

# Ripken uninterested in Orioles' VP offer

BALTIMORE (AP) — Cal Ripken Jr. is too busy to take on a front-office job with his former team, the Baltimore Orioles. Ripken on Tuesday withdrew his name from the list of candidates to become the Orioles' vice president of baseball operations — a title that is tantamount to general manager. Ripken, who played with the Orioles from 1981-2001, held informal discussions with Orioles owner Peter Angelos about the VP job. But the future Hall of Famer ultimately decided the time wasn't right.

"I removed myself from consideration because, as exciting as the opportunity is, I am heavily involved with my youth initiative, the project in Aberdeen and the Cal Ripken Sr. foundation," Ripken said.

"I discovered during the proceedings that for me, the timing just wasn't right," Ripken concluded. Former Orioles pitcher Mike Flanagan, Detroit Tigers assistant general manager Al Avila and former Montreal Expos general manager Jim Beattie are among those still considered to be candidates for the job.

Each hopes to take over for Syd Thrift, whose contract

expired after this season. Although the Orioles have not announced Thrift's dismissal, Angelos has made it clear that he wants someone different to turn around a franchise coming off its fifth straight losing season.

Ripken seemed to be a viable option. Although he has no front-office experience beyond overseeing the operations of his Class A team in his hometown of Aberdeen, Md., the former Orioles' infielder has a keen knowledge of the Baltimore franchise and its farm system.

Also, Ripken recently spoke fondly about seizing the GM job with the Orioles.

"I don't want to manage right now, and coaching doesn't appeal to me," he said. "But if there was a job that I could shape a baseball organization or help shape a baseball organization, I certainly would look at that. ... The Orioles are my first choice."

Ripken is tied up in the promotion and development of youth baseball. He's also developing a Little League complex in Aberdeen, and is eager to make up for the time he missed being with his family during a lengthy baseball career.

# Kushner setting up boxing competition

NEW YORK (AP) — Times are tough. The market is down and red ink is up. So when promoter Cedric Kushner and entrepreneur Donald Trump tossed around \$50 bills as if they were confetti on Tuesday, a fistful of fighters took notice.

None was named De La Hoya, Tyson or Lewis — all of whom are accustomed to larger denominations.

Still, Kushner had plenty of customers. Grandpa Tim Witherspoon, a two-time heavy-weight champion, eyed the make-believe money with more than casual interest. So did Mitch "Blood" Green, who was not invited to the party, but decided to make a guest appearance anyway and shadow-boxed in the back

of the room, just in case he was needed. Boxing's next great promotion, courtesy of Kushner, is a Nov. 30 pay-per-view show at the Trump Taj Mahal in Atlantic City carrying a winner-take-all payoff of \$100,000.

These are hard times in boxing and Kushner had no trouble finding fighters happy to sign on for a bargain basement price.

Besides Witherspoon, the all-heavyweight card has undefeated Gerald Nobles; Italian Olympic bronze medalist Paolo Vidoz; Jeremy Williams; Ray Austin; Maurice Harris; Anthony Thompson; and Derrick Jefferson. The matches will be made by a blind draw two weeks before the show.

Trump, summoned from a board meeting for the event, opened an attache case to show off the loot, and then made a quick exit, probably to deal with issues carrying much higher stakes.

Kushner put a little different

wrinkle on the program, inviting the eight heavyweights for a one-night box-off. There will be four quarterfinals, with the winners advancing to a pair of semifinals before the final. All are 3-round bouts.

"This is a unique situation in the world of boxing that is known to have a lot of unique situations," explained Kushner, flanked by two models in bikinis who are not on the card.

"Times are difficult in the world of boxing in terms of television. There's a cutback. There's a need for creative ideas like this."

Creativity is fine. A paycheck is better. "I'm in because my kids like to eat," said Thompson, who is 17-1 and father of seven.

His biggest previous purse was \$6,000, so \$100,000 sounded pretty good. He has made as little as \$600 for three rounds. Each 3-rounder on Kushner's card pays \$5,000 on top of the final fight payoff.

For Witherspoon, whose biggest payday was \$800,000 to fight Ray Mercer and has made plenty less than that in other fights over a career that began in 1979.

"I've got to stop," said Witherspoon, who will be 45 in December. "I don't want to wind up in a wheelchair like Greg Page or unable to speak like Ali. I'll have a couple of more last hurrahs, this one, maybe one more."

He thinks about his 4-year-old granddaughter, who confronted him after he knocked out Darroll Wilson in March. "She said, 'Poppa, why did you do that to that man?'"

Witherspoon said his interest in this affair is strictly altruistic. He is doing it, he said, for the good of the game.

# CLASSIFIED

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