

NCAA looks into football spying

United Press International

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — The NCAA is investigating a report that Florida's football coaching staff sent a spy to the practices of at least seven Gator opponents during the 1980 and 1981 seasons. The St. Petersburg Times reported Tuesday night. The alleged spying apparently was a factor in Charley Pell's surprise resignation Sunday as the Gators' coach, the newspaper said in a copyright story.

The story did not disclose the source of the report.

The newspaper said the alleged spy was Michael Brown, a graduate assistant and academic adviser on the Gator athletic department staff in 1980-81. Brown was fired by Pell in late 1981.

According to the report, Brown posed as a student and watched opponents practice the week before their games with Florida and reported his findings to the Gator coaches.

The Times said he reportedly told the NCAA that he was dispatched in 1980 to spy on California, Georgia, Auburn, Mississippi, Mississippi State, Louisville and Florida State. In 1981, he reportedly spied on Florida State, Mississippi State and Georgia.

"The NCAA has reportedly obtained receipts for some of his (Brown's) airline tickets and hotel bills, some of which were paid for with Florida coaches' credit cards," the newspaper said.

Brown, who now works out of state, confirmed Monday he has

been contacted by the NCAA, the newspaper said. He declined to comment publicly until after the NCAA investigation of the Florida football program, begun in December 1982, is completed.

Pell refused to comment on the report.

University President-designate Marshall Criser could not be reached for comment. But the newspaper said the alleged spying apparently was revealed only recently. It quoted Criser as saying at Monday's news conference that "information received by the university's attorney ... within the last three weeks" figured in Pell's sudden resignation.

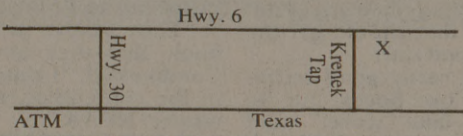
"Brown is said to have visited opponents' campuses on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, joining the students and fans who came out to watch their team practice," The Times said. "When the practices were closed to visitors, he apparently was able to find a vantage point to watch from afar."

"Tuesday and Wednesday are key practice days for most teams. Brown reportedly told the NCAA that no one ever suspected him or asked for identification. On the Auburn practice field, in fact, he even chatted with then-coach Doug Barfield."

"So that he would not be recognized on game days, Brown was assigned a role in the press box, where coaches on the sideline could confer with him through their headsets," the story said.

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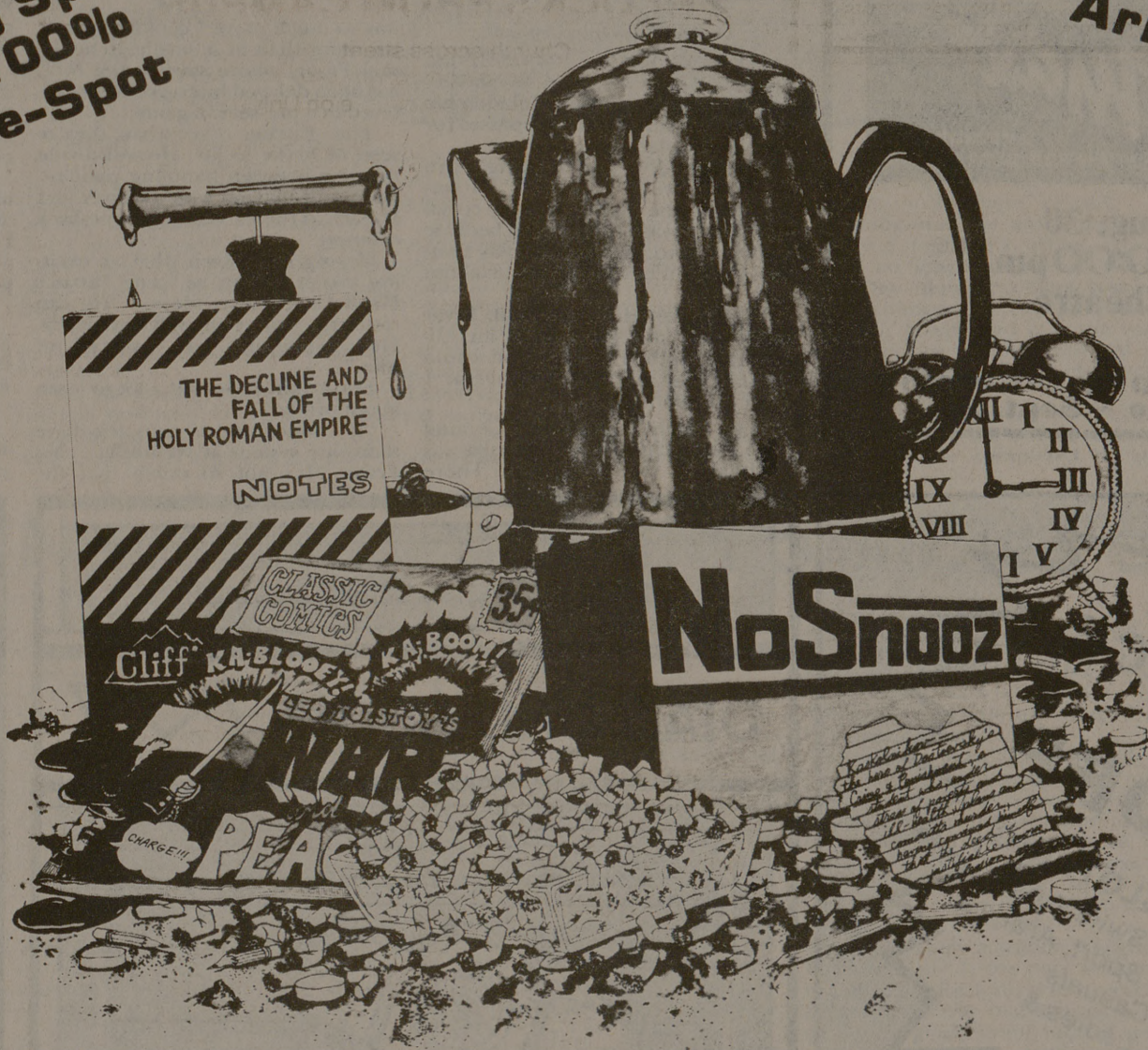


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