

PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Brown denies marriage rumors

NEW YORK (AP) — Whitney Houston says she is the aggressor in her marriage to Bobby Brown.



"Contrary to belief, I do the hitting," he doesn't. He has never put his hands on me. He is not a woman-beater," the singer and actress said in the May issue of Redbook. "We're crazy for one another. I mean crazy in love, love, love, love. When we're fighting, it's like that's love for us. We're fighting for love."

Brown's arrest history includes drunken driving and battery against women other than his wife. Brown was sentenced in 1998 to five days in jail and a year on probation for drunken driving. On Monday, a judge in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., put him back on probation for showing up drunk to do his time.

Houston conceded that her anger husband is "a party guy" who "likes to hang with his friends. He likes to dance with different people." But she said she knows he is loyal to her because "I checked him out when he wasn't even looking."

Widower sued for Wynette's death

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — The widower of Tammy Wynette died allegations that he helped cause the country star's death. George Richey and Ms. Wynette's physician, Dr. Wallis Marsh of Pittsburgh, are being sued by three of her daughters for \$50 million.

The daughters claim Richey and Marsh didn't monitor her

medical condition closely enough and gave her too many painkillers.

Wynette died last April at her home. She was 55. Marsh ruled she died of a blood clot to the lungs. There was no autopsy. "All of these allegations are totally false, without foundation, and that will be proven in a court of law," Richey said in a statement Monday.

It was the first comment from Richey's side since the lawsuit was filed April 5. Marsh has also denied wrongdoing.

Shaw chosen to sew royal gown

LONDON (AP) — Sophie Rhys-Jones has chosen a little-known designer to make the dress for her wedding to Prince Edward.

The design by Samantha Shaw, who set up her own salon only four years ago, will remain secret until the June 19 ceremony at St. George's Chapel at Windsor Castle, Shaw's publicist said Tuesday.

Shaw, 30, never advertises and sells her work mainly at private fashion shows.

"It's a great choice," said Camilla Secil, social editor of Harpers and Queen magazine. "Sam makes very feminine clothes, very pretty and often layered."

She uses very rich fabrics, hand-painting and beads. Those little touches are always absolutely perfect."

Both Princess Diana and the Duchess of York, the former Sarah Ferguson, chose unsung designers to make their wedding dresses.

Public appearance reveals tired Payton

CHICAGO (AP) — Former football star Walter Payton was suffering from fatigue Tuesday after throwing out the first pitch on

opening day at Wrigley Field.

Payton, who has a rare liver disease, was scheduled to speak Tuesday at the Machinery/Materials Conference and Exposition but canceled at the last minute, convention spokesperson Leo Nadolske said.

Nadolske said he was told that Payton, 44, went to bed sick Monday night after arriving home from Wrigley Field and his first public appearance in months.

But Ginny Quirk, vice president of Walter Payton Inc., said Payton was not bedridden.

"He had a very big day yesterday and part of the symptoms of (his disease) is fatigue. Therefore, his feeling was that it was going to be too much to go all the way downtown and give a powerful keynote speech. He was too taxed to make the trip," she said.

Mandela builds home on seacoast

Payton lives in suburban South Barrington.

MAPUTO, Mozambique (AP) — Nelson Mandela and his wife, Graca Machel, are building a new home on an elegant seacoast street.



MANDELA

Machel, the widow of the late Mozambican President Samora Machel, married Mandela last year.

Mandela, 80, is retiring in June after five years as South Africa's first democratically elected president.

He was divorced from anti-apartheid activist Winnie Madikizela-Mandela in 1996.

Mandela also owns South African homes in an upscale neighborhood of Johannesburg and in his boyhood home of Qunu.

'ER' ratings not all good news for NBC

NEW YORK (AP) — "ER" was the week's top-rated show for the 18th time in the 18 weeks it has aired an original episode this television season — yet it still gives NBC executives cause for concern.

The medical drama's 17.9 rating and 30 share last Thursday was its lowest rating for a first-run episode since November 1994, its premiere year.

NBC suggests last week's ratings were down because many other prime-time programs aired reruns, and some viewers may have assumed that "ER" was doing the same thing.

The season-to-date ratings for "ER" are down 11 percent from last year, however.

The timing is particularly bad because this year NBC is paying a record \$13 million per episode for the drama, more than five times what it paid in the past.

"ER" has been hurt by softness in NBC's Thursday night lineup, the recent departure of George Clooney and the simple passage of time," said Marc Berman, a television analyst for the ad buying firm Seltel.

"It's rare for a show in its fifth season to continue to grow in ratings," he said.

"I don't think the show is as compelling as it once was," he said.

This is also the first year old episodes of "ER" have aired in reruns on cable television and through syndication.

The ability for fans to see the show several times a week generally hurts the ratings for first-run episodes, Berman said.

NBC's Thursday night lineup has seen a ratings decline this year, with the prominent exception of "Friends."

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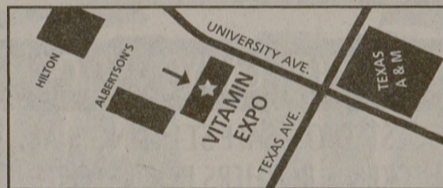
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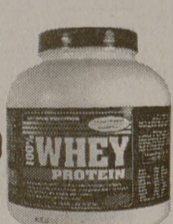
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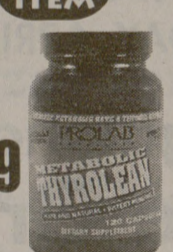
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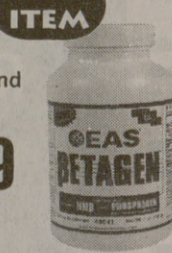
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