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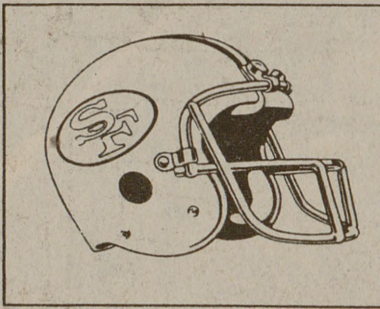
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Genius in a cardigan? 49ers Coach Seifert 'quietly' guides team to Super Bowl

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — The Pacific Ocean off Pacifica, just south of San Francisco, is anything but pacific. And that's how it was the day three years ago when George Seifert nearly drowned when his fishing boat capsized.



A few days later, Seifert and his friends were back on the water and since then, the same thing has almost happened again at least three times.

are some thrills in life you can't overcome. You've got to do it."

The day after the biggest victory of his NFL coaching career, the 30-3 win over the Rams that put his San Francisco 49ers in the Super Bowl, George Seifert looked far more like a professor than Captain Ahab as he faced the press wearing the same patterned blue cardigan and top-sider moccasins (without socks) he had worn the week before.

"Lucky sweater?" someone asked him. "I guess so," he replied with his characteristic smile, then added: "I'm glad no one asked about my shorts."

Of all the comparisons between Seifert and his predecessor, that comment may say the most. Can anyone imagine Bill Walsh, who frowned on four-letter words and preached decorum as much as football, talking about underwear?

The man who has the 49ers on the verge of their fourth Super Bowl was a protégé of the man who won the first three and has his same professorial looks.

But he is about as different from his predecessor as two men can be who succeed in a demanding and offbeat profession.

To put it another way, there may be as much Mike Ditka as Bill Walsh in George Seifert.

If most 49ers regard Seifert as a players' coach, there is steel behind the white hair and affable exterior. Just ask Tim McVey, one of his best defensive backs, who was suspended for two games after talking back when Seifert asked him to return to the lineup after sitting out with a groin injury.

"He can be intimidating," quarterback Joe Montana says of a man who looks and often talks like vanilla ice cream. "Just ask the defensive guys."

Ask this defensive guy: "Anybody who doesn't think George is tough doesn't know what he's talking about," says safety Ronnie Lott, who played under Seifert when he was the 49ers' defensive backfield coach and defensive coordinator.

"I mean this is a guy who'll make you do it over and over until you get it right. If there were lights out there on the practice field, we'd stay out there at night."

"If the offensive guys thought they were getting a softy, they were getting a surprise." Ditka's a bit of a stretch — Seifert

never has and never will grab a player on the sidelines and shake him in full view of the Monday Night Football cameras.

Seifert will never say "we stunk" after a loss, although he hasn't had much practice — just two losses in his first 18 NFL games.

Seifert is a coach without the ego of most of his colleagues, including Walsh, who rarely ducked away from the tag of "genius."

"With this team, there's plenty of recognition to go around for everybody," Seifert says. "I don't think I have to have it all. I don't think it has to be George Seifert's team. It's the 49ers team."

And, if it beats Denver, a team for history.

That's a long way from where Seifert, who turned 50 Jan. 22, thought his coaching career was headed a decade ago.

A native of San Francisco, he attended Polytechnic High School next to the 49ers' old home at Kezar Stadium and served as an usher there.

Then he played linebacker and guard at the University of Utah and got his first head coaching job at Utah's Westminster College at age 26.

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Open gives Krickstein new hope

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — Aaron Krickstein, a 16-year-old phenom when he cracked the top 100 in 1983, is still chasing his first Grand Slam title and trying to get into the upper echelon of players.

Mats Wilander, 25, knows what it's like to be No. 1, to win an Australian Open, a French Open, a U.S. Open. He did it all in 1988 — and lost it all last year.

But they operate now in the shadows of Ivan Lendl, Boris Becker, Stefan Edberg and John McEnroe, capable of beating any of them but more often losing to them in the big matches.

Krickstein, the son of a doctor and grandson of a rabbi from Grosse Pointe, Mich., is ranked No. 7 in the world, certainly a fine accomplishment but short of his dream of being No. 1.

Soft-spoken and easy-going, Krickstein doesn't mind laboring in relative obscurity and letting the pressure fall on others.

"I can understand why people wouldn't say I'm a threat to win the tournament — I've never got even to a final" of a major, he said Thursday after reaching the third round of the Australian by beating Ramesh Krishnan 6-1, 4-6, 6-3, 6-1.

"It doesn't really bother me being behind the scenes," he said. "I just try to get as far as I can and then maybe I can play well at the end of the tournament and cause an upset or something."

Wilander, a Swede who has homes in Greenwich, Conn., and Monaco, says he just wants to "get back to scratch," to find the winning formula after a year of injuries, aimlessness on the court and personal problems.

After beating Canada's Martin Wostenholme 6-2, 7-

5, 6-3 to reach the third round, Wilander proclaimed himself more confident.

"I sort of lost trust in my baseline game," he said. "It was pretty bad, I think, but I've got it now."

Wilander, who dropped to No. 12 in the year-end rankings, is currently 15th.

"I'm more concerned with winning another Grand Slam title than being No. 1," he said. "Winning a Grand Slam proves the point that you're not finished. I'm getting there."

Wilander has been there before, having captured the Australian in 1983, 1984 and 1988. He won the French in 1982 and 1988, and was runner-up in the U.S. Open in 1987 before winning it the next year.

Wilander's next opponent, Australian Wally Masur, won't be a pushover, especially with the crowd roaring for him. Masur beat Becker here in 1987 en route to the semifinals.

The heat was terrible — 108 degrees on court — and the flies were worse on Thursday but Becker, No. 3 Edberg and the other top seeds survived unscathed.

Argentina's Gabriela Sabatini, the No. 2 women's seed, also reached the third round with Americans Zina Garrison, No. 3, and Mary Joe Fernandez, No. 6.

Becker, fighting the sun at high noon, won a 6-3, 7-6 (7-4), 4-6, 6-2 slugfest against scrappy American Scott Davis, the winner of last week's New Zealand Open.

"It was hard to see the ball in the sun," Becker said. "It's hot out there. It's not easy playing under those conditions, but it's the same for both players."

Pokes looking at underclassmen

DALLAS (AP) — The Dallas Cowboys will need a few good men to help them improve on last season's NFL-worst record.

And some of those players are likely to come from a pool that Cowboys owner Jerry Jones said he expects.

Jones has already said he is against allowing college underclassmen to leave school early for the National Football League draft. But he concedes that the expected flood of juniors this year could help the team rebound from 1989's 1-15 record.

"The more we can condense that rebuilding, the sooner we have accessibility to good players, the quicker our rebuilding job will be," Jones told the Dallas Times-Herald.

Scouts, agents and NFL analysts estimate 10-to-30 underclassmen will follow Alabama junior linebacker Keith McCants' lead into the draft. McCants announced his plans to turn pro Tuesday.

Although McCants is not eligible for the April 22-23 draft under NFL guidelines, the league is not expected to challenge him for fear of losing a court battle. The Alabama star is expected to be the overall No. 1 pick.

Commissioner Paul Tagliabue was scheduled to meet NCAA Executive Director Richard Schultz Thursday to discuss the issue. Tagliabue this week called the league's draft rules "vague and uncertain."

Tagliabue is preparing a policy revision to accommodate more underclassmen. That report should be ready when the owner's meet in March.

Clemson coach resigns amid NCAA violations

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — Clemson's Danny Ford, armed with a \$1 million settlement, resigned Thursday and ended an 11-year coaching tenure that brought the Tigers national prominence and NCAA penalties.

Ford's resignation comes less than two weeks after the NCAA informed Clemson, the top football power in the Atlantic Coast Conference, of 14 alleged rule violations committed between 1984 and 1988 by the football program.

The 41-year-old Ford said he would "cooperate and participate with Clemson" in responding to the NCAA inquiry, which must be completed by March 12.

Peden

(Continued from page 7)

cause headaches for Astros management, and nothing to besmirch the name of Houston.

The only controversy he has been involved in was when he asked management not to use his name in a beer promotion because he thought it was an improper signal for a role model like himself to send out.

The only headache he has given management is over salary. Management's position on salary is understandable.

If Davis can continue to consistently hit more than 30 homers a year, hit for a decent power-hitting average (like .269), and provide excellent defense and leadership, he eventually will be among the highest-paid players in Major League Baseball.

Astros' management knows that by holding down his salary now, they can hold it down in the future.

McCartney given Bear Bryant award

HOUSTON (AP) — Colorado's Bill McCartney, who led his team to a No. 1 ranking during the season and a trip to the Orange Bowl, was awarded the Bear Bryant award Thursday as the nation's top collegiate football coach.

Other finalists were Miami's Dennis Erickson, Notre Dame's Lou Holtz and Bill Curry, former head coach of Alabama.

McCartney was on a recruiting trip and was unable to attend the ceremonies at the Hyatt Regency in Houston. But his son Mike, a graduate assistant on the Buffaloes staff, was in attendance to receive the award on his father's behalf.

It was McCartney's first Bear Bryant award. Holtz won the award last year and in 1977 while at Arkansas.

Meanwhile, Holtz, who has been a finalist for the award the last three of four years, said he still thinks his 11-1 team should have been named national champion following their 21-6 Orange Bowl victory over Colorado on New Year's Day.

"We did have the best record and the hardest schedule," Holtz said during a news conference prior to the awards ceremony Thursday. "But we're not complaining."

Miami, who ended the season with an 11-1 record in Erickson's first season, was voted No. 1 by The Associated Press after the Hurricanes defeated Alabama 33-25 Jan. 1 in the Sugar Bowl. Notre Dame, who lost to Miami 27-10 in November, finished No. 2.

Colorado ended the season ranked No. 4 and Alabama No. 9.

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