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End of basketball season signals start of 'ruff' times

By Homer Jacobs
Sports Editor

That time of year is here again. The time when sportsaholics go through serious withdrawal pains.

No more Magic. No more Bird. Just PGA golf tournaments and names like Davis Love III.

My blood curdles with excitement.

There are

Major League baseball games to watch on television. But with around 700 more games to go before the pennant races wind down, there's not much excitement in watching the San Diego Padres battle the St. Louis Cardinals.

In the past, there has been the drama and tradition of Wimbledon's fortnight, which begins June 22. Those two weeks at least kept my appetite for sport alive.

There was plenty of strawberries and cream to go around, as well as the usual hearty helping of a Big Mac, as in John McEnroe.

But the summer of 1987 will be even tougher to muddle through

as McEnroe has pulled out of Wimbledon because of back problems. Wimbledon without McEnroe is like the NBA Finals without the Lakers and the Celtics, the strawberries without the cream.

So basketball is over, tennis is suffering and baseball is boring. That leaves PGA golf on TV for all the sports junkies to survive on.

The NBA draft and Major League All-Star game temporarily do appease the summertime blues.

But with exhibition professional football and the college football season months away, golf is in the limelight. And consequently, the blues continue to mount as long as the greens grab center stage.

So what is there for the sportsaholic to do? There's no hotline, no public service pleadings on the tube. Are we to just say "no" to televised sports this summer?

What I would do to hear ABC sportscaster Keith Jackson in his usual manner say, "Hello again everybody, welcome to Kyle Field.

We've got a dandy between the Razorbacks of Arkansas and the Aggies of Texas A&M."

I even miss the eloquence of college basketball's Dick Vitale.

CBS's Ken Venturi whispering on the back nine that Greg Norman has missed a birdie putt on No. 15 just isn't up to par.

The only cure I can see for these dreaded times in the sports-world is to turn to the sports junkie's dealer — ESPN.

This station will come to my need. It'll serve up Australian rules football and roller derby. Now we're talking real spectator sports.

If I can just make it to August when American football kicks into gear and the boys of summer move into fall.

But for now, I must cope with these lean times. I will survive, but it'll be rough. Maybe I'll just go cold turkey and not watch any sports on TV for the next six weeks.

Wait a minute, a sportsaholic without sports? Now that's the "Big Lie."

Livingstone to try out for USA team

Texas A&M standout pitcher Scott Livingstone said he will try out for the United States Olympic Team, and three other college baseball players signed professional contracts in the wake of the Major League baseball draft.

Livingstone, who was named Southwest Conference Player of the Year, was drafted in the third round by the Oakland Athletics. He will consider his options after the August Pan American games. Livingstone has the option of signing a professional contract or returning to his senior year at A&M.

In other A&M news, pitcher Wernig was also drafted by the Athletics, going in the 15th round. He will report to Oakland's Class A affiliate, the Medford Athletics. Ever Magallanes was chosen in the 10th round by the Cleveland Indians and will report to Burlington, N.C. Carolina to play under former Coach Tom Chandler.

Pitcher Gary Geiger was drafted by San Francisco, and will play for Class A team in Everett, Wash.

Ailing McEnroe to skip Wimbledon

WIMBLEDON, England (AP) — John McEnroe, saying he didn't want to play if he was not 100 percent physically, withdrew from Wimbledon Monday because of a persistent back ailment.

It was the latest twist in the story of McEnroe's attempts to come back from a self-imposed sabbatical from tennis, and growing doubts of his ability to bear the pressure imposed on the sport's top players.

A first-round loser in each of his last two Grand Slam appearances, the three-time Wimbledon champion said he was "tired of walking onto the court worried whether I shall be able to give it my best effort."

Wimbledon officials said that,

while McEnroe's withdrawal would not affect attendance, his absence would be a loss.

"All things being equal, one would like to see all the top players participating," said Chris Goringe, chief executive of the All-England Lawn Tennis Club. "But they've got to be fit. Otherwise, there's no sense in them sacrificing themselves in any tournament."

The announcement that the American left-hander would skip the world's most prestigious tennis tournament for the second year in a row came as organizers were announcing the seedings for the event, to be held June 22-July 5.

Defending champions Boris Becker of West Germany and Martina Navratilova of the United States

were made the top seeds, Navratilova as expected and Becker in a surprise.

Becker is ranked second in the world behind Czechoslovakia's Ivan Lendl, but has won Wimbledon the past two years and is at his best on grass courts.

He won the Stella Artois tournament on grass at Queens Club Monday, beating American Jimmy Connors 6-7, 6-3, 6-4. Connors, a two-time Wimbledon winner, is seeded seventh.

Lendl and West Germany's Steffi Graf, the men's and women's champions at the French Open this month, received the second seeds. Mats Wilander, runner-up to Lendl at Paris, is No. 3 among the men,

while American Chris Evert, the

time Wimbledon champion, is seeded among the women.

Based on his computer ranking, McEnroe would have been seeded eighth in his first appearance at Wimbledon in two years. He lost last year's tournament as a six-month break from tennis.

But in a telex to the All-England Club, McEnroe said the back problems that have plagued him in months were too much to overcome.

"There is no reason for me to come to Wimbledon unless I'm in percent fit," McEnroe said. "I not been able to train since I returned from Paris and I'm not walking onto the court to whether I shall be able to give my best effort."

Becker grabs Wimbledon title before

LONDON (AP) — Boris Becker won his last tournament match before Wimbledon Monday and pronounced himself in good mental and physical shape to launch his bid for a third consecutive All-England title.

"If I'm not confident now, I never will be," Becker said after rallying to beat Jimmy Connors 6-7, 6-3, 6-4 and capturing the \$40,000 first prize in the Stella Artois grass court championships at Queens Club.

"This is a good win for me after playing for so long on clay at the French Open," said the 19-year-old West German, who reached the semifinals at Paris.

"I came to Queens without practicing a lot on grass and still beat most guys easily until the semifinal and final. I have not been playing 100 percent, but I still won the title."

Becker needed two hours, 18 minutes to outlast the aging but game Connors, who had several chances to win his first tournament in more than 2½ years.

The 34-year-old American, a three-time champion at Queens Club but who has not won any title since October 1984, played very well for half the match, tactically outwitting the frustrated Becker.

Returning serves superbly and outlasting his opponent with low, angled passing shots, the canny Connors took the opening set on a tie-breaker and had two break points for a 3-0 lead in the second set, with his serve to come.

But he made two forehand errors and Becker, quick to seize the chance, won the game, broke Connors twice and tied the match.

In the third set, Connors put more pressure on Becker's unusually suspect second serve, but was having just as much trouble holding his service.

Spinks takes down Cooney in five

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. (AP) — Michael Spinks knocked down Gerry Cooney twice in the fifth round and then stopped him Monday night as Cooney stood helplessly against the ropes to win a scheduled 15-round heavyweight bout.

Spinks hurt Cooney with a right hand after Cooney missed with a wild left hook. Then Spinks landed a barrage of punches to the head that put Cooney down.

He got up at three but Spinks came to the attack and flattened him with another barrage.

The 6-foot-6 Cooney struggled to his feet again. But Spinks came on again, backing off briefly as if he needed a rest.

A moment later, Spinks launched another barrage and finally referee Frank Cappuccino stopped the fight at 2:51.

The bout was billed by promoter Butch Lewis as one for the heavyweight championship of the world, although the World Boxing Council and World Boxing Association recognize Mike Tyson as champion.

The International Boxing Federation, which stripped Spinks, recognizes Tony Tucker.

The fight surely moves Spinks toward a major money-match with Tyson sometime in 1988.

The devastating loss most likely ended Cooney's career. It was his second defeat in an important bout. On June 11, 1982, he was stopped in the 13th round by Larry Holmes in a bid for the WBC title.

Between the loss to Holmes and Monday night's fight before a sellout crowd of 16,500, Cooney had fought only three times for seven rounds. The inactivity surely hurt him.

Before the match, Spinks said: "I can't be acting like I'm afraid of Gerry. I'm not. I'm looking for an opportunity to hit him with my Sunday punch."

In the first four rounds, Spinks spared Cooney with punishing jabs and short left hooks.

In the fifth round, Spinks, 208½, hit the 238-pound Cooney with everything.

Tyson was in the audience and he had to be impressed with the 30-

year-old Spinks' stellar performance.

No longer can anyone say the former undisputed light heavyweight champion cannot hit true heavyweight.

From the outset, Spinks moved left and then right to the ponderous Cooney, then darted inside to land jabs or one to the head.

Spinks carried the first with several good jabs and good lefts to Cooney's head.

Cooney did land a hard left to the head of the 6-2½ Spinks the bell.

"If I hit him, I'll hurt him," he had said.

But Cooney was never able to Spinks with more than one or two punches at a time and he never all of Spinks, although he did hit him up in the fourth round and him under the right eyebrow in the second.

It was the unbeaten Spinks' victory and 21st knockout.

Cooney, who also is 30, now 2 with 24 knockouts.

Scott, Houston pounce on Cincinnati

HOUSTON (AP) — Mike Scott struck out a career-high tying 14 and pitched a seven-hitter over eight-plus innings Monday night, leading the Houston Astros over the Cincinnati Reds 4-0.

Scott, who did not walk a batter, is tied with Seattle's Mark Langston for the major-league lead with 116 strikeouts. Scott, 8-3, won his third straight decision and his fifth over his last six starts.

The 1986 Cy Young Award winner struck out 14 on Sept. 14, 1986, in a 3-2 loss against San Diego and repeated the feat on Oct. 8 in Game 1 of the National League playoffs, beating the New York Mets 1-0.

Dave Smith entered the game in the ninth after Bo Diaz reached on

an error by Terry Puhl and stuck out three batters.

Bill Gullickson, 7-4, held the Astros to a pair of singles until Bill Doran led off the sixth inning with his seventh home run of the season over the right field fence. Doran was 2-for-26 prior to the homer.

Gullickson left the game for pinch-hitter Paul O'Neill in the seventh inning.

The Astros got another run off reliever Frank Williams in the seventh inning when Scott scored from second base on Billy Hatcher's single to left field.

Scott reached base on a fielder's choice and took second on the same play on shortstop Kurt Stillwell's throwing error.

Houston scored their final two

runs in the eighth on a

Glenn Davis, a triple by Ken and a sacrifice fly by Ron Reyes.

Hatcher singled to left field to open the game against Gullickson and the next hit didn't count the fifth inning when Dickie led off with a single.

But Scott struck out and Gullickson turned Hatcher's pop into a double play, throwing out the first.

Scott pitched himself out of trouble in the fourth inning. After going out leadoff hitter Budby Terry Francona doubled and Diaz singled to center field, Scott Francona to third.

Scott struck out Ron Oester and Gullickson to end the inning.

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