

Sports

Yankees' accountant says team not racist

NEW YORK (AP) — The New York Yankees' chief accountant says he wasn't offended when team owner George Steinbrenner called him a "young black boy" on national television.

Warren Atkinson, 30, said he hasn't experienced any racism from Yankees management since he began working for the team in 1984.

"I wouldn't say I have been treated differently," Atkinson told the *New York Post*. "I have no gripes over race. I don't think the Yankees are really race oriented."

office as my 'boys and girls' — and I ain't about to change for nobody."

Atkinson said Steinbrenner frequently adopted a fatherly tone and often called younger men "son." He also said the Yankees "seem to be making some effort to include minorities, including myself, in management decisions."

Appearing with Steinbrenner on "Face the Nation," former San Francisco and Cleveland manager Frank Robinson said there are former black players "just dying" to get front-office jobs in baseball.

On "Face the Nation" Sunday, Steinbrenner defended his minority hiring policies by saying that "the head accountant that I have in my finance department happens to be a young black boy."

Steinbrenner later defended his use of the word "boy," considered offensive by many blacks.

"I have been using the term 'boys and girls' since my parents taught me what it meant on restroom doors in my grammar school," he said. "I've always referred to my team as the 'varsity' and to my players and the younger members of the front

"If you can give me the names of three young men ... give them to me now and I'll be in touch with them Monday morning," Steinbrenner replied. Robinson mentioned the names of former major league players Ray Burris and Don Buford.

Burris, 36, was hired by the Milwaukee Brewers last April as a special assistant to General Manager Harry Dalton. He is also attempting a comeback as a pitcher with the Class A Stockton (Calif.) Ports.

Buford, 50, is an assistant baseball coach at the University of Southern California.

Cash not the typical Wimbledon champ

WIMBLEDON, England (AP) — Pat Cash, a product of the liberated 1980s, doesn't want to be compared with the Australians who built a tennis dynasty in the '50s, '60s and early '70s.

"I don't think Harry Hopman would wear a diamond in his ear," Cash, who does, said Monday in a reference to the late Australian coach, a tough taskmaster who developed most of his country's players 20 and 30 years ago.

"Tennis has become a bit more professional world. It's a completely different lifestyle now. It's a full-time job," Cash said.

On Sunday, Cash became the first Australian man to win Wimbledon since John Newcombe captured the title in 1971. Newcombe was the last in a long string of champions from Down Under although Ken Rosewall was the last to make the Wimbledon finals, losing to American Jimmy Connors in 1974.

Although Cash said he had no heroes when he began playing tennis, the names of Newcombe, Rod Laver, Roy Emerson, Neale

Fraser, Lew Hoad, Norman Brooks and Ashley Cooper, among others, gave him a thrill at Sunday night's champions dinner.

Still, he said, things are different these days.

"I'm in a different era than those guys," Cash said Monday, a day after his 7-6, 6-2, 7-5 victory over Czechoslovakia's Ivan Lendl. "The way I play and the way I live is different."

Of his victory at Wimbledon, Cash said:

"It really hasn't sunk in properly yet. It started to sink in last night when I was sitting at the table with the trophy right in front of me. I was very, very proud of my name being on there with those great champions."

Cash said he had received hundreds of letters and telegrams from Australia, including one from Prime Minister Bob Hawke.

"He said, 'You did yourself and your country proud,'" Cash said. "He's a big sports fan and I've seen him at Davis Cup many times."

Blue Jays top Rangers with six-hitter

TORONTO (AP) — George Bell and Ernie Whitt hit consecutive homers in the fifth inning and Jimmy Key pitched a six-hitter for seven innings as the Toronto Blue Jays snapped an eight-game losing streak Monday night, defeating the Texas Rangers 6-4.

Key, 9-5, retired 12 straight Rangers following Pete Incaviglia's solo homer, his 17th, gave Texas a 1-0 lead in the second inning. Bob Brower broke the string with a check-swing single in the sixth.

Toronto scored four times off Charlie Hough, 9-4, in the second inning. Fred McGriff, Garth Iorg and Tony Fernandez had RBI singles and Kelly Gruber had a sacrifice fly in the inning for Toronto, which was helped by two passed balls charged to Texas catcher Mike Stanley.

The Blue Jays pulled ahead 6-1 in the third when Bell and Whitt connected for homers. It was the 28th for Bell and the sixth for Whitt.

Texas chased Key with three runs in the eighth after he took a three-hitter into the inning.

Incaviglia doubled, Stanley walked and Don Slaught doubled in the first run. When Steve Buechele singled home Stanley to make it 6-3, Tom Henke replaced Key and got the last six batters for his 14th save, although Gino Petralli made it 6-4 with a sacrifice fly.

Hough, 39, failed in his attempt to become the Rangers' all-time leader in victories with 94. He is tied at 93 with Ferguson Jenkins.

Thon says future with Houston uncertain

HOUSTON (AP) — Houston Astros shortstop Dickie Thon, plagued by vision problems since a 1984 beaming, said Monday he is not ready to retire but he doubts he will ever play for the Astros again.

Thon, who left the team Friday and returned to Houston because of his eye problems, said he plans to continue therapy and hopes for some improvement.

"I feel sad because I wish I could have done more for the team," Thon said at a news conference at the Astrodome. "I feel a lot for this team. I feel I'll always be one of them."

Although he said he doesn't know what is going to happen to his baseball career, he added, "I don't want to say I'm going to retire."

Thon said continuing to play baseball with the vision problems

posed a threat to him and he was afraid he would get hurt again.

In April 1984, Thon was hit by a pitch in the left eye. He has since suffered vision problems and has left the team several times, including during spring training earlier this year.

Thon, whose contract expires at the end of the season, has been placed on the disqualified list and the Astros have recalled Bert Pena from Tucson to take his place.

The 29-year-old Thon said he talked to General Manager Dick Wagner on Monday about his decision to leave the team, but team spokesman Chuck Pool said he did not have a statement from Wagner about the meeting.

When asked if he thought he

would return to the Astros, Thon replied, "I don't think so. The way (Wagner) has been dealing with my situation, I won't be around here anymore."

Thon said he plans to stay in Houston for awhile where he will talk to his family about his future.

"It's difficult to walk away from a game I'd do anything to play," Thon said. "I'd do anything to play again."

Thon said he knows he has the ability and could play major league baseball again if his vision improved.

The vision problems have made playing baseball scary because he could not see the ball like he once did, Thon said.

"I don't know how I did it," he said.

In 32 games, Thon was hitting .212 with one homer and three RBI.

Gibson says increase in homers related to rule changes in 1969

NEW YORK (AP) — The theories for the increase in home runs this season have ranged from the lively ball to changes in the cosmos. Bob Gibson has a much simpler explanation.

Gibson says too much has been done in the past 20 years to help the hitter.

Gibson, a Hall of Famer who won 251 games in a 17-year career with the St. Louis Cardinals, was a competitor to whom every batter was an enemy. An intense figure on the mound, he mowed down batters as a marksman might clay pigeons.

His career reached its zenith in 1968 with a season that may never be matched.

It included a 1.12 earned run average, the best since the introduction of the lively ball in 1920. Of his 22

victories that season, 13 were shut-outs. He struck out 268 batters and completed 28 of 34 starts.

But there were great pitchers just about everywhere that season. . . . Juan Marichal, Ferguson Jenkins, Jim Maloney, Don Drysdale, Tom Seaver, Denny McLain, Dave McNally, Lius Tiant, Mel Stottlemyre, Catfish Hunter, and Mickey Lolich to name a few.

In 1968, five of the National League's 10 teams hit less than .240 and the Chicago Cubs led the league with 130 home runs. The league total was 891 in 1968, an average of 1.02 homers per game. The overall major league batting average was just .237.

This year, in 480 NL games through Sunday more than 900 homers had been hit and the average was up to 1.95 per game. Cincinnati, San Francisco, the Chicago Cubs and New York Mets have already hit at least 100 homers.

The changes began the next season.

"In 1969 they took five inches off the mound. It went from 15 inches to 10 inches and everybody blames it on me," Gibson said.

There was also a change in the strike zone. Instead of a strike being from the batter's knees to the top of the shoulders, it was changed to top of the knees to the armpits.

That led to higher averages, .248 overall in 1969 and .253 in 1970.

In 1968, four of the 10 teams in the NL hit 100 or more homers. The next season with the changes and expansion to 12 teams, nine clubs reached 100 or more homers, led by Cincinnati's 171.

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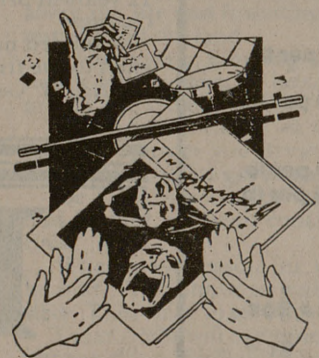
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