league's Board of Governors. On the contrary, he said that last September a four-member Special Committee of the league's Advisory Committee proposed to him a new five-year contract that included a provision that he remain as commissioner through the 1984-85 season.

O'Brien said he was resigning his post because the job, while challenging, was becoming too repetitive.

"I was beginning to get the feeling of going around on a merry-go-round," he said. "It was starting to get to me a little. You don't want to lull yourself into continuity. There should be an end — and this is the end. I have a need for new challenges."

"I think 8 1/2 years is the longest I've ever spent concentrating on a particular situation or subject. I think when I came into this league if you told me that I'd be standing here 8 1/2 years later I wouldn't believe it for a minute. Normally, I don't stay that long."

O'Brien, who had a career in politics before becoming NBA commissioner, would not say what he intended to do in the future but there was speculation that he might return to politics. He previously served as Postmaster General in President Johnson's administration, was a special assistant to Presidents Johnson and Kennedy and served as national chairman of the Democratic Party before succeeding Walter Kennedy as NBA commissioner.

"My future will be the subject of another news conference, but



Lawrence O'Brien resigns as commissioner of NBA

it won't necessarily involve you sports people," said O'Brien. David Stern, the NBA's executive vice president of business and legal affairs, has been mentioned as a leading candidate to replace O'Brien as commissioner.

"Whomever they choose has to be a very strong guy who deals with everyone at arms length, who treats everyone as fairly and equally as you possibly can and

does not concern himself about any animosities that might occur by virtue of his actions," said O'Brien.

O'Brien will leave behind a legacy of achievement. Despite a current labor dispute between the league and its referees that has yet to be resolved, O'Brien's reign as commissioner produced a great many significant changes that has left the league in its best shape ever.

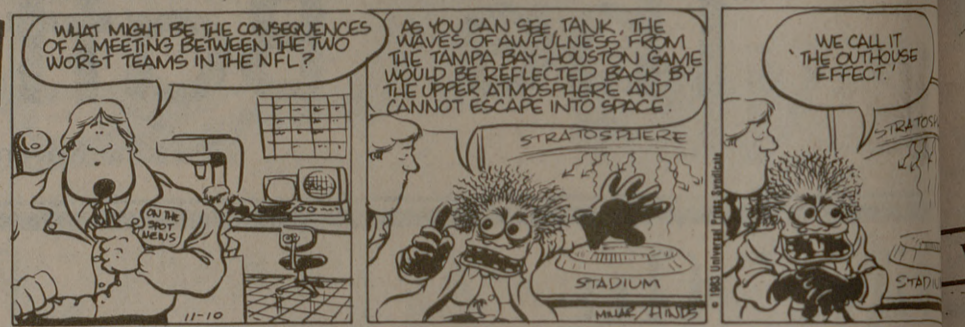
Among the accomplishments of O'Brien's reign were:

- An increase of 300 percent in television revenue.
- An increase of 200 percent in gate receipts.
- The settlement of the Oscar Robertson suit that paved the way to the absorption of the four surviving ABA teams in 1976.
- A settlement of a collective bargaining agreement between the league and the Players Association in 1983 that was hailed as a landmark labor agreement in professional sports. The agreement places a cap on team salaries and benefits. In exchange, the players are guaranteed 53 percent of the defined gross revenues of the league.
- Establishment of an innovative anti-drug program in 1983 that calls for a player being permanently banished from the league if implicated because of drugs.

"This past year without question is a highlight year of the NBA," said O'Brien. "When you look at the collective bargaining agreement, the unique aspects of it, it's a first, it's historic. And we did it together. And then move from that into the drug agreement, which I know in the world of sports just floored everyone."

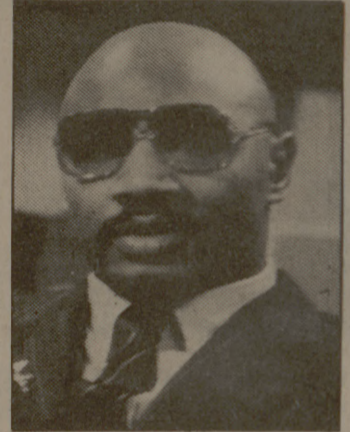
TANK McNAMARA

by Jeff Miller & Bill



Hagler 3-1 favorite over Duran tonight

United Press International
LAS VEGAS, Nev. — Defending champion Marvin Hagler will be fighting for fame and riches and Roberto Duran will be seeking a niche in boxing history Thursday night when they face each other in a multi-million dollar duel for the world middleweight title.



Marvin Hagler favored to win middleweight title

Hagler, who is undisputed world champion, is considered by many to be the finest boxer in the world today. He is 57-2-2 and has not lost a fight in nearly eight years. Hagler won the title by knocking out Alan Minter in three rounds in 1980 and has made seven successful title defenses, all ending in knockouts.

But Hagler has not been able to break into the truly big money in boxing — until now. Hagler's duel with Duran is his first mega-buck fight and could bring him close to \$10 million. It also could bring him the public acclaim he feels he has not been given despite his impressive ring performances.

Duran, who is seeking an unprecedented fourth title, is no stranger to big money fights. He ruled the lightweight division for nearly a decade in the 1970's and then won the World Boxing Council welterweight title by

handing Sugar Ray Leonard his only defeat, a 15-round decision in June of 1980.

Five months after his spectacular victory over Leonard, an out-of-shape Duran destroyed his own career by quitting in the eighth round of his rematch against Leonard. He was branded a coward and a traitor in his native Panama and it took him nearly three years to climb back into favor.

That came earlier this year when, after two losses and an uninspiring victory, Duran produced two major victories to put himself in line for a shot at boxing history. First, he knocked out former welterweight champion Pipino Cuevas in four rounds in January to earn a title

shot. And then he became only the seventh fighter in boxing history to win titles in three divisions by pouncing out defending champion Davey Moore in eight rounds last June to win the World Boxing Association junior middleweight title.

Thursday night's fight, to be held in a specially constructed 15,200-seat outdoor stadium at Caesars Palace, is scheduled for 15 rounds. It is expected to be

gin shortly after 9:30 p.m. and will be televised worldwide on closed circuit television.

Hagler was rated a 3-1 favorite to retain his title.

Hagler, who has been a middleweight for his entire career, will have the edge physically. At 5-9 1/2, he is

taller than Duran and has an eight-inch reach. He is expected to weigh three pounds more than Duran when the fighters weigh in at 10:30 a.m. EST Thursday.

"This is the one I've been waiting for," Hagler said. "I've been fighting a long time and haven't lost a fight in eight years but I could never get a money fight. I watched Larry Holmes and Cooney and Sugar Ray and Thomas Hearns come after me and get big fights right away and I was getting nothing out of them. This will change

Duran, who is 76 1/2 in his career in the 135-pound lightweight class and has a record of 41-1-1, is a Hispanic American. He is a former junior middleweight champion and has competed for Hagler's nomination for a world middleweight title. He feels his vast experience and burning desire for a pay-per-view fight will give him the edge.

"I feel I am destined for boxing history, to be the first man ever to win world titles," Duran said. "Hagler's size and strength bother me because I have experience fighting bigger men. Marvin Hagler has never anyone like me — I have talent in his division — I will show him things he has never seen before in the ring."

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UT's first tourney show

United Press International
AUSTIN — The University of Texas' first annual Longhorn Invitational basketball tournament in 1984 will feature the Ford, Army and Mercer, any possible with the host Longhorn support.

UT Coach Bob Weir said the school's first holiday tournament is scheduled for December at the 16,231-seat Frank Center.

"We wanted quality teams from various parts of the country, and I think we got them," said Weir, "I'm very happy with these teams."