

SEC commissioner: no hasty league decisions

Clay Rasmussen
 Sports Editor

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (AP) — The commissioner of the Southeastern Conference said that because serious decisions are involved, any SEC expansion will not be done hastily.

Eventually, Roy Kramer said, the conference has to take a final vote on whether to admit new members, "but we have not set any meeting or any schedule for that type of meeting."

Kramer said the SEC continues to ask for information from schools such as Arkansas of the Southwest Conference and Florida State, an independent, and provide those schools with information they need in deciding whether to join the SEC.

"These are serious decisions and they're not going to be made overnight," Kramer said. "If it doesn't happen by the start of football season, that doesn't mean discussions are not continuing."

Arkansas Athletic Director Frank Broyles recently said the possibility is strong that Arkansas will remain in the Southwest Conference, which also is considering expansion.

Florida State Athletic Director Bob Goin said an expanded Metro Conference, which would add football as a league sport, "sounds like a great concept," but that "it would be a mistake to put a timetable on us."

"We only heard 30 days ago from the SEC. You don't give up 30 years of athletic history in 30 days."

FSU President Bernard Sliger has

Consultants hired to assess SWC league operation

DALLAS (AP) — Southwest Conference presidents hired a consulting company on Tuesday for an extensive study of all facets of the league's operation before deciding what to do about expansion and realignment.

Commissioner Fred Jacoby said the report by McKenzie and Co., of Dallas and Houston, would be ready for the presidents by late September.

The move put on the back burner any immediate action by the SWC about the threat of the University of Arkansas leaving the league. The Southeastern Conference is courting Arkansas, and the SWC fears that Texas and Texas A&M would follow suit should the Razorbacks leave.

"The presidents want more concrete information before they determine the future of the Southwest Conference," Jacoby said.

Arkansas chancellor Daniel Ferritor was on hand for the meeting which included a unanimous vote to hire the consulting firm.

Ferritor said after the meeting that the Razorbacks' upcoming meeting with the SEC still was without a date. Athletic director Frank Broyles was in Scotland for the British Open and not available this week.

On Friday the 13th, Broyles left a meeting of athletic directors and faculty representatives, saying "it's a strong possibility" the Razorbacks will stay in the SWC.

"Not only is it a possibility, it's a strong possibility we will stay," Broyles said. "If changes are made, the

conference will be a viable competitive national conference."

Jacoby left Tuesday's meeting saying there was a "strong feeling to keep the conference intact. You don't take 76 years of history then discard it in 30 days without a lot of information. In September, we will have more direction."

The presidents put on the back burner any immediate raid of other conferences.

"I did not receive a positive response to move ahead to talk to other conferences," Jacoby said. "We needed more review. I'm confident we will hold ranks until the study is in. I think everyone wants to go about this in a deliberate matter."

Jacoby said under review will be the SWC's round-robin schedule. He said one of the suggestions included SWC teams playing only six league games, leaving two more games to schedule against other opponents.

Jacoby said, "There was a feeling that we also shouldn't rush into realignment. There is more to this than just television money. We feel the big picture needs to be discussed and studied. The conference presidents do want to be pro-active and not reactive."

Jacoby said he viewed the whole process "as a chance to improve the conference."

Asked about recent polls that showed a majority of Arkansas fans favoring a move out of the SWC, Ferritor said "polls aren't going to make any difference."

A's Van Poppel model for used car salesmen

He's more sly than a used car salesman with a Brooklyn accent. After all, he had both Sports Illustrated and me fooled.

Who's he? Todd Van Poppel. Van Poppel, the 18-year-old pitching sensation, signed a \$1.3 million deal with the Oakland A's Monday despite scaring away many teams by announcing that he would bypass a pro contract to attend the University of Texas and try to land a spot on the United States 1992 Olympic team.

Hey, I'm a capitalist. After college, I'm looking for the big bucks and I'd be delirious if I could land a job that paid \$1 million plus. And so I take my hat off to Van Poppel.

Skewed priorities

But I can't say I agree with his method.

Sports writers across Texas were praising Van Poppel's comments after the A's wooed him. Sports Illustrated gave Van Poppel kudos. "It's nice to see Van Poppel's priorities in order," Sports Illustrated wrote.

In order indeed. I was even willing to accept the fact that this pitching coaches dream possibly would be facing Aggie batters for the next three or four years.

He was one of the good guys. My faith in baseball was restored. No longer was the young ace swayed by monetary concessions. An education and the chance to play ball for the U.S. Olympic squad was more important to Van Poppel.

Or so he said, anyway.

A salesmen's model

Van Poppel's had us fooled. While I was bestowing praise on him, the Oakland A's came to Texas and were doing one heck of a sales job to nab him. And evidently, so was Van Poppel.

Headlines read that he had a change of heart, but I contend Van Poppel was doing a selling job of his own. Like a fine used car salesman, he held out and stressed that he intended to honor his commitment to Texas.

Obviously the A's upped their initial offers. I use the term upped lightly.

When the smoke cleared and Van Poppel had a change of heart, the A's had him at a price of more than \$800,000 a year over three years including a \$500,000 signing bonus.

Not too bad a deal for a kid who was drafted 14th overall. In fact, his contract with the A's equaled the record salary for an amateur. Tony Clark shares this distinctive record when Detroit signed him last week. Clark was a No. 1 draft pick.

So, once again my faith in baseball has been shattered (or restored, however you prefer to look at it). And once again, Van Poppel deserves kudos for doing one hell of a selling job.

Tour victory within reach for LeMond

LUZ ARDIDEN, France (AP) — The yellow jersey of the leader seems to be all that separates American Greg LeMond from a second consecutive victory in the Tour de France.

And that seems to be just a matter of time — five seconds to be exact.

Up and down the hills of Tuesday's mountainous 16th stage, LeMond pulled into second place and within easy striking distance of overall leader Claudio Chiappucci of Italy and established himself as the clear favorite with five stages left in the three-week race.

Lathon signs contract; ready for rookie start

HOUSTON (AP) — Houston Oilers first round draft pick Lamar Lathon, wearing faded overalls and a t-shirt, signed a five-year contract Tuesday night and pronounced himself ready to become a rookie starter.

Terms of the contract were not announced, but Lathon was seeking a \$3.1 million deal with a \$1 million signing bonus.

"This is my image, I like to feel comfortable," Lathon told a hastily called news conference late Tuesday.

Lathon, who played under Oilers coach Jack Pardee last season at the University of Houston, was the 15th player chosen in the NFL draft after Pardee became head coach of the Oilers.

Lathon says he'll be comfortable in the Oilers' 4-3 defense, the same alignment in which he starred for the Cougars.

"I feel comfortable in our defense," Lathon said. "Basically I think Coach Pardee would turn me loose and I could call the signals."

Lathon skipped his final collegiate season with the Cougars to apply for the NFL draft despite missing most of last season with a knee injury.

"There is no question about the knee and I'll prove the knee is fine when we start working out," Lathon said.

Lathon's agent Tom Williams vowed on draft day that his client would not be a holdout.

"It got a little nasty but not too nasty because Mike Holovak doesn't get nasty," Williams said.

Soviets invade Texas to 'play ball'

AMARILLO (AP) — It took a little Glasnost, some Southern Hospitality, a portion of perestroika, and a lot of Yankee Ingenuity to get the U.S.S.R. National Baseball Team to Amarillo to play the Amarillo Texans.

In today's doubleheader, the Soviets play the Oklahoma City Collegians at 6 p.m. in the first game, and the Texans in the second game.

The Soviet team originally was scheduled for a one-game stop in Amarillo as part of its pre-Goodwill Games tour.

However, when the American marketing company, which was sponsoring that tour, dropped them just before their arrival, the Russians didn't feel so lucky to be back in the USA with no place to play or to stay between June 29 and the start of the Goodwill Games on July 23.

Enter comrade Bunny. That's Bunny Mick, now a special assignment coach with the St. Louis Cardinals, who played and managed in the New York Yankees farm system in the 1940s and '50s.

Mick had put on a clinic for the Russian team during their 1989 tour of the United States and was invited to the Soviet Union later in the year where he instructed their teams several weeks.

Mick arranged for the team to stay at Cocoa (Fla.) Expo Sports Center, where the Houston Astros held their spring training camp when

Mick coached for them in the 1970s and '80s.

"I asked these wonderful people at Cocoa Expo if they would be interested in housing 30 people for 21 days for nothing," said Mick, a native of Tampa, Fla.

"I was almost asking tongue-in-cheek when I asked them for it. And they gave it to us for the whole time for nothing. That's absolutely amaz-

ing! That's 30,000 dollars or so worth of goodies."

Cocoa Expo is not only feeding, housing and providing practice facilities for the Russian team, but arranging for games with Space Coast League teams, which has college, junior college and high school players.

"They did everything for me," Mick said of the Cocoa Expo people. "All I had to do was show up with a

bunch of Russians."

The United States Baseball Federation, headquartered in Trenton, N.J., came up with \$4,810 to bus the team from Kennedy Airport in New York to Florida.

Meanwhile in Amarillo, manager Mike Moore, the Texans general manager, had heard the Russian tour had been canceled. But neither he nor any other executives in Jayhawk League towns where the Soviets also had been scheduled to play could locate the team.

Moore enlisted the help of U.S. Rep. Bill Sarpalius in finding the Russians. Sarpalius aides Rick Smith and Robert Hinkle spent several days on the phone with the Soviet and U.S. embassies locating the team and arranging their games in Amarillo.

The Russians will leave Amarillo on Thursday morning and play games in San Bernardino, Calif., on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. They are due to report to Seattle, Wash., on July 23 for the Goodwill Games.

The Texans and San Bernardino officials will share the airfare expenses of getting the Soviets from Florida to Seattle.

Moore said this visit by the Russians will give the Texas Panhandle a rare chance to show off its western heritage to its new-found friends. The Soviet group will be given cowboy hats, boots and jeans shortly after its arrival.

Da dude, run, run, run



Photo by Sondra N. Robbins

Mark Waite, a junior marketing major from Houston, runs up the bleachers in Kyle Field during a break in Tuesday's rainfall.

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