

# Freeman faced with \$2,500 fine

RIVER FALLS, Wis. (AP) — John Tait threw the first punch in a training camp fight with rookie Eddie Freeman, but a helmet in the face left him with 17 stitches and the Kansas City Chiefs have now fined Freeman \$2,500.

Coach Dick Vermeil reversed himself on the matter Thursday, a day after saying he planned no disciplinary action. The coach announced the fine after a long meeting with Tait, who will be sidelined at least a week and had said he thought Freeman should be disciplined for hitting him with the helmet.

“It’s out of respect for John,” Vermeil said of the fine. “John threw the first punch, but that retaliation was out of line for the National Football League and the demeanor we want.”

On Wednesday night, Vermeil had become angry over questions about the fight and walked away from reporters.

“I apologize for losing my cool last night,” the coach said Thursday. “I don’t normally do that but it’s happened before. I’m human.”

Tait, whose nose was broken, was pleased about Thursday’s development.

“I’m glad we did something,” said Tait, the Chiefs’ starting right offensive tackle. “I’m not getting my jollies over this. I don’t want Eddie to suffer, but I thought it was appropriate they did something. There’s a little closure.”

Asked whether he was satisfied with the amount of the fine, Tait paused and said: “They did something. That was for the team to decide.”

# Priest Holmes not changed by rushing title

By Doug Tucker

The Associated Press

RIVER FALLS, Wis. (AP) — He won the NFL rushing championship, and now Priest Holmes wonders what all the fuss is about.

He knew all along he was this good. Didn’t everybody?

The short, powerfully built Texan remains so remarkably unchanged, it’s almost as though somebody else authored his monster season for last year’s 6-10 Kansas City Chiefs.

“It’s pretty much the same with me,” Holmes said with a shrug of his shoulders. “I’m not one who will be seen on commercials. But there are people who recognize me for just being humble and being willing to help out.”

When they signed the five-year veteran in April 2001, the Chiefs themselves failed to fully appreciate their find, preferring to focus their offense on Trent Green’s passing arm.

Big mistake. After they turned to their rushing game around midseason, Holmes galloped across the finish line with 1,555 yards rushing and 2,169 yards from scrimmage, both league-highs and team records.

He was the first undrafted player to win a rushing title since 1954.

His 327 carries were the fewest by any rushing champion since Barry Sanders carried only 307 times in 1996.

“When you give Priest Holmes the ball, you don’t need the play to be executed perfectly,” said coach Dick Vermeil. “He makes it on his own.”

Nevertheless, the thought lingers among many NFL observers perhaps it was not a breakout season, but a fluke. Fluke or not, it’ll be tough for any kind of an encore.

“He’s going to have a very hard time duplicating last year,” said Vermeil.



Jason Shelledy (above) pitched the first game of the city/county recreation men’s league championship for the Twig-N-Giggleberries on Thursday at Centennial Park. Kyle Hawks (below), on the Budweiser team, ran for third. Photos by Doug Stephens/The Goodland Daily News

# Rookie pitches shutout

PITTSBURGH (AP) — Suddenly losing his control, Colorado rookie Jason Jennings appeared as if he might give up the lead even before he gave up a hit.

After retiring 12 batters in a row in the 3-0 victory, the Rockies right-hander walked Aramis Ramirez and Rob Mackowiak to start the Pittsburgh fifth, then ran the count full in succession to Adam Hyzdu, Craig Wilson and Pokey Reese. The no-hitter looked in jeopardy and so did the Rockies’ one-run lead.

But in one of the Rockies’ best pitching performances all season, Jennings recovered to retire all three batters, then didn’t yield a hit until Mackowiak’s broken-bat bloop single into left with two outs in the seventh.

Afterward, Rockies manager Clint Hurdle celebrated more than a win Thursday and the end of a season-long, eight-game losing streak. He also was cheered by an impressive outing — and an equally impressive recovery — by one of the NL’s fast-improving young pitchers.

“That’s the opportunity of a lifetime,” Hurdle said after the Rockies’ longest no-hit bid in their 10-season history. “It was another step in the right direction for him.”

Mackowiak’s hit was the only one allowed by Jennings in seven innings.

# Kansas City has one win in two weeks

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — The Kansas City Royals went from the hottest team in the American League to the coldest.

After winning 10 of 11, the Royals have lost nine of their past 10. The losing streak has come against the Toronto Blue Jays, Chicago White Sox and Detroit Tigers, all under .500.

Paul Byrd, who has 14 of the Royals’ 44 wins, has the only Kansas City victory since July 21. Manager Tony Pena called a clubhouse team meeting Thursday before the Royals’ 3-2 loss to the Blue Jays.

“We have two months to go and they know they can play better,” Pena said. “They’re professionals, so they know what they need to do.”

Since a nine-game winning streak ended July 20, the Royals have hit a .221 and scored 36 runs.

“They’re going to wake up,” Pena said. “We’re going to get it going.”

With Mike Sweeney and his AL-leading .355 average on the disabled list with a bad back, the Royals’ offense has sputtered.

“We’ll come out of it,” said Raul Ibanez, who drove in 31 runs in July and extended his hitting streak to six games.

Roy Halladay (13-4) made sure the Royals didn’t come out Thursday, limiting them to five singles and two runs.



# Budweiser takes first in recreation league

By Doug Stephens

The Goodland Daily News

The guys with the funny names played a tough game, but they couldn’t catch up to Budweiser, the winner of the city/county recreation men’s championship.

Smalz, Scuba, Don-O, Lil’ Kobe, Vegas and the rest of the team called Twig-N-Giggleberries lost both games of the doubleheader, 13-8 and 20-19.

The slow-pitch league is fast-paced, as most guys swing on the first pitch and most hit easy pop-ups to the outfield. There weren’t too many hits, a fact the Twigs’ coach, “Scuba,” noticed.

“C’mon guys,” he said. “Base hits win ball games.”

The players encouraged each other and played a competitive game. One hit by the Twig’s “Jay” looked like a sure homer, until the Budweiser left fielder jumped up, balanced his body on the fence and came up with the ball.

“OK, I got robbed,” Jay said, “but it was a heck of a good catch. He was going over the fence until he pushed himself forward with his legs.”

After their first loss, the Twigs started connecting with the ball. They went through their entire lineup twice in the first inning, then hit a homer in the second. The Budweiser defense

caught up in the third and put down three straight batters.

Most of the players were in their late teens or early 20s, but there were a few players on each team in their mid-30s. Both teams had a few skirmishes with the umpire. A Budweiser fielder caught a ball after it bounced off a fence, and the Twigs argued he had “trapped” the ball, and the batter shouldn’t be out. Later the Budweiser team argued a close call at first.

All argument with the official stopped in the sixth inning of the first game. The catcher tagged a runner going for home, but the ball slipped out of his glove. The umpire called the runner out at first, but changed his mind when he realized what happened. While the ump was making his new call, the catcher missed a throw and the ball bounced up and hit the official in the leg. He called a time-out and walked it off.

No more calls were contested. The co-ed league played its championship game after the mens’. Hitchcock beat Car Quest 17-2.

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