

SPORTS BRIEFS

Red Wing player constantly improving

ROYAL OAK, Mich. (AP) — The process of weaning Detroit Red Wings defenseman Vladimir Konstantinov from a ventilator began Tuesday, a doctor said. Konstantinov has been on a ventilator since he and two other members of the Red Wings organization were injured when the limousine they were in struck a tree on June 13. "Mr. Konstantinov continues to make purposeful movements in response to family, teammates and medical staff, opening his eyes and waving his hands on command," said Dr. Karol Zakalik, a neurosurgeon at Beaumont Hospital.

Divorce finalized for David Justice

ATLANTA (AP) — David Justice and Miss Berry are officially divorced. The couple, in a joint statement released Tuesday, said terms and conditions of the divorce were confidential. "Miss Berry and Mr. Justice each have the highest respect for the other personally and professionally. They both deeply regret that the marriage was not a successful one," the statement said. "They express their hope that they will remain good friends." A Fulton Superior Court judge signed the final order June 20 in the ugly divorce of the former Atlanta Braves outfielder, who now plays for the Cleveland Indians, and the actress.

Phoenix guard will come back for 1998

PHOENIX (AP) — Phoenix Suns guard Kevin Johnson, who toyed with the idea of retiring after last season, is returning for one more year and a reported \$7 million salary. "I intended to play 10 years and then I would be done. At the end of the season, I still felt that way," Johnson said Tuesday at a news conference at America West Arena. "But Jerry (Colangelo) said we had to dig down deep in my soul for a decision and this is it."

Houston Oilers' early exit approved

HOUSTON (AP) — With neither Harris County nor discussion, Harris County Commissioners Tuesday unanimously agreed to accept \$3.5 million from the Houston Oilers so the team can escape its Ashtabula lease a year early and set up shop in Tennessee. The action took just a few seconds and was included in several items rubber-stamped simultaneously by the Harris County Commissioners Court. "I'm pleased we have now got the Oilers behind us," County Judge Robert Eckels said after the 3-0 vote. "I think it's a fair deal for the taxpayers of Harris County. We come in with a practice facility and a stadium. I think we're coming out ahead of the game."



A&M Athletic Director **Wally Groff** has a rich A&M background. He was a student and has worked for the University for 31 years.

The man who is behind madness of A&M sports

Groff heads one of the nation's biggest athletic departments

When people think of college athletics, athletes pumping iron, practicing and competing in games come to mind. What may not come to mind are the hard working individuals behind the scenes. Officials in the Big 12 conference, those who work for various parts of the athletic department and those who keep the athletes in line are crucial to any athletic program.

The Battalion will feature these individuals who make the A&M athletic program one of the tops in the country and illustrate the people behind the names.

Part one in a series

By **TRAVIS V. DABNEY**
THE BATTALION

Wally Groff is the definition of a loyal company man. He began his career at Texas A&M University as a student and has not left since.

Groff became A&M's athletic director in 1993 after working his way up from business manager. He has a difficult job because he has to deal with many different aspects of running one of the largest athletic departments in the country.

Although Groff's duties vary, he has several that usually present themselves on a consistent basis. They range from running the business department and making himself available to coaches and assis-

tant athletic directors, administration, alumni, student athletes and the 12th Man Foundation. These tasks, as well as the formation and continued development of the Big 12 Conference, dominate Groff's job as athletic director.

During his time here at A&M, Groff has found time to raise a family. He has a wife, two sons and a daughter. Everyone in Groff's family has graduated from A&M, except his youngest son Dennis, who plans to attend A&M. When he can find time in his busy schedule, Groff describes himself as an "outdoors man." He enjoys fishing and hunting as well as just putting in a hard days work outside. Groff has recently purchased land on the Brazos River, where he plans to build his family home.

Although Groff admits he enjoys these things, his time is limited, so he looks for personal pleasures in his job. For example, Groff gets a tremendous amount of satisfaction from the several conventions that he travels to each year, as well as speaking engagements that he attends at A&M clubs around the state.

Groff believes there are four aspects that make a good athletic department. His criteria include a great university, good facilities, good coaches and good students. Groff said he believes A&M meets all of them. While Groff said the A&M Athletic Department has all the tools necessary to be an overall impres-

sive department, he does acknowledge that the department had a less than spectacular performance in the previous academic year, but said the Athletic Department will be as strong as ever for years to come.

One of Groff's main goals since he has become athletic director has been to improve the facilities at A&M. Groff calls himself a "frustrated architect."

Since Groff took over the position of athletic director, he has overseen the building of Reed Arena, the planned improvements of Kyle Field and the building of a new tennis facility. Also, the athletic department has overseen the replacement of the turf in Kyle Field with grass and the planned building of two new grass practice fields south of Kyle Field.

"There will be no reason to believe that our facilities will not be in the top five to ten in the nation when all of the planned projects have been completed," Groff said.

The main duty of a Big 12 athletic director, besides running his own school's program, is to the conference. While the Big 12 members have had several disagreements in the past year, Groff said this situation is a positive one and that all the members have made several sacrifices for the improved state of the league.

Groff said he is happy with the status of the new conference.

Please see **GROFF** on Page 6.

NBA Draft '97 outcome will be unpredictable

Only certain thing: Duncan is first

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — The NBA draft will be held Wednesday night and Wake Forest center Tim Duncan will be the No. 1 pick. That much is certain. It's a guessing game as to what happens after that.

"In past years we'd at least know who the Nos. 2, 3 and 4 picks are," Minnesota general manager Kevin McHale said Tuesday. Not so this year.

What follows is an educated guess at which teams will do what. 1. **San Antonio** — OK, no educated guess here because the selection of Duncan is a certainty. Coach Gregg Popovich says only four or five teams called to ask about the pick because everyone knew the Spurs would be foolish to even think of trading it.

2. **Philadelphia** — The chances are 50-50 that this pick ends up with some other team. The 76ers are flooded with offers from teams wanting to move up and select Utah forward Keith Van Horn. The guess here is that coach Larry Brown trades the pick and gets an awful lot in return.

3. **Boston** — Coach Rick Pitino on Tuesday publicly listed his team's needs: center, point guard, shooting guard, power forward. What he really wants is Van Horn. If he's gone, look for the pick to be Colorado point guard Chauncey Billups.

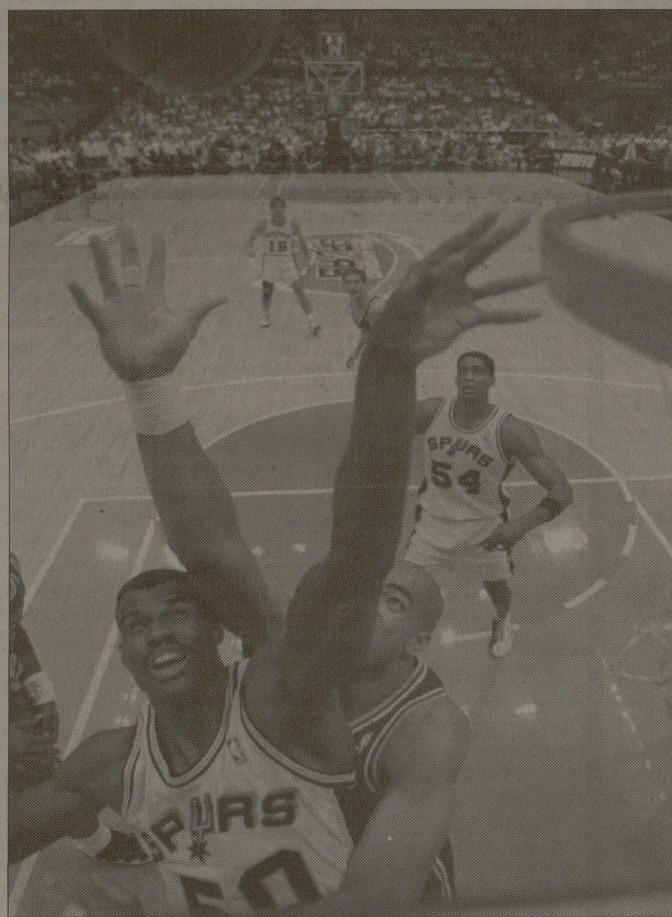
4. **Vancouver** — A couple of weeks ago, this pick, too, was a 50-50 shot to be dealt. General manager Stu Jackson still hasn't hired a coach, maybe because he has big plans for a swap. If the Grizzlies keep it, Bowling Green point guard Antonio Daniels is the man.

5. **Denver** — With Antonio McDyess rumored to be looking to flee as a free agent next summer, the Nuggets are faced with a trade-him-or-lose-him dilemma. In the absence of a decent offer, though, they should be expected to add Tony Battie of Texas Tech as insurance.

6. **Boston** — If Pitino keeps the pick, the ex-Kentucky coach grabs Wildcat Ron Mercer after scaring everyone else off him.

7. **New Jersey** — The Nets, ever cautious since the Yinka Dare fiasco, figure to go with what worked last year — a Villanova player.

Please see **DRAFT** on Page 6.



David Robinson and the San Antonio Spurs look to get on the winning track with the first round draft pick.

San Antonio Spurs have first pick

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — Armed with the No. 1 pick, the San Antonio Spurs enter Wednesday's NBA Draft in the enviable position of getting to select center Tim Duncan of Wake Forest.

And after the gloomy 20-62 season San Antonio suffered through, the Spurs are savoring and celebrating every moment of draft week.

"It just makes it easy to have a big smile on your face," said Spurs coach and general manager Gregg Popovich. "It makes it easier to forget last year and just move on."

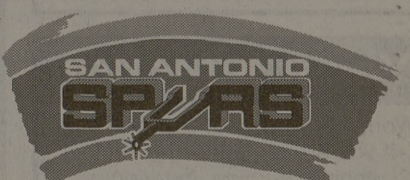
When San Antonio won the NBA Draft lottery in May, beating out Philadelphia and Boston, there was no question the 6-foot-10 Duncan would be the player the Spurs would choose. The NCAA Player of the Year and twice a first-team All-American, Duncan averaged 20.8 points, a national-best 14.7 rebounds and 3.3 blocked shots per game his senior year at Wake Forest.

With All-Star center David Robinson expected to return healthy from back and foot injuries this fall, the Spurs are viewing the versatile Duncan as part of a powerful frontline alongside the 7-foot-1 Robinson.

"We've got two guys that are very dangerous at both ends of the court. At that size, it's a pretty awesome tandem," Popovich said.

Robinson, who also expressed excitement about Duncan, has been working out daily and is expected to have physical contact on the court with Duncan by August.

Since the lottery, Popovich has met with Duncan, a native of St. Croix in the U.S. Virgin Islands, and said he has been impressed by the player's intelligence and sense of humor.



Please see **SPURS** on Page 4.

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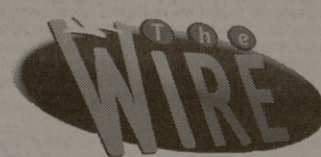
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