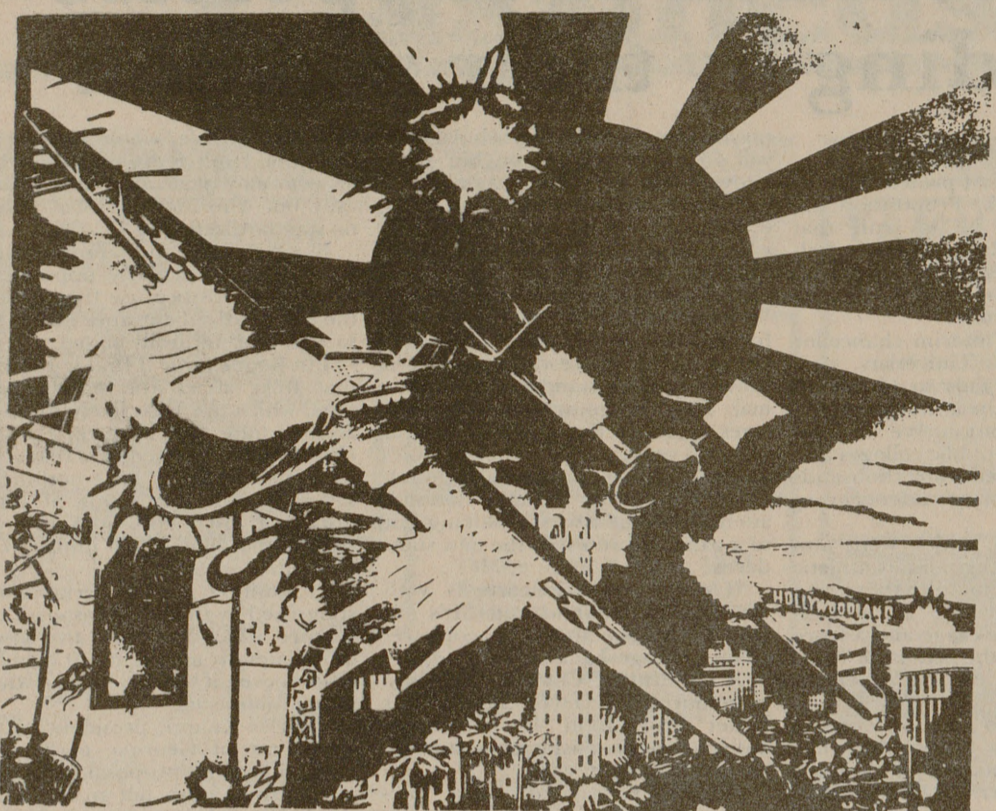


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Bengal's Boomer astounded by work of offensive line

CINCINNATI (AP) — Quarterback Boomer Esiason doesn't get a close look at his offensive line's work until film day. What he sees when the lights go out astounds him. "When you look at our end-zone films of the games, there are five-yard holes," Esiason said. "I've never seen anything quite like that. We'd be nuts not to take advantage of it." The Bengals have taken full advantage this season. They have the league's most dangerous offense — and a Super Bowl appearance — largely because of the success of

their massive line. The line is experienced and big, one of the best in the NFL. Two members are going to the Pro Bowl — tackle Anthony Munoz and guard Max Montoya. The smallest member is center Bruce Kozerski, who is 6-foot-4 and 275 pounds. The best-known is Munoz, who has been chosen for eight consecutive Pro Bowls and is considered one of the best ever at his position. The best numerical measure of the line's success this year is 169 — the number of yards per game that the Bengals averaged on the

ground. With backs Ickey Woods and James Brooks taking advantage of those holes noted by Esiason, the Bengals have the NFL's best running attack and a powerful weapon for the Super Bowl. "They do a great job of blocking," said Buffalo coach Marv Levy, whose team lost to Cincinnati in the AFC championship game. "Their blocking schemes are not anything I haven't seen before, but they execute them well." Larry Roberts, a 49ers defensive end, offered this view: "What their offensive line intends to do is get a little movement, turn you so Icky Woods or James Brooks sees an open area and they hit the crack. They will be trying to succeed where a string of others have failed."

49ers losing Cross

MIAMI (AP) — Center Randy Cross, whose 13-year career spanned the San Francisco 49ers' futility in the 1970s and their championships in the '80s, will retire Sunday after his third Super Bowl. Cross' announcement Wednesday surprised his teammates but left the oldest 49er, at age 34, elated at the circumstances surrounding a decision he made last October.

experience of the 49ers' other four starting offensive linemen — tackles Steve Wallace and Harris Barton and guards Jesse Sapolu and Guy McIntyre — matches his 13 years of seniority. Walsh was unsuccessful in an attempt to get Cross to anchor the line for one last year. "In today's football, the offensive line calls are so continuous, so vital, so important to success," Walsh said. "He can recognize fronts, he sees the shifting of fronts and changes line calls. That know-how among offensive linemen is a critical area, and you lose a lot when you lose these kinds of men."

"I can think of no better way to end a career," Cross said. "This is the way you read about it, it's the way you dream about ending your career." Cross, a three-time Pro Bowl selection, is considered the 49ers' most articulate player and has been pursuing a career in sports broadcasting for several years. He told Coach Bill Walsh of his decision on the plane from San Francisco last Sunday, but didn't disclose his secret to his teammates before taking the podium in front of hundreds of reporters at the team's hotel. "I always told myself I wanted to play as long as I was happy with the way I was playing," he said. Shifted permanently from guard to center in 1987, he has provided leadership in a role that Joe Montana describes as "quarterback of the offensive line." The combined NFL

Eddie DeBartolo Jr., owner of the 49ers, noted that Cross was the only player left from when he bought the team in 1977. The 49ers suffered through their worst season with a 2-14 record in 1978, Cross' third year, and matched it in 1979 even after the arrival of Walsh and Montana. "He has been an iron man for the 49ers," DeBartolo said. "But more than that, he has held — in bad times and good times — this team together with his leadership." "He is the classiest individual and the nicest person, and one of the greatest football players I've ever been associated with," he said.

Galarraga, Bonilla agree to new contracts

NEW YORK (AP) — Andres Galarraga tripled his salary Wednesday while Bobby Bonilla, Joe Hesketh and Wes Gardner doubled their paychecks. Galarraga and the Montreal Expos agreed to a one-year contract for \$865,000, a 260-percent increase from the \$240,000 he made in 1988. Bonilla and the Pittsburgh Pirates agreed to a one-year contract for \$730,000, a \$485,000 raise. Hesketh and the Montreal Expos settled at \$417,000, a \$226,000 raise, while Gardner and the Boston Red Sox settled at \$265,000, a \$148,000 raise. In other moves Wednesday, Ron Hassey and the Oakland Athletics agreed to a one-year contract with an option that is worth \$700,000 guaranteed. Hassey will get \$600,000 in 1989 and Oakland has an option for 1990 at \$700,000. The Athletics must pay a \$100,000 buyout if the option is not exercised. Also, third baseman Chris Brown and the Detroit Tigers agreed to a one-year contract for \$277,500, a \$12,500 raise, and left-hander Jerry Don Gleaton and Kansas City agreed to \$220,000, a \$100,000 raise. All seven players were eligible for salary arbitration. There are 120 players still eligible for arbitration and they will exchange salary figures

with their clubs on Thursday. Hearings will be held from Feb. 1 to Feb. 20. Andy Van Slyke, the Pittsburgh outfielder, has agreed to a \$5.5 million salary over three years but he and the Pirates have so far been unable to settle on lockout language covering the 1990 season. Bonilla, though, was pleased with his deal. The 25-year-old third baseman batted .274 last season with 24 home runs and 100 runs batted in. "I never dreamed of a year like that," Bonilla said. "What a year. What a wonderful year." Galarraga, a 27-year-old first baseman, batted .302 in 1988, fourth-best in the National League, with 29 homers and 92 RBI. Hesketh was 4-3 with a 4.99 ERA and two saves. The left-hander agreed to the same salary that Toronto's John Cerutti agreed to on Tuesday. Gardner was 1-1 in 18 relief appearances with Boston before he became a starter. The right-hander finished 8-6 overall with a 3.50 earned-run average. Hassey, a catcher, batted .257 with seven homers and 45 RBI. Brown, acquired from the Padres in the off-season, hit .235 for San Diego with two homers and 19 RBI.

42-year-old runner punishing competition in distance running

DALLAS (AP) — There was a time when the running competition in Dallas among the 40-and-older set was close. Then along came Deon Dekkers. Masters runners — those 40 or older — in Dallas insist there ought to be a law against somebody who, at 42, can run the mile in 4:24; who has clocked 15:05 for 5,000 meters; who is creeping closer and closer to 30 minutes for 10 kilometers; and who is blessed with movie-star good looks. It appears that even the laws of nature do not apply to Dekkers. "I just don't think he's aged like the rest of us," said fellow Masters runner Steve Shopoff of Dallas. "He's so far ahead of the rest of us that we can't even dream of staying with him." Shopoff added, "He's a national-class runner banging away at local-class talent — and it shows." Dekkers entered the Apple Grand Prix last fall in Dallas and ran away with the Masters title. In 1986, he won the Masters division at the Mercedes Mile in New York. That year he also won the Masters national championship for eight kilometers

in Tampa, Fla., and the national title in the 5,000 on the track. But then his construction business took off, and Dekkers had to put running aside for a time while he chased the mighty greenback. "For a year, all I could see were dollar signs," Dekkers said. "Only in the last couple of months or so have I been able to get back to some serious training." It was Dekkers' business that brought him to Dallas 15 months ago. In fact, it was his business that brought him to the United States from his native South Africa three years ago. "I had a construction firm in (Capetown) South Africa, but when the economy went bad, I came to Houston to sell some of my heavy equipment," said Dekkers, who has permanent resident status and an exemption from The Athletic Congress that allows him to run in the United States. "When I got here, I found all sorts of opportunities. I had only intended to stay 10 days, but ended up moving to Houston. Eventually, I was doing so much work in the Dal-

las area that I moved my office up here." Dekkers never ran in high school. He took up the sport at 18 when he saw how well younger brother Gerhard was doing at it. That was in 1963. By 1969, Dekkers was the South African cross country champion and national record holder for 3,000 meters with a time of 8:04. His wife, Lorraine, took up running shortly before the move to the United States. In Houston, she began working with coach Jim McLatchie and has been clocked at 2 minutes 42 seconds for 800 meters. They passed on their running genes to their kids. Their daughter, Michelle, recently won the NCAA cross country championship, and son Andre also took up running and clocked 15 minutes 43 seconds for 5,000 meters before devoting more time to working for his father's company. "I used to be able to run with Michelle. Now, I'm taking my turn getting whipped by the whole family," Shopoff said. "But really, they are all class people, and they are good for the local scene."

Graf takes match in straight sets

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — It's no surprise that Clint Eastwood is one of Steffi Graf's favorite actors: They're both killers. While Eastwood blasts bad guys on the screen, Graf destroys opponents on the tennis court. Graf's latest victim was Rene Simpson, a 23-year-old Canadian who had the misfortune to run into the Grand Slam winner in the second round of the Australian Open. They played 12 games on center court Wednesday, and Graf won every one. Simpson won just six points in the first set and 26 in the match. "It doesn't matter if it's that sort of match," the West German said. "I try to finish the points the same way I would in the tough matches." It was Graf's third Grand Slam shutout in the past eight months. Last year, she blanked Natalia Zvereva in the French Open final and Hu Na in the opening round at Wimbledon. So dominant is Graf that there is already speculation about an unprecedented second straight Slam.

"I'm not talking about that," she said. "It's awfully difficult, and it's out of my mind totally." About the only time Graf gets tested these days is on the practice court, where she prefers to play against men. "It's more challenging," she said. "It's good to lose sometimes (in practice) so you don't get too confident. You need reminding." Graf's teen-age rival, Gabriela Sabatini of Argentina, also moved into the third round Wednesday with a 3-6, 6-1, 6-2 victory over Conchita Martinez of Spain. "I didn't use my head very much in the first set and I was surprised how well she was playing," said Sabatini, the third seed. "After that, I hit the ball harder and started trying to move her." "It's good to have a tough match, but I never thought I was going to lose. When I concentrated and hit the ball, I didn't have any problems." Also advancing to the third round were sixth-seeded Zina Garrison, No. 8 Claudia Kohde-Kilsch, No. 13 Raffaella Reggi and No. 16 Nicole Provis. In men's play, 10th-seeded Aaron Krickstein and No. 16 Amos Mansdorf won their first-round matches but No. 5 Jakob Hlasek was upset by Australian Darren Cahill.

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