



**Trouble brewing down Yankees way Paper: Steinbrenner blackmailed**

NEW YORK (AP) — An unemployed gambler who says George Steinbrenner is "a sick liar" allegedly is attempting to blackmail the New York Yankees owner. The New York Daily News, in Sunday's editions, said Steinbrenner admits to paying \$40,000 to Howard Spira on Jan. 8. Spira gave Steinbrenner information to use in his suit against Yankee outfielder Dave Winfield, but Steinbrenner said that was not the reason for the payoff. Spira signed an agreement promising never to disclose the payoff, but the newspaper says he has since threatened to make it public, along with their tape-recorded conversations, unless Steinbrenner gives him an additional \$110,000 and a job at his American Shipbuilding Co. in Tampa, Fla. "Steinbrenner is a sick liar," Spira told The Associated Press on Sun-

day. "This man promised me the world and kept me isolated in this house with his promises. He is trying to frame me and put me in jail. This man is so two-faced and sees out of his head two sides at once." Steinbrenner, in turn, has accused Spira of "extortion in its purest form." Spira is under investigation by the FBI, which raided the New York City apartment where he lives with his parents and seized tapes, legal documents and other records, according to the Daily News. "I am scared to death that he will do everything he can to get these people to create other charges against me. I have no money and no legal representation," Spira said. In 1981, when he was 21, Spira became associated with Winfield's agent, Al Frohman. Although he was not paid, Spira did public relations work for the David M. Winfield

Foundation. Spira said he turned to gambling because Winfield demanded he maintain a high lifestyle, then received a \$15,000 loan from the player in December 1981 to pay off gambling debts. Spira said he was forced to pay back \$18,500 and said Winfield allegedly threatened to kill him if he didn't repay the money within two weeks. Winfield has denied Spira's charges. Spira said Sunday that the only time he has lied was to protect Steinbrenner and not reveal he had told the baseball owner about Winfield. "He said if I took all the dirt on myself and kept him clean, he would give me \$150,000, a \$50,000-a-year job working directly for him in Tampa, and free lifetime residence at the Bay Harbor Inn in Tampa," Spira said.

**Wrongway runner awarded St. Pat's race**

DALLAS (AP) — A runner who took the wrong route in a St. Patrick's Day footrace still got first place because, officials said, it wasn't his fault and he was beating everyone anyway. James Jackson inadvertently took a shortcut because a police officer had directed him onto a street one block too soon, tainting his finish time of 23:51. But, second-place finisher, Kirk Thaxton of Abilene, said Jackson was so far ahead of the pack before the errant detour that it would be unfair not to give Jackson the victory. "He was just kicking our butts anyway, even before that," said Thaxton, who finished with a time of 25:22. "If they don't give first place to him, I'll raise a heckuva fuss, because James deserves it." Race director John Collieran agreed. "It wasn't his fault he got off course," Collieran said. "He was just following the police car. He ran hard and probably would've been the winner anyway."

Jackson said he had psyched himself up for a fast time in the five-mile Shamrock Run on Saturday, but when he looked at the clock as he crossed the finish line, he thought it had been too fast. But, by the time the police officer led him astray, Jackson had built up such a commanding lead over Thaxton that race officials had time to direct the remaining 4,200 runners on the right route. "I knew something was wrong when I passed the three-mile mark in 13:58," Jackson said. A 13:58 at that point would've meant a 4:30 mile after having run 4:35 and 4:54 respectively, for the first two. "I knew there was no way I ran a 4:30." Jackson won the 1989 West End Five-Mile Run in Dallas with a time of 24:17. The Shamrock race came as Jackson was recovering from an ankle injury suffered Feb. 4 at the U.S. Cross Country Trials. "I'm feeling strong, really strong," he said. "Too bad my time doesn't mean anything today."

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