

SPORTS

A&M's Connell climbing tennis mountain

By ED CASSAVOY
Sports Writer

Grant Connell, a tennis star for Texas A&M just a few months ago, now stands on the courts of Vancouver, Canada and gazes at the Rocky Mountains ringing that beautiful city.

For Connell, those mountains represent his tennis future, because he's got a lot of climbing ahead.

Connell suffered a ruptured appendix nearly a month ago and he said that had the biggest effect on his tennis game.

"I've been playing on the satellite circuit," Connell says, "and, right now, I just want to get back into it. To work back up to a better level."

The satellite circuit is the starting rung of professional tennis, where players try to earn tournament points to move up the professional ladder.

Right now, Connell says he feels he hasn't had enough time to really get a feel for playing in the pros. Connell left A&M at the end of the 1985 Spring semester.

"I played in the Canadian National (tournament)," Connell says, "and I lost in the second round. But I'm playing tournaments to work up to the Canadian Open which starts around Aug. 10."

Connell says he was happy with his finish in the NCAA Tennis Tournament this past spring.

"I got to the quarter finals in the NCAA tournament," he says, "and I lost to the No. 1 seed in the tournament."

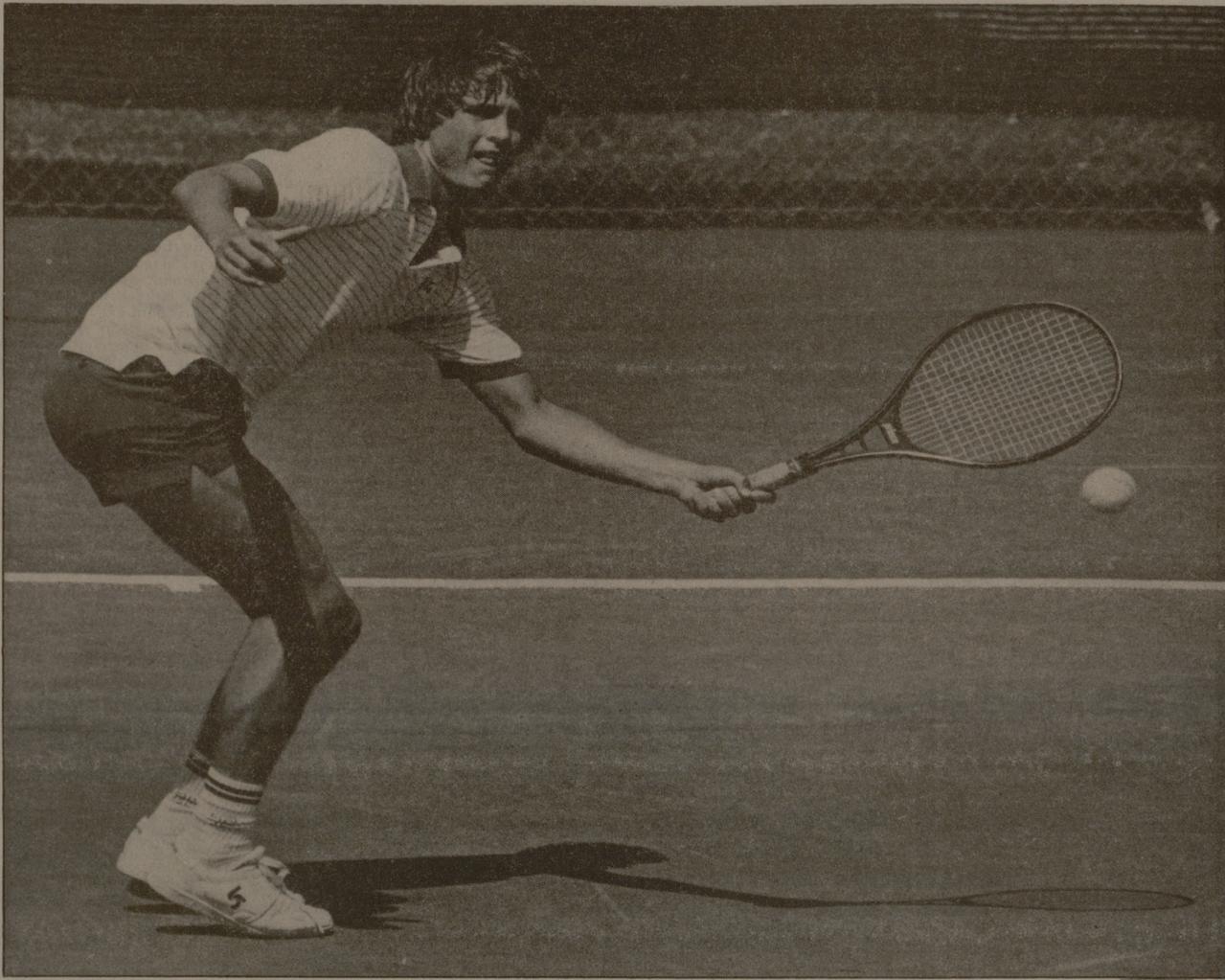
"That's the way it goes (Connell was seeded 7th). I figure making it to the quarter finals was about right for me."

After battling it out in the Canadian Open, Connell said he will return to Texas to play in a number of satellite tournaments in Dallas, Corpus Christi, Waco and Tyler.

Australia is the next stop for Connell in a tennis schedule that he admits "keeps you busy."

Connell analyzed his play, in and out of college, and came up with this summary.

"Since getting out of college," Connell says with a laugh, "I'm probably not playing as well as I did at A&M. I've lost 15-pounds,



Battalion File Photo

Former Texas A&M tennis player Grant Connell (above) is currently playing on the Canadian satellite circuit in hopes of breaking

into the professional ranks. Connell left the Aggie tennis team after the Spring of '85 season to pursue a professional career.

and I'm just trying to get back into shape. It's a week by week thing." He says the tough competition

in the satellite circuit doesn't help matters much. "There are just so many people playing in these events,"

Connell says, "that it's real tough, especially playing against the older players. The range of ages in the circuit is 17 to 30."

And how does Connell stack up against his opponents? "Ask me in a little while," he says.

Connell says as a Canadian, who has played mostly in the United States, he has noticed the biggest difference between the two countries' players at the junior levels. At these levels, he says the U.S. has better players and grassroots organization.

But at the higher levels of tennis, even the Canadian events are played by the top American players.

"The Canadian tournaments are full of Americans," Connell says, "so it feels like I'm not even playing in Canada."

"But Canadian tennis is growing and more money is being put into developing a good tennis program."

Connell is sponsored by Molson Canada (Molson is a Canadian brewery), which he says pays for all his expenses on the tennis circuit. In return, Connell says he gives Molson Canada any tournament money he wins.

Connell estimates a satellite circuit event has an average winning purse of \$3,000.

"But the money is not the significant thing to me," Connell says, "the important thing is the points."

He says tennis rankings and movement to higher circuits in the Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP) is all based on points earned in the various satellite circuits.

Connell says he hopes to play in two more satellites circuits before moving up to the 25,000 circuit, the next step up.

And how has his playing days at A&M help Connell?

"It was great," Connell says, "If I could do it again I would. When I came down, I hadn't had much match playing time."

"At A&M, I got three hours a day of practice and tons of matches."

Connell thinks that coaching had something to do with it too.

"He (A&M Men's Tennis Coach David Kent) didn't push me too hard," Connell says, "but he pushed all of us when we needed it."

"He helped me to cut down on the jumping I did on my serves."

But for now, Connell hopes the tennis mountain he's scaling is more in the order of Mount Aggie, not Mount Everest.

Ueberroth asking both sides to set baseball strike back

Associated Press

NEW YORK — With no "solution in sight," Commissioner Peter Ueberroth said Thursday he would offer a number of suggestions, including an extension of Tuesday's strike deadline, in an effort to end the impasse in baseball's contract talks.

One proposal would ask the union to set aside its Aug. 6 strike deadline while negotiators tried to settle one of their most troublesome issues, the owners' contribution to the pension plan. Another proposal called on owners to stop asking players to help solve teams' financial problems.

Talks ended abruptly Wednesday after the union formally rejected a management proposal on pensions, and no new sessions have been scheduled.

Lee MacPhail, president of the owners' Player Relations Committee, said the PRC executive board had been called to New York "for the rest of the go." The four-owner board, which sets policy in negotiations, will meet Friday night.

MacPhail said he could not comment on any of the commissioner's proposals since he had not seen them in writing.

Union negotiator Don Fehr, meanwhile, rejected all or parts of each of the two suggestions. Fehr said he still viewed Ueberroth as being on management's side, but he thought it was "interesting" that he would tell owners to quit blaming players for whatever financial woes the game suffers.

Ueberroth said he would submit five potential solutions in writing by 9 a.m. Friday. He said his proposals came from suggestions offered by fans, private consultants and his "own ideas."

Players have asked for a \$45 million annual increase in the pension contribution, from \$15.5 million to \$60 million, tying it to their demands for one-third of baseball's \$1.1 billion network television contract.

Newest USFL merger a 'dream team'

Associated Press

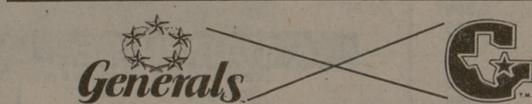
NEW YORK — New York real estate developers Donald Trump and Steve Ross, saying they want a "dream team" that can challenge the National Football League, Thursday announced they will merge the New Jersey Generals and the Houston Gamblers.

The merger brings together the United States Football League's top quarterback, Jim Kelly of the Gamblers, and premier running back Herschel Walker of the Generals, and probably means a trade for New Jersey quarterback Doug Flutie.

"These two are building a dream team in the nation's No. 1 media market," said USFL Commissioner Harry Usher. "Maybe this will start generating demand for a dream game between this dream team and the other two teams that play professional football in the New York area."

That would be the NFL's New York Jets and New York Giants.

"We'll be challenging the NFL," said Trump, formerly sole owner of the Generals. "There's no way the Giants and the Jets can beat this team. I'd like to see the NFL stop



(Kelly and Walker), plus the receivers and other offensive and defensive players on these teams.

"I don't think it can be done."

The first competition between the Generals and New York's NFL clubs will be for playing dates at Giants Stadium in New Jersey, home for all three teams. The USFL is switching to a fall schedule next year after playing in the spring and summer for its first three years. Trump said he would look at other area stadiums if the Generals can't get playing dates at Giants Stadium.

Trump and Ross also must settle on a coaching staff and 35 players to be protected during the long layoff. Walt Michaels is the Generals coach and Jack Pardee coaches Houston.

"We're going to take the best of each team and add it together," Trump said. "We'll have not just the

best in the USFL, we'll have the best team anywhere."

Trump and Ross also have to settle the future of Flutie, the 1984 Heisman Trophy winner whose 2,109 yards and 13 touchdowns can't compare with Kelly's 4,623 yards and 39 TDs.

"Jim Kelly is the quarterback and Doug is on the team," Trump said. "A lot of people are very interested in Doug. He's a real winner."

Flutie's agent, Bob Woolf, said from Boston, "We're disappointed, since one of the reasons we went to the USFL in the first place was the opportunity to play in New York. Maybe some good will come of it. There is the possibility that there may be a USFL team in Boston."

"And the only thing better than playing in New York would be play-

ing in Boston, as far as Doug Flutie is concerned."

While Flutie and Kelly are known for aerial power, Walker set rushing records with 2,411 yards and 21 touchdowns. Trump, who signed Walker after his Heisman Trophy junior season at Georgia, said he has been interested in Kelly since the quarterback joined the USFL out of Miami in 1983.

"Jim Kelly is equal to or better than Dan Marino," Trump said, referring to the record-setting quarterback of the NFL's Miami Dolphins. "Along with Marino and Joe Montana, these three are the best quarterbacks in the country."

Ross, head of a group that agreed last week to buy the Gamblers from Jerry Argovitz and his partners, met the club's payroll and save the roster from the waiver wire. Argovitz will be president of the merged team.

In addition to the Gamblers, the Portland Breakers, San Antonio Gunslingers and Tampa Bay Bandits have been in financial trouble this summer.

Usher blamed the problems on ABC-TV's failure to pay \$7 million this summer for broadcast rights.

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