

Hot summer nights

When he's not on the gridiron, Chris Valletta spins tunes for KHLR 103.9 the X

By **JEFF WEBB**
Sports Editor

From smashing defenders to Smashing Pumpkins, Chris Valletta has done it all in college. And the great thing is, he still has three years of eligibility left. Valletta, listed by the A&M athletic department as a 6-foot, 2-inch, 306-pound offensive lineman, does a show for KHLR 103.9 the X during the summer months to make some cash on the side.

He works in the summer like many other college athletes, taking advantage of CAA provisions that allow student-athletes on full scholarship to hold jobs during official institutional vacations.

A recent amendment allows athletes to have part-time jobs during the regular school year, a rule Valletta was not able to take full advantage of before he started.

"They just changed the rule," he said. "I worked three weeks for free until the rule went into effect. You're not allowed to work until the day after your last final, right as the spring semester ends."

Some athletes get jobs working in construction or for the 12th Man Foundation, but Valletta's is a huge departure from normal summer job fare. Getting the job,

his first in broadcasting, was an unusual break for the Plano native.

"I wanted to get into radio at some point," he said. "One of the DJs that used to work here was in one of my classes and I asked him if they were hiring. He said they weren't, but I went up there anyway and filled out an application."

"I always wanted to get into some aspect of broadcasting. It gives you an opportunity to make a few extra bucks."

— Chris Valletta

KHLR 103.9 the X disc jockey

Valletta is no stranger to being in the spotlight. He helped Plano High School to the Class 5A Division I state championship as a junior and came to A&M as a highly-touted Prep All-American by Bluechip Illustrated and SuperPrep.

A&M currently lists him as a backup to Cameron Spikes at the left guard position where he may see some action in the upcoming season.

However, Valletta's job at the radio station takes up most of his time during the summer. He said working for the radio provides excellent experience for his speech communications major.

"It helps to develop articulate speech skills," he said. "You have to think about what you want to say. It's not really that difficult, but you just have to get over the initial idea of not looking at anyone while you're talking and try to be funny."

The full-time 6 p.m. to midnight shift on Monday through Friday and the 10 hours he worked on the weekends were cut back to only weekends because Valletta's class load next session will be twice the hours he is taking this session.

Valletta said he knows that having a summer job is a nice bonus to playing football, and he is grateful for the chance to make the cash and get the experience.

"I always wanted to get into some aspect of broadcasting," he said. "It gives you an opportunity to make a few extra bucks. Some athletes are blessed to get school paid for, but it's nice to have this option."



PHOTO BY JAKE SCHRICKLING/THE BATTALION
Kickin' Back Sophomore offensive lineman Chris Valletta works a show for KHLR 103.9 the X on summer weekends while attending Texas A&M.

McGwire leads Coors hopefuls

DENVER (AP) — Imagine the NBA holding a slam-bang contest on a 9-foot hoop or golfers playing the U.S. Open on a par-3 course.

That is what Monday's All-Star Home Run Derby will be like with some of baseball's biggest sluggers launching balls into mile-high air.

"To me, that's going to be the highlight of this whole All-Star Game," San Diego's Tony Gwynn said. "In this, the Year of the Homer in baseball, there is no more fitting venue to host St. Louis' Mark McGwire and the other long-ball contestants than Coors Field, where more homers have been hit the past two seasons than in any other major league ballpark."

The lineups had not yet been completed Sunday for the event, which for the first time will be televised in prime time, but among the most likely participants are: McGwire, Atlanta's Chipper Jones and Andres Galaraga, and Colorado's Vinny Castilla for the NL; Seattle's Alex Rodriguez, Cleveland's Jim Thome, Detroit's Damion Easley, Baltimore's Rafael Palmeiro and Anaheim's Darin Erstad in the AL.

Ken Griffey Jr. of the Seattle Mariners, leading the AL homers, announced last month that he would skip this year's event because it messes with his swing. And the Cubs' Sammy Sosa, who set a record with 20 homers in

June, had to pull out Sunday with a sore left shoulder.

Still, Sosa was planning to attend the festivities in Denver as a spectator.

"You know me, I want to be there," he said. "I'll be there watching McGwire."

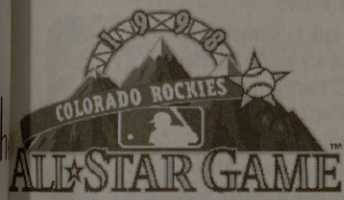
McGwire should test the laws of gravity and may crush the stadium record for the longest homer, a 496-foot shot belonging to Mike Piazza. In fact, some of the restaurants and art galleries surrounding Coors Field may want to board up some windows with Big Mac coming to town.

And although Sosa and Griffey — who with McGwire will be chasing Roger Maris' record of 61 homers — will not be participating, the St. Louis first baseman was looking forward to his sixth home-run contest.

"I've enjoyed it. I think that's probably the best part of the All-Star game," he said. "Everybody has their own opinions about it, but I enjoy it. I'm sure they have their reasons (for pulling out)."

Before the homers start flying on Monday, NL manager Jim Leyland and the AL's Mike Hargrove will announce their lineups and starting pitchers for the 69th All-Star game. Atlanta's Greg Maddux (12-2) is expected to be Leyland's choice while Yankees left-hander David Wells (11-2) may get the nod from Hargrove.

Also on Monday, four teams — each made up of a celebrity, a major league rookie and a retired All-Star — will compete in a new event, the MCI Hitting Challenge. Denver Broncos quarterback John Elway, actor Kevin Costner, George Brett, Andre Dawson, Dave Kingman and Robin Young are some of the participants.



Lewis leaves A&M for LSU

Ashley Lewis, a freshman pitcher and first baseman for the Texas A&M Softball Team this past spring, will transfer to her hometown of Baton Rouge, LA to play for Louisiana State University. A&M released Lewis from her scholarship for her transfer.

Lewis earned All-Big 12 utility player honors while posting a 12-9 record as a pitcher with a 2.02 ERA in 23 appearances for the Aggies. Lewis was the third-leading hitter on the team with a .289 average and four home runs.

"One of her former coaches (Glen Moore) was named the head coach at LSU and she also wanted to go back home to pursue her education and play softball," A&M coach Jo Evans said. "We hate to see her go, but we wish her well."

Evans coached the Aggies to a 32-25-2 overall record in 1998.

Astros defeat D-backs 5-2

HOUSTON (AP) — Brad Ausmus drove in three runs, Moises Alou and Craig Biggio homered and Sean Bergman recorded his career-high eighth victory as the Houston Astros defeated the Arizona Diamondbacks 5-2 Sunday.

Bergman (8-4) pitched five innings, allowing five hits and two runs while walking five and striking out two. Willie Blair of Arizona suffered his major league-leading 12th loss.

Ausmus' two-run double gave Houston a 3-1 lead in the fourth. Carl Everett bled the inning with a double to right and moved to third on Ricky Gutierrez' single. Ausmus' line drive down the third-base line scored both runners.

Ausmus added a RBI single in the seventh to give Houston a 5-2 lead.

Alou's homer, his 20th, came with one out in the seventh on a 1-2 pitch from Blair and increased Houston's lead to 4-2.

Sampras regains dominance

Fifth Wimbledon title for Sampras ties Bjorn Borg's record; veteran Novotna sheds 'choker' image, topples No. 1 Hingis

Men's Final

WIMBLEDON, England (AP) — Just when everyone thought it was safe to play Pete Sampras, a champion beset by burnout, he unleashed his finest tennis in his toughest Grand Slam final Sunday and captured a record-tying fifth Wimbledon title.

Pressured by a barrage of 32 aces that often left him shaking his head, Sampras could not afford even a moment's letdown in a 6-7 (2-7), 7-6 (11-9), 6-4, 3-6, 6-2 victory over brokenhearted, three-time runner-up Goran Ivanisevic.

"Now I guess I'm out of my slump," Sampras said with a smile.

Sampras had been shut out of every major final since winning Wimbledon a year ago, briefly lost his No. 1 ranking, and the whispers on the men's circuit were that he had lost his edge, the desire it takes to train and win. Sampras himself admitted burnout had gotten to him after ruling tennis for five years. Former Wimbledon champion Richard Krajicek even weighed in last week with the idea that Sampras was playing more like a No. 10 than a No. 1.

Not in this tournament, and certainly not in the final.

A month shy of 27, Sampras showed the full range of his tennis artistry in tying Bjorn Borg for the most Wimbledon men's championships of the 31-year Open era, and matching Borg and boyhood idol Rod Laver with 11 Grand Slam titles. Only Roy Emerson, with 12, has won more majors.

"Borg's five I thought would never be broken," Sampras said, who also won \$722,000 to push his career earnings past \$33 million. "I think I've got some years left in me so that I can, hopefully, do it again."

Sampras took this one — his first five-set Grand Slam final — as much with his craft as with consistency and will. Stroke for stroke, little separated him from Ivanisevic, whose left-handed serves are among the most intimidating in tennis. The radar speed gun clocked them both with serves up to 134 mph.

"Compared to all the finals I've played, this is by far the toughest," Sampras said. "I didn't think I was quite in control of the match, and Goran was playing huge. I got a little bit lucky out there, I must admit, and raised my level just enough in the fifth set. And before I knew it, I won it."

For Ivanisevic, performing in front of Croatia's prime minister in the Royal Box, the loss hurt more than any in his career. He had played one of the greatest Wimbledon finals, serving 37 aces against Andre Agassi in 1992, and lost. He fell to Sampras after two tiebreakers in the 1994 final. But he described this as one that would torment him the rest of his career.

"It hurts most because this time I had the chance," Ivanisevic said. "He didn't play well."

As Sampras carried his trophy around the court in a lap of honor for the fifth time in six years, Ivanisevic slumped in his chair in the deepest gloom.

Women's Final

WIMBLEDON, England (AP) — Jana Novotna's first Wimbledon title might not be her last.

She turns 30 in October — elderly by tennis standards — but she's still going strong, as Martina Hingis, Venus Williams and Nathalie Tauziat can attest.

Novotna beat them all at Wimbledon. With a 6-4, 7-6 (7-2) victory Saturday over Tauziat, Novotna earned the first Grand Slam title in her 13-year career.

"I'm quitting now," she joked. "It's over."

In truth, Novotna plans to continue playing. And with her reputation as a choker finally eradicated, she may become a more formidable force than ever.

"If she doesn't win another match, it doesn't matter," her coach Hana Mandlikova said. "But of course she'll keep playing and fighting. I think she'll play for another two or three years. This is a huge thing for her and will give her even more motivation."

The future may belong to Hingis, Williams and the rest of tennis' teen-age vanguard, but Novotna and Tauziat, 30, proved there's still room at the top for a veteran.

"I'm pleased about that," Tauziat said. "It's important to show them we're here. They have to realize everybody can play well, whether you are young or older. Age has nothing to do with tennis right now, especially on grass."

Grass is Novotna's best surface, which is why she could remain a threat at Wimbledon. Her athleticism and serve-and-volley game have always been perfectly suited to the surface, and only a fragile psyche held her back.

She sobbed on the shoulder of the Duchess of Kent after blowing a big lead in the 1993 Wimbledon final. She led again in the 1997 final before losing to Hingis.

On Saturday, Novotna overcame a slow start to win the first set, and she was the player with more poise in the second-set tiebreaker. She dedicated the victory to Mandlikova, a four-time Grand Slam champion and Novotna's coach since 1990.

"I was the one who always believed that she could do it if she put the hard work in," Mandlikova said. "I've always tried to instill security in her. I tried to instill positive thinking. It took four years to get it into her, talking every day to her, telling her to give 100 percent to the sport."

Novotna caught a break when she drew the No. 16 seed in the final, but her path to the championship was hardly easy. She eliminated Williams in the quarterfinals and the top-ranked Hingis in the semifinals.

"To win a championship when you beat the No. 1 player in the world, it makes it really special," Novotna said.

The Czech will climb from third place to second place behind Hingis in this week's rankings, matching a career high.



Brazil, France advance to World Cup final four as expected; Croatia conquers Cup powers for berth

The World Cup semifinals look strangely like an NCAA Final Four, with three high seeds and one outsider.

Nobody can be surprised that Brazil, the defending and four-time champion, has made it this far. Nor can the host French be a shock.

The Netherlands has not been this far in 20 years, but generally is a soccer power and was regarded as a contender entering the tournament. It plays Brazil on Tuesday.

Croatia, though, is something different: a first-time participant and conqueror of two of Europe's strongest teams, Germany and Romania. It faces France on Wednesday.

What, no Italy, Germany or Argentina in the semis? Well, Duke, UCLA and Kentucky don't get there all the time, either.

Brazil vs. the Netherlands at Marseille

The Brazilians have been brilliant at times, ordinary at others. Their 3-2 victory over Denmark in the quarterfinals demonstrated their sensational scoring power, but also displayed once more the problems they've had on defense.

Because this is Brazil, it will always play aggressively with the ball. It will attack, and will do so with style — what Pele, the game's all-time greatest star, has always called "beautiful football."

"We are obligated to that type of game," Cafu said, a defender who, like everyone else, frequently gets into the offensive mix. "Brazil is not only expected to win, but to win with class."

But the Brazilians have not outclassed their opponents here. Except for Chile in the second round, a 4-1 win, the games against solid foes have been close. That does not bode well for them because of the leaky defense.

Still, if any team can make up for not being stingy enough, it is Brazil, with the likes of Ronaldo, Rivaldo, Bebeto and Cesar Sampaio.

The Dutch have also had their moments, good and bad. They had a shaky first round marred by Patrick Kluyvert's two-game suspension after elbowing a Bel-

gian opponent in a lackluster 0-0 opener. They routed South Korea, but then blew a 2-0 lead in the second half against Mexico. The 2-2 tie allowed them to win the group, but not in the manner they preferred.

But the Netherlands, which last made it this far in 1978 when it lost to Argentina in the title game, has opened things up since. The Dutch needed last-minute goals to beat Yugoslavia and Argentina, but were the better team both times.

"If we play the same way, not as individuals, I think we will do well against Brazil," coach Guus Hiddink said. "But they are a totally different opponent."

France vs. Croatia at Saint-Denis

Host teams usually do well in the World Cup, although none has won since 1978. France just might do it while not looking particularly like champions.

The French squeezed by one-dimensional Paraguay 1-0 on a sudden-death overtime goal by Laurent Blanc in the second round. Blanc had the deciding shot in a penalty-kick shootout against Italy in the quarterfinals.

While France clearly was superior in both games, it could not finish off a multitude of scoring chances. It got impatient, even frustrated.

"I know the problem and there is no explanation," captain Didier Deschamps said.

Croatia can withstand physical play, as it did against Germany. It also has impressive counterattacking skills, and its defense has been among the staunchest in the Cup.

And do not be misled by the debut stuff, because many of its players have solid international backgrounds. Croatia made the European Championship field two years ago, so its achievement as the first newcomer to make the semis is somewhat misleading.

"When I heard (German coach) Berti Vogts called us a small country, this raised our morale by 200 percent," star striker Davor Suker said. "We were fired up to send the Germans packing. This shows that small can beat big."

But can small beat the home team?

