

# Bucs celebrate win with parade

By Mitch Stacy  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

TAMPA, Fla.—Warren Sapp blew kisses to the crowd, and coach Jon Gruden received the key to the city as an estimated 100,000 people lined the streets of downtown Tampa on Tuesday to celebrate the Buccaneers' Super Bowl victory.

Fans clad in the team's red and pewter colors waved banners and chanted "Defense!" and "Tampa Bay!" as the Buccaneers rode in convertibles and pickup trucks in a parade in their honor.

"This is about you Tampa, I love you," running back Mike

Alstott told the crowd.

Tampa Mayor Dick Greco, flanked by mayors from Clearwater and St. Petersburg, presented Gruden the key to the city and said Tampa owed him "a million thanks."

Tampa Bay won its first Super Bowl title Sunday, beating the Oakland Raiders 48-21 in San Diego.

"I was raised in San Diego, but my hometown is Tampa," safety John Lynch said. "I've been here 10 years and I've waited a long time to do this, so help me out — We're No. 1! We're No. 1!"

Sapp added: "Thank you from the bottom of my heart."

Some of the loudest cheers were for defensive coordinator Monte Kiffin, who received permission to speak to the San Francisco 49ers about their vacant head coaching job.

Kiffin is the man responsible for building the Bucs into the NFL's No. 1-ranked defense, which dominated the Raiders.

Fans chanted "Stay, Monte, stay!" as the 62-year-old Kiffin made his way to the front of the dais. He made no mention of plans for the future.

"You're the greatest fans in the world," Kiffin said. "We love ya. Let's come back."

Long-suffering Bucs supporters waited 27 years for a

championship. The frustration turned into elation Monday as they rushed to stores across the region to buy anything commemorating the Super Bowl triumph.

Many of the fans along the parade route wore clothes emblazoned with the Super Bowl XXXVII logo.

On Monday night, a crowd of about 65,000 filled chilly Raymond James Stadium with camera flashes and deafening noise as the Bucs arrived home from San Diego.

"It's our time," Duane Jones, 44, of Tampa, said a 20-year fan of the Bucs. "It's our season, and go champs!"

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## Softball

Continued from page 7

Three freshmen players should see playing time this season, while a fourth, Jill Weynand, will be sidelined by an ACL injury. First-year player Kristin Gunter could make a quick impact, having progressed nicely during the early practice schedule.

"(Kristin) has made a lot of progress in terms of hitting and possibly being able to produce in our batting order, but I think all three freshmen will be able to see time," Evans said.

The Aggies will work to elevate themselves in a highly competitive conference that includes the likes of Texas, Oklahoma, Nebraska and Baylor among others. The Longhorns won the Big 12 a season ago with a record of 17-1 in conference play. Evans and A&M finished last season even in the Big 12 at 9-9 while posting a 40-18 mark overall.

A strong series of practices have Evans and her team thinking optimistically about this season's team on both sides of the ball.

"I am pleased with the progress that we are making on the field," Evans said. "We have a real positive environment, and everybody is working really hard. We are all anticipating the season opener."

The Aggies first action will be a double-header against Stephen F. Austin, next Tuesday at 3 p.m.

# Boxer freed in rape case

By T. A. Badger  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SAN ANTONIO — Boxer Tony Ayala Jr. was freed Tuesday after state prosecutors dropped their effort to send him back to prison, saying defense lawyers had severely damaged the credibility of a teenage girl who accused him of having sex with her.

The Bexar County District Attorney's Office withdrew its motion to revoke Ayala's 10-year probation for a September 2001 burglary conviction.

Ayala, a 39-year-old middleweight, had been in custody since early December after he was accused of twice having sex with the 14-year-old girl in November. He had denied the statutory rape allegation.

"You know the saying, 'The truth will set you free,'" said an elated Tony Ayala Sr. after state District Judge Maria Teresa Herr ordered his son freed from jail.

"When you're facing these kinds of ramifications — 10 years in prison, with so little of your boxing career left and maybe you'll be able to fight for a title — obviously it's a great relief for Tony Ayala," said Jimmy Parks, his lead attorney.

The 14-year-old girl spent most of Monday on the witness stand, calmly testifying that she aggressively pursued Ayala sexually after meeting him at his training gym, and that she eventually was able to seduce him.

She said that the pair had sex once in the backseat of the boxer's car in early November and again in his parents' house in San Antonio during Thanksgiving week.

But under intense cross-examination, the

eighth-grader from suburban San Antonio conceded that she had told several different versions of her story about sex with Ayala to police, her friends and other people.

The girl also acknowledged that she had falsely accused her stepfather of sexually molesting her for four years. She told Parks that she made up that story because she was mad at her stepfather.

On Tuesday, the judge asked the girl at one point if she knew what perjury was, and when she said she didn't, the hearing was stopped. A lawyer was later appointed to make sure the girl's legal interests were protected.

Michael Bernard, Bexar County's first assistant prosecutor, said he still believed the girl, but given her weakened credibility, it didn't make sense to continue with the hearing. He also said the girl's lawyer advised her to not continue with her testimony.

He said the state was obligated to investigate the girl's allegation and to try to corroborate it, "and then you follow your instinct."

Ayala's burglary trial in 2001 bore several key similarities to this week's hearing.

He had been charged with breaking into the San Antonio home in December 2000 with intent to commit rape, but the charge was reduced in a plea deal after Parks hurt the credibility of the case's key witness by exploiting a number of discrepancies between her testimony and her statements to police.

Ayala previously served 16 years in a New Jersey prison after being convicted in 1983 of raping a schoolteacher. At the time of that conviction, he was considered a rising middleweight prospect.

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# Sorenstam considers PGA appearance

By Doug Ferguson  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The idea was to test her considerable skills against the best men in her sport, the chance of a lifetime for a woman at the top of her game.

A public relations gimmick? Ann Meyers never saw herself that way.

"I wouldn't have played if I didn't think I could make it," Meyers said, reflecting on her historic NBA tryout in 1979 with the Indiana Pacers. "That's how much I believed in myself. It wasn't to prove a point."

Meyers never played in the NBA. She didn't make it past a three-day camp for rookies. She still thinks former Pacers coach Slick Leonard had made up his mind about her before she even stepped onto the court.

That's why Meyers doesn't want Annika Sorenstam to play a PGA Tour event.

She wants her to play several. Sorenstam, who wins more often than Tiger Woods, is still deciding whether to accept any of the seven offers from PGA Tour events that poured in after the 32-year-old Swede said she would

take a sponsor's exemption "in a heartbeat."

"I would love to play," she said. "I have nothing to lose. It's a great challenge."

There are a few catches. Sorenstam would only consider tournaments where she has a fighting chance, on courses that put a premium on accuracy over power. She hits the ball about 265 yards, which would have ranked her 196th on the PGA Tour last year.

**"I have no problem with a tournament giving her an exemption."**

— David Duval  
PGA Professional Golfer

It can't conflict with any weeks where she is defending champion — 11 — or the major championships or Solheim Cup. There goes four months out of the schedule.

The real problem might be the public relations battle.

"The most difficult thing wasn't playing the game,"

Meyers said. "It was all the negativity, so many people who were against it."

One of the more valid arguments is that if Sorenstam really wants to measure herself against the men, why not Monday qualify? That's what 13-year-old Michelle Wie did in Honolulu, shooting a 73 to fall six shots short of getting into the Sony Open.

One of the weaker arguments is that Sorenstam would take a spot away from someone else more deserving.

Sponsor exemptions were designed for tournaments to fill out the field or generate interest for their community.

"I have no problem with a tournament giving her an exemption," David Duval said. "They have no obligation to give those to anyone except the people they see fit."

Another argument: If Sorenstam can play on the PGA Tour, why can't men play on the LPGA Tour?

Simple. The PGA Tour is not for men. It's for the best players, who happen to be men.

"Annika is not going to render the PGA Tour obsolete," LPGA

Tour commissioner Ty Votaw said. "There is the potential that men could do that to the LPGA. She would be at a disadvantage against the men, yet she still wants to do it. The only reason men would want to do it (play the LPGA) is to take advantage of a physiological differential."

Duval has competed against Sorenstam twice in the last two years, the "Battle at Bighorn" two years ago and an 18-hole exhibition in Mexico last month.

His impression? "I wish I could hit the ball that straight," Duval said. "It's impressive."

What kind of scores Sorenstam might post is anyone's guess.

Power puts her at an extreme disadvantage, not only off the tee but coming into the green. She likely would be hitting 5-iron and 7-wood when others have a 7-iron or an 8-iron in their hands.

"Why not test your abilities?" Meyers said. "Any athlete, any human ... you always want to see what you can do against the best. She's just challenging herself. She wants to know what she's capable of doing."

It wouldn't hurt to find out.

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