

INSIDE SECTION 4

Press Box/Briefs	2
Jerome Holtzman	3
Clubs & Ins.	5
NBA roundup	5
Golf roundup	5
Scoreboard/Racing	7

BASKETBALL

Wills heads south

The Atlanta Hawks trade Al-Star forward Kevin Willis to the Miami Heat for Steve Smith and Grant Long. The trade leaves the Hawks down two-thirds of its front line from last season. **Page 5.**



Photo credit by Hung T. Vu

Relax, boxing purists, and enjoy Big George

Bob Verdi



I say here in The Ring Record Book, boxing's bible, that George Foreman was born in Marshall, Texas, in January of 1948. Attempts to verify this information at mission control headquarters of the new old heavyweight champion in Houston were unsuccessful. An experienced co-worker could not supply details, and we were told that Foreman himself was—where else?—out to lunch.

But if The Ring Record Book is accurate, that means Foreman is 46, not 45. Ah, the story gets better all the time.

Or worse, if you are inclined to think that Big George's victory over Michael Moorer in Las Vegas Saturday night was a sham, a fix, a sick commentary on the state of the sport or all of the above.

The suggestion here is, take two aspirin and loosen up. The games people have been playing in 1994 aren't much fun. Baseball and hockey aren't playing, period. We should rejoice that at least one athletic superstar is back around the middle instead of fat in the head. Or must we dwell on the Bears' trumped-up quarterback controversy? It isn't that at all because controversy implies that the issue is important.

Foreman's triumph does

Chicago Tribune Sports

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PRO FOOTBALL

Can Bears swamp Miami, too?

The Bears' improving defense (left) will be put to the test Sunday when they face Miami—and the best offense in the NFL. Bears coach Dave Wannstedt says one of the biggest challenges will be to surprise Dolphins quarterback Dan Marino. **Back Page.**

■ Dallas dominates the New York Giants 38-10. **Page 3.**



AP Wire photo

BASEBALL

Sounds likely

It's not official, but Nashville is preparing to roll out the red carpet for Michael Jordan, likely left-fielder for the Triple-A Nashville Sounds. **Page 3.**

Like Mike? Well, like Toni Kukoc keys Bulls' win with 19 of 28 points in 4th quarter

By Melissa Isaacson
Tribune Staff Writer

Toni Kukoc is hardly ready to proclaim himself as the second coming of Michael Jordan. And Bulls coach Phil Jackson will go only so far as

United Center remains crylike. Without Kukoc, Bulls fans have to hope Scottie Pippen never has a bad night. Monday, Pippen did. Or at least, it was a bad night shooting (9 of 29). But Kukoc was positively Jordanesque, pouring in 19 points in a 36-14 fourth quarter to help rally the Bulls from a 16-point third-quarter deficit to a 58-53 victory.

Kukoc, who ended up with 28 points for his second straight career-high-scoring game, was indispensable in the game-breaking run—a 19-4 streak stretching over the third and fourth quarters.

"It was Toni's night," Pippen said. "I was Toni's night." And it was. Kukoc, drilling 3 of 5 three-pointers and whipping a behind-the-back flip from mid-court to a waiting Steve Kerr

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JEROME HOLTZMAN
Baseball execs grapple with parceling out remaining cash to players.
See Page 3

athletic superior is thick around the middle instead of fat in the head. Or must we dwell on the Bears' trumped-up quarterback controversy? It isn't that at all because controversy implies that the issue is important.

Foreman's triumph does confirm that boxing tests positive for duration, but the sweet science can't claim a patient on shallow talent pools. Having him wear a very large belt again is no more hocus than the pious of the NHL player's format, pitching starts populated by rag arms who can't throw a strike, or expansion under the guise of progress.

Example: The six worst players on the 1984 Tampa Bay Buccaneers will be made available to stock the 1985 Jacksonville Jaguars and Carolina Cougars. And you're offended that the heavyweight throne is occupied by someone who's forty-something?

Laugh it off, because Foreman is. He engaged in preflight protocol last week, blistering at Moorer and his entourage. But then, Big George returned to status quo. Said he "is that it?" You think we sold those 4,000 remaining tickets? Foreman takes his craft seriously, but not himself, and it only some of the pompous toms in the sports

round and swollen face occurred later, when he discovered that the Oz butter at the MGM Grand—all you can eat for \$2.25—had closed. "You can't do this to me!" Foreman howled. A chef appeared from the kitchen and the champion was seated. There might not be a potato left in the entire state of Nevada.

Moorer, who could have fap-danced for seven more minutes and won, fought the dumb fight. His chin head "hit me" written all over it. His attitude toward much-glorified trainer Teddy Atlas was obstinate. But Foreman's triumph was one of the spirit, and instead of gloating, he did a bit of preaching. Calling all nursing homes and grade schools, too. You have to dare to dream.

No, Foreman didn't effect the greatest upset in sports history. He was belted down to a 2½-1 underdog. And, no, the punch wasn't the hardest in heavyweight annals. But a good story is a good story, and there aren't enough of them around the playpen anymore. Would you rather see George Foreman fight Mike Tyson or Donald Fehr fight Richard Ravitch?

Big George has an ounce or two of con, but he's 250 pounds of humor and humanity. Savor it. Cheeseburgers for all.

Medics warn Foreman: Use your head—and save it

By Trisha Gura
Tampa Staff Writer

Medical experts meeting Monday in Chicago had this multimillion-dollar question for George Foreman as he considers future championship fights: Is your brain worth it?

Many physicians, especially experts on head injuries, are adamantly not fans of boxing.

"Anyone who receives multiple blows over many years drastically increases their risk of brain damage," said neurologist Nathan Zislet, one of the nation's leading head-injury experts.

Zislet serves as the chairman for scientific and research affairs for the National Head Injury Foundation, the group meeting this week at the Chicago Marriott. So as Foreman contemplates donning his faded red trunks one more time to defend his title, many physicians shake their heads at the sight of yet another aging professional boxer risking his health, and maybe even his life.

"Boxing is the only sport in

which the goal is to damage the brain [a knockout]," said Dr. George Langberg, editor of the Journal of the American Medical Association. "It is medically and mutually wrong."

Broken bones, kidney damage and eye injuries are also common in boxing. However, brain trauma predominates the list of injuries in both frequency and degree of danger.

Experts cite three special concerns for older professional boxers: The cumulative damage incurred by repeated punches, the loss of brain cells as an individual ages and slowed reflexes needed to protect a fighter's head.

"It's the constant repetitive blows that boxers should fear, not the knockout," said Dr. Henry C. Powell, head of the neurophysiology department at the University of California-San Diego.

Powell's colleague, the late Dr. Peter Lampert, spent his career researching and describing the medical effects of boxing.

Lampert advocated showing



Despite the vicious nature of the hit on the Bears' Tom Waddle (left) by the Bucs' Thomas Everett, most agree it appeared legal.

Rough play not necessarily order of day

NFL officials try to spear the spear

NFL officials seem to be taking seriously this season the need to penalize unnecessary roughness. Speaking—illegal use of helmets—is one of the more flagrant types of unnecessary roughness. What the NFL rules say:

Article 8. There shall be no unnecessary roughness. This shall include, but will not be limited to,...

■ A tackler using his helmet to butt, spear or ram an opponent.

■ Any player who uses the crown or top of his helmet against a passer, a receiver in the act of catching a pass, or a runner who is in the grasp of a tackler.

Penalty for unnecessary roughness: Loss of 15 yards. The player may be disqualified if the action is judged by the official(s) to be flagrant.



By Don Pearson
Tampa Staff Writer

The chins of the Bears' Tom Waddle and the Cowboys' Troy Aikman became highlight-reel fodder after bone-jarring hits by the Buccaneers' Thomas Everett and the Cardinals' Wilber Marshall during the last two weeks.

But despite the danger and obvious entertainment value, they are not indicative of a vicious trend, NFL officials said Monday.

Everett's hit on Waddle was more legal than referee Gordon McCarter ruled, said Bears coach Dave Wannstedt and Gene Washington, the NFL's vice president for football development.

Tampa Bay safety Everett was penalized for unnecessary roughness Sunday for what McCarter called "a head shot" to Bears receiver Waddle. He said Everett "led with the forearm and the crown of his

headgear, both above the neck."

Leading with the crown of the headgear would be spearing, an automatic penalty and fine. But neither Wannstedt nor Washington believes the hit was illegal. And Washington said Monday that spearing incidents are down dramatically since the league began a "Heads Up" poster campaign in locker rooms last season.

"I didn't think it was an illegal hit," Wannstedt said Monday. "After looking at the film, I haven't changed my opinion."

"I've only seen the TV version, but I agree with Wannstedt," Washington said. "It doesn't appear to be spearing."

Washington is in charge of reviewing flagrant on-field incidents and separating fact from hysteria fueled by television returns such as the chin shot Aikman took from Marshall.

See SPARKING, Page 4

Source: NFL

Chicago Tribune

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Foreman

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

boxers the consequences of the sport—brain swelling, scarring and blood clots, not to mention torn nerve cells and physically shrunken brains. The choice to continue fighting would then be left to the boxer.

Powell explained that the head does not need to be hit in order for severe injury to occur. Rapid body acceleration—such as in the case of whiplash and the so-called shaken baby syndrome—bring the soft brain tissue crashing against the hard skull.

"The brain is like a computer," Powell said. "If a person whacked their computer against the wall hundreds of times, eventually it won't work."

The American Medical Association's Lundberg estimated that as many as 70 to 80 percent of boxers with "substantial career lengths" had physically shrunken brains as measured by clinical examinations, CT scans and MRIs. The tissue of such longtime fighters' brains degenerated after repeated damage.

Lampert reported that as many as 10 to 20 percent of boxers with long careers have dementia pugilistica, the medical name for the so-called "punch-drunk syndrome."

Individuals with the disorder experience speech difficulties, clumsiness and loss of balance that eventually progresses to symptoms mimicking Parkinson's disease.

The National Head Injury Foundation's Zasler noted the Parkinson's-like neurological disorder suffered by the legendary Muhammad Ali.

"Dementia pugilistica occurs in the same brain tracts as Parkinson's," he said. "Therefore, the clinical symptoms of both can parallel."

In addition, Zasler noted that brain cell reserves decrease with age.

"As people go downhill, they become less tolerant to multiple blows," he said. "There are fewer neurons to protect them against such diseases as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's."

The problem for older boxers is only exacerbated when opponents are 19 or younger, a situation outlawed in amateur boxing, said Dr. Joe Estwanik, an orthopedic surgeon at the Sports Science Center in Charlotte, N.C.

Estwanik is chairman of the

Boxers risk brain damage

Boxers risk many types of injuries. Medical researchers have found brain damage to be the most dangerous type of injury suffered by boxers. Potential for chronic brain damage increases in older boxers who have had long careers.

Brain

Blows to the head can cause the brain to "swirl" in the skull, tearing blood vessels and nerve fibers. Concussions, hemorrhages and skull fractures can occur in a fight.



■ An aged or groggy fighter, who has lost control of neck muscles, is less able to withstand the sudden acceleration of a blow to the head.

■ Older boxers also become less tolerant of multiple blows because their brain tissues have decreased with age.

■ When the brain swells or blood accumulates around the brain, death can result.

■ Boxers with long careers may suffer punch-drunk syndrome, which includes speech difficulties, clumsiness, and other symptoms associated with Parkinson's or Alzheimer's disease.

Eyes

Blows to the face can cause retinal detachment, which can result in blindness.

Neck

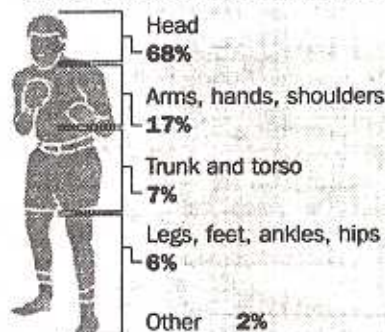
Blows to the neck can damage the carotid artery, decreasing blood flow to the brain.

Elsewhere

Dislocations, fractures, sprains, strains and contusions can occur during a boxing match.

Where damage occurs

A study of boxing-related hospitalizations at U.S. Army medical facilities, 1980-85, found the following distribution of injuries:



Source: Journal of the American Medical Association
Chicago Tribune

sports medicine committee for USA Boxing, an umbrella organization for amateur boxing across the country, and a veteran ring-side physician.

"When it comes to safety," Estwanik said, "the advantage is with youth."

Estwanik noted that reflexes such as dodging hits or tightening neck muscles to absorb crushing blows slow with age.

"Aging fighters have to consider their defensive strategies," he said.

But Estwanik, a fan of boxing for years, does not advocate banning the sport.

"With modification and appropriate safety," he said, "boxing is a tremendous fitness activity."

Estwanik points to changes in the amateur boxing rules that make the sport safer: limited rounds; restrictions for boxers

with heart, eye or neurological problems; and a medical passport that documents every health problem and injury a boxer has sustained.

Fighters can be prohibited from competing in the event if there is evidence of a recent injury or predisposing condition such as an aneurysm. Medical checkups are mandatory.

"You cannot predict what will happen in a fight," Estwanik said. "But we have remarkable tools to evaluate athletes."

The ringside physician believes that if professional fighters were restricted as in amateur boxing, the sport would be safe.

Others experts disagree.

"A brain is a brain, a fist is a fist," said the American Medical Association's Lundberg. "Blows damage the head no matter what the age of the boxer."

European fight reaction: 'Absolutely flabulous'

MEDICS WARN FOREMAN: USE YOUR HEAD - AND SAVE IT

Medical experts meeting Monday in Chicago had this multimillion-dollar question for George Foreman as he considers future championship fights:

Is your brain worth it?

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Powell's colleague, the late Dr. Peter Lampert, spent his career researching and describing the medical effects of boxing.

Lampert advocated showing boxers the consequences of the sport-brain swelling, scarring and blood clots, not to mention torn nerve cells and physically shrunken brains. The choice to continue fighting would then be left to the boxer.

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GRAPHIC: Boxers risk brain damage

See microfilm for complete graphic.

Source: Journal of the American Medical Association
Chicago Tribune.

KEYWORDS: PRO BOXING INJURY