

NFL talks break down Replacement officials work exhibition games

NEW YORK (AP) — The NFL is about to learn what happens when its oft-criticized officials are not on the field.

With the breakdown of talks in Dallas between the league and the NFL Referees Association, replacement officials will work exhibition games, the first labor stoppage among officials in NFL history.

The lockout will begin Thursday night, when six exhibition games are scheduled.

The contract expired last March and the two sides have been negotiating since. Most of the replacements will be from NFL Europe or the Arena League, and league supervisory officials, all former field officials, will also be on hand.

"We have a duty to our fans and teams, and we cannot go into the regular season with the threat of a sudden work stoppage by our game officials," said commissioner Paul Tagliabue Tuesday. "Despite our efforts, we remain far apart, and the officials' negotiators

have repeatedly refused to consider a no-strike, no-lockout agreement with the NFL covering the 2001 season."

The officials said the NFL had reneged on some of its pension and benefit improvements. Their salary proposals were 50-

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— Jerry Jones
Dallas Cowboys owner

75 percent higher than the NFL's offer, which doubles most current salaries by 2003.

"I respect our officials, and regret that we haven't been able to get together, but they just

want too much money," Dallas owner Jerry Jones said. "There are just too many other qualified people out there that are willing to do it for the right price."

The news didn't make many players happy.

"I'm sure every player feels the way I do, we want all the refs to be out there," said Green Bay quarterback Brett Favre. "I think they deserve more. How much is not up to me."

"We've worked hard and put a lot of time and effort into this, and we want the best possible guys out there," said New York Jets quarterback Vinny Testaverde. "I believe those are the guys who have been calling our games through the history of the league."

"The replacements have a lack of experience in our arena, the NFL," said safety Robert Griffith, the Minnesota Vikings' union representative. "You see something over and over, you're going to get better at it. Our officials get better at making the calls."

Sampras leads U.S. Open hunt

NEW YORK (AP) — Pete Sampras, hoping the hard courts of the National Tennis Center can help him end a 17-tournament losing streak, won a battle of big serves at the U.S. Open on Tuesday.

Sampras defeated Julien Boutter 6-4, 7-6 (4), 7-6 (6), in a center court match that produced 43 aces.

After they were through, defending champion Venus Williams took over the main court with a 6-2, 6-3 victory over 17-year-old Lenka Dlhopolcova.

Williams, coming off a second straight Wimbledon championship and riding a nine-match winning streak, hit just 52 percent of her

first serves against Dlhopolcova, who was making her Grand Slam debut. Serving for the match, she allowed the teen-ager to break her, but broke back to finish it in 52 minutes.

Without a tournament title since capturing a record 13th Grand Slam championship at Wimbledon a year ago, Sampras came in seeded 10th, uncharacteristically low for a player of his stature.

He played better than that — and he had to against Boutter, who challenged him throughout but was hurt by his own mistakes. He had 10 double faults and 30 unforced errors compared to just two and 17 for Sampras.

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— Luke 9:23

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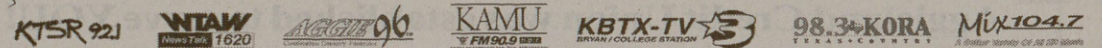
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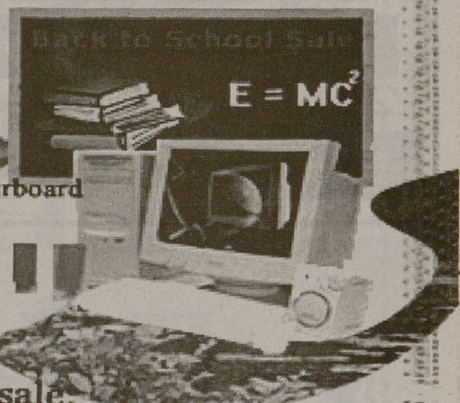
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