

Wednesday, July 26, 1989

## Mack pleads innocent to drug trafficking charge, remains free on bond

CLEVELAND (AP) — Cleveland Browns fullback Kevin Mack pleaded innocent to drug trafficking Tuesday, and his attorney said Mack's cocaine rehabilitation would be completed in time for the team's exhibition opener.

"Kevin Mack is not a drug trafficker," Gerald S. Gold, Mack's defense attorney, said outside court after Mack's arraignment.

Mack, 26, who was arrested with two others June 28 at a street corner known as a drug dealing site, was allowed to remain free on \$2,500 bond by Cuyahoga Common Pleas Court Judge William E. Aurelius.

The judge assigned the case to Judge Richard F. McMonagle.

Gold predicted that a crowded court docket would mean Mack's trial would not begin until after the NFL season.

Gold, who cautioned his client against commenting on the case, said the player's month-long drug rehabilitation program at the Cleveland Clinic was "going very well" and would be completed Friday.

His completion of the voluntary drug rehabilitation program means Mack will be available to travel with the Browns to Britain for an Aug. 6 exhibition game in London against the Philadelphia Eagles, Gold said.

Gold said he was uncertain whether Mack would face punishment from the NFL or the Browns because of his drug use and arrest. Mack had a problem with cocaine but not an addiction, according to Gold, who denied Mack had cocaine in his possession at the time of his arrest.

Kevin Byrne, a team spokesman, said the Browns plan to have Mack accompany the team to London if he completes the rehabilitation program as scheduled.

Asked how much Mack would work with the team during its week in Britain, coach Bud Carson said at the Browns' preseason training camp, "I wouldn't imagine much for him except for some ball handling and conditioning."

Joe Browne, the NFL's director of communications, declined comment on whether the NFL would impose any sanctions on Mack.

Mack was indicted July 10 on one felony count each of cocaine possession, cocaine trafficking, possession of criminal tools, and using a motor vehicle for drug abuse. If convicted on all counts, Mack could face up to 20 years in prison.

Police have said they found 11 packets of cocaine valued at \$50 each inside his car.

## Little League playoff freeze lifted

HOUSTON (AP) — An order that temporarily halted all Texas Little League playoff games didn't cause too many disruptions because only a few games had to be canceled, league officials said.

State District Judge Arthur Lesher lifted the freeze Monday after lawyers involved in a lawsuit over an ineligible player agreed that the statewide ban could be canceled and not affect the playoffs while the case proceeds.

Lesher scheduled a Thursday morning hearing to consider a temporary injunction. The next game

for North Houston National, the disputed champion of District 25 Little League, is a Thursday night bi-district contest.

Little League Inc. officials said the order didn't throw off the state playoffs since Sunday games are rare and a minimal number of Saturday games had to be canceled.

"We were lucky it hit on a weekend," said Mike Witherwax, Texas Little League director. "Obviously, it had a little effect, but we're in good shape and on track right now."

Lawyer Blaise Heaney, who filed the suit, said he will not seek to inval-

idate games played in other areas while the order was pending because those games would not affect his case.

"The games Friday and Saturday will stand," Heaney said. "We're not trying to hold the others in contempt."

The controversy began after North Houston's 8-5 playoff win over the Northside National Little League All-Stars on Wednesday.

Northside filed a protest over the participation of North Houston player David Lezcano, who lives outside the team's eligibility area.

Little League officials in South Williamsport, Pa., agreed the boy was ineligible, disqualifying him from further play, but they determined that Lezcano's play did not affect the outcome.

It was then that James R. King Jr., father of Northside's Jason King, filed the suit, which claims that Lezcano, 12, a center fielder, caught three fly balls, had two hits and scored two runs.

King said the suit will teach the boys the importance of playing by the rules.

## Alvarez shipped to minors after poor debut

ARLINGTON (AP) — The Texas Rangers' top pitching prospect went from stellar predictions to a cellar performance in his major-league debut.

Nineteen-year-old lefthander Wilson Alvarez, the youngest player in the majors, lasted only 26 pitches in Monday night's loss to the Toronto Blue Jays. He didn't even get an out.

And he won't even get a chance to redeem himself — at least not right away.

The Rangers announced Tuesday they had optioned Alvarez to Tulsa, their Class AA affiliate, and purchased the contract of righthander Paul Wilmet from triple-A Oklahoma City.

"This was my first time, and the experience is going to help me out a

whole lot when I go on," Alvarez said Monday, before the demotion was announced.

Alvarez was pulled by manager Bobby Valentine after giving up consecutive walks that followed back-to-back homers by Tony Fernandez and Kelly Gruber.

Both home runs and a leadoff single by Junior Felix came on 1-and-2 off-speed pitches.

Alvarez, at 19 years, 4 months, is 123 days younger than Seattle's Ken Griffey Jr., who reobtains the distinction of being the youngest player in the big leagues.

The 33,754 fans gave Alvarez a prolonged ovation and Valentine patted him on the back and told him not to get down.

"I'd say his fastball was outstand-

ing," Valentine said. "They didn't even put his fastball in play. Nobody got around on his fastball."

Although the organization lost confidence in Alvarez after one abbreviated appearance, the Rangers aren't ready to give up on him just yet.

Scouts say Alvarez, who became the first player born in the 1970s to pitch in the majors in the 1980s, is expected to anchor the Rangers staff of the 1990s.

But that was of little consolation to the native of Maracaibo, Venezuela, who was called up from Tulsa on Friday when Charlie Hough went on the 15-day disabled list with soreness in his right shoulder.

Alvarez, sitting solemnly and alone in the Rangers clubhouse a

half-hour after the Rangers' 6-3 loss to Toronto, welcomed passing teammates' pats on the back with half-smiles of acknowledgment and an occasional shrug.

Alvarez avoided the media, telling team officials he didn't want to talk to reporters because his English was limited.

But in an interview with the Associated Press, Alvarez spoke in Spanish and said he wasn't discouraged by his shaky debut.

He said he was nervous at first, "but I saw that I can pitch here in the majors. This game will help me."

Catcher Jim Sundberg said Alvarez slowed his delivery somewhat when he threw his curve and changeup, which scouts say are his best pitches.

## Hogs' fullback arrested on traffic violations

FAYETTEVILLE, Ark. (AP) — Arkansas junior fullback Terrence "Juj" Harshaw, arrested early Sunday morning on charges of speeding, driving while intoxicated and having an altered driver's license, faces arraignment next week in Fayetteville Municipal Court.

Harshaw was traveling at 63 miles an hour in a 35 mph zone, officials said.

Razorback football coach Ken Hatfield said he had not talked with Harshaw yet. "But, I will and we'll go from there."

Hatfield said there is one rule players are expected to abide by — that they do nothing to embarrass the University of Arkansas.

"I feel very strongly about DWIs and DUIs, I don't care if it's by one of our players or not. That's like being a loaded gun. I think there should be stringent penalties for that."

"He (Harshaw) certainly didn't do anything to endear himself. I'm just thankful nobody was hurt."

Harshaw, the team's fourth leading rusher last season, carried 78 times for 306 yards and scored four

touchdowns in 1988.

Harshaw is the second player with ties to the Razorback program to be in trouble recently with Fayetteville authorities.

Tony Chericco, a former Arkansas noseguard who is now a graduate assistant under Fred Akers at Purdue, pleaded innocent Monday to a charge of theft of property. Chericco, at the University of Arkansas attending summer school, was arrested last week after a three-day investigation into a theft at a Fayetteville clothing store.

## TANK McNAMARA

by Jeff Millar & Bill Hinds



## Aluminum bats, turf and domes: Where is baseball headed?

Ahhh, don't you just love baseball in the summertime? The players take the field. The first batter is up. He swings on the first pitch and clangs the ball into left field.

Huh? Clangs? What is this, a joke? No, actually, it may be reality in the future. Major League Baseball is considering allowing players to hit with aluminum bats.

To me, that really is a joke. It would benefit the hitter, but it would take away from the game.

The traditional sound of the crack of a wooden bat sending a ball over the fence would be gone.

Sure, the hitters will send more over the wall, but we'd see batting averages skyrocket. Pitchers have enough to worry about already. Besides, we'd probably see a lot of lawsuits because of dented cars that were parked past centerfield.

The broken bats would be no more. We'd see every ball go farther and harder than if hit with a wooden bat. Tradition alone should take precedent in this decision. It just would change the game.



Robbie Scichili  
Sports Writer

And what about baseball parks in general? There are no two that have the same proportions, measurements and size. Oh sure, the base pads are always 90 feet apart, but have you ever looked at how different the home run walls are?

A batter can hit a home run in Boston's Fenway Park where it would be a foul ball in Seattle's Kingdome. Some parks have a tendency to give up more home runs than others simply because of the way they were built.

Some parks have roofs while others do not. Minnesota fans have forgotten even what a rain-out is.

These parks make me mad. There's no wind. The temperature is always the same. There's no sunny afternoons for fans to get a good tan in the outfield seats. Almost sounds un-American, doesn't it?

There are domes. There are stadiums. There are parks. Could we please figure out what we want to call the edifice that houses a baseball game?

Then fielders have to deal with the type of field they're playing on. At least there are only two choices here: grass or astroturf. But which one is better?

I vote for grass. First of all, the problem with turf is that it can literally turn what would be a single on grass into a triple. Have you ever seen a ball fly into the right field corner and stop? It reminds me of Speedy Gonzales teasing Sylvester the Cat.

Those poor outfielders. They have to change their strategy every time they play a different team because of the difference in fields. Then again, sometimes I don't feel

sorry for them with all the money they're getting.

Any team out there want a hard working redhead to chase any ball that comes his way?

The designated hitter. Is this a good description? A better one might be "washed up old man who can't field anymore." Or teams could put up a sign on the dugout that says: pitcher too chicken to hit.

Seriously though, I feel that the designated hitter is something baseball can do without. If pitchers can field, they should hit as well. Why don't we just have one half of the team field and the other half hit?

Even though there is an argument over the designated hitter, you'd think that Major League Baseball would come up with a standard for the league.

But no, they want to complicate things up even more by making pitchers bat in the National League while designated hitters pick up the slack in the American League. This creates even more problems.

Take Bruce Hurst for example. Boston

traded him to San Diego during the off-season. The only swings Hurst took in Boston were at flies in the clubhouse.

Now Hurst is struggling to even make contact with the ball when up to bat. I don't think he'll be threatening to pass Kevin Mitchell in the home run derby anytime soon.

As much as I hate to admit it, baseball will continue to change as time goes on. The game is such a thrill to watch, but these different conditions of play cause the true essence of the game to be lost at times.

There should be a standard for all baseball parks in the league to have the same type of field, the same distance to the outfield walls and the same type of dimensions.

The American League needs to cut this designated hitter idea and make every player hit. Let's say Adios to the domed stadiums and make all of the parks outdoors with natural grass.

After all, how can we expect the level of play to be authentic when the conditions of play are artificial?

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