

## SportsBriefs



NICK HOWARD/Colby Free Press

Colby High School Eagle football players worked out during a recent practice. The team will have its first public scrimmage at 7:30 p.m. today at Dennen Field. The Lady Eagle volleyball team will scrimmage at 6 p.m. at the high school gym.

By The Associated Press  
CINCINNATI — Carson Palmer is ready to play.

With his rebuilt knee holding up in practice, the Cincinnati Bengals quarterback said that he will play in the next preseason game, stepping on the field and taking a hit for the first time since his injury in the playoffs seven months ago.

Palmer is expected to start against the Green Bay Packers on Monday night, when his left knee will get its biggest test yet.

Palmer hasn't talked to coach Marvin Lewis and offensive coordinator Bob Bratkowski about how much he will play.

IRVING, Texas (AP) — Terrell Owens missed practice again, virtually ensuring he will miss his third straight preseason game for the Dallas Cowboys this weekend and might not play until the regular-season opener.

Owens missed 15 of 27 training camp workouts in Oxnard, Calif., and the first two exhibition games before the Cowboys resumed practice at home Wednesday.

Owens said Wednesday he aggravated his left hamstring injury by returning to practice too soon last week.

DENVER (AP) — Ashley Lelie's departure from Denver was a costly one.

Broncos coach Mike Shanahan confirmed that in order to be free from the final year of his contract, the recalcitrant receiver agreed to pay the Broncos a hefty sum.

The amount is believed to be \$982,000.

Not counting players' days off, Lelie skipped 23 days of training camp, making him liable for \$14,000 in daily fines totaling \$322,000.

The Broncos also wanted Lelie to repay a prorated portion of his \$3.3 million signing bonus, which would amount to \$660,000 if divided by five.

SANTA CLARA, Calif. (AP) — Jerry Rice signed a one-day contract to retire with the San Francisco 49ers, officially ending the receiver's matchless career back where it began.

Rice, who played the first 16 of his 20 NFL seasons with San Francisco, shed no tears during a short signing ceremony at the 49ers' training complex.

Rice, who will turn 44 in October, hasn't played since leaving the Broncos' training camp before last season, holding his first retirement news conference last September in Denver. He spent three seasons in Oakland after leaving the 49ers, then played a final year with the Seattle Seahawks.

### TRACK AND FIELD

Another track athlete coached by Trevor Graham has tested positive

for banned performance-enhancing drugs.

Sprinter LaTasha Jenkins tested positive for the anabolic steroid nandrolone in July, a source familiar with the results told The Associated Press. Only the "A" test has been conducted, said the source, who asked not to be identified because the results have not officially been made public.

Graham has had several athletes test positive for banned substances, including Olympic 100-meter champion Justin Gatlin. The world record holder in the 100 meters tested positive for testosterone and other steroids at the Kansas Relays on April 22.

## Is there a muzzle in the desk too?

By Jim Litke

AP Sports Columnist

You have to admire Bryant Gumbel's chutzpah, if not quite his timing or choice of words.

He bit a hand that's under contract to feed him this season — outgoing NFL commissioner Paul Tagliabue's ring finger, no less — and got off with just a warning. This time.

Next time, though, Gumbel had better be right not just about what he says, but when and how he says it.

Eight days ago, the eponymous host of HBO's "Real Sports with Bryant Gumbel," and soon-to-be play-by-play broadcaster for the NFL's in-house network, addressed his closing remarks to incoming commissioner Roger Goodell:

"Before he cleans out his office, have Paul Tagliabue show you where he keeps Gene Upshaw's leash," Gumbel said. "By making the docile head of the players union his personal pet, your predecessor has kept the peace without giving players the kind of guarantees other pros take for granted.

"Try to make sure," he added, "no one competent ever replaces Upshaw on your watch."

What Gumbel said about Upshaw being outmaneuvered by Tagliabue over guaranteed salaries is dead on.

Unlike their NBA and MLB counterparts, NFL players never see all the money or years promised in the splashy deals they sign. But that doesn't mean none of the dollars is guaranteed.

To get around the salary cap introduced in the 1993 collective bargaining agreement, NFL owners began negotiating "signing bonuses" — essentially lump-sum payments — and deferred most of the big salary years until the end of contracts, by which time few players are still playing for teams that sign them.

The players no doubt would like all their money guaranteed, but they haven't minded taking the other side of that bet, either. Considering the average career lasts only a few seasons, veterans and high draft choices wind up pocketing about half the dollars they sign for.

Those players — as opposed to a fifth-round pick who gets little up front and is often gone when the season kicks off — are Upshaw's constituents. And anybody who thinks he hasn't been listening to that first group hasn't been paying attention.

Tagliabue was the NFL's outside legal counsel before he became commissioner in 1989, and one of the first people he phoned from his new office was Upshaw. They'd already met in court over a union lawsuit seeking free agency, and they met again soon after that call for a low-key dinner in Washington.

While all their subsequent sit-downs haven't gone quite as smoothly, the salary cap was \$34.5 million that first season and it will be \$102 million this one.

Gumbel presumably knew that when he mentioned "the leash," even though Tagliabue called that remark "about as uninformed as anything I've read or heard in a long, long time." Unfortunate as the wording was, the timing of Gumbel's remarks might have irritated the commissioner even more.

Gumbel was an interesting choice as an NFL broadcaster from the outset. He had to be approved by Tagliabue, who knew his reputation for candor and must have hoped that independence would only help raise the credibility for the relatively new NFL Network.

Maybe because they're so familiar with risks, players are hesitant about choosing sides.

"We talk about the right to freedom of speech," said Buffalo safety

and NFLPA president Troy Vincent, "but I was always taught that if I don't have anything positive to say, especially about my peers or brother, then don't say anything at all."

That won't be the case with Gumbel. But the next time he pushes the envelope, he should remember that if the commissioner has a leash in that drawer, chances are good there's a muzzle somewhere in there, too.

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