

GEORGE BEAHON

"In This Corner"



They laughed when the fledgling American Football League club owners sat down to sign pro players. But the AFL made it big and is in business. Right? Right.

They laughed when the American Basketball Association stood up and stole players from the establishment National Basketball Association. But ABA is ready to play former NBA stars next season. Right? Right.

They just about broke up when the World Hockey Association announced it would hang out its shingles for action next Fall. Then the WHA began signing stars — caliber of Bobby Hull, Gerry Cheevers, Derek Sanderson, and scores of others. Now the WHA is for real, and the establishment National Hockey League ranks have been riddled. Right?

Wrong.

The WHA, half of whose owners operate with cash and the other half on pies in the skies, may lose all of these NHL performers before the first puck is dropped in anger in October.

Instead of becoming instant major league, the WHA may operate at a fourth or fifth rate level of competition, less attractive even than the Eastern League.

This is the word and promise of an executive in the NHL. For reasons which will become obvious, he must be anonymous. But he talks with his head, and not his heart, and he is willing to put his money where his words are.

Deadline for contract signing in the NHL passed some hours before this deadline. What's important is that in the NHL no player may report to training camp unless his autograph is on the dotted line.

Missing the opening of training camp, says our source, will not automatically trigger the action the NHL is going to take. What will touch off the fireworks will be when these scores of NHL veterans, whether they are stars or just bodies, do report to their WHA camps.

"When that happens, and it probably is only a matter of a week or two away," says the NHL exec, "that's when the shock wave will hit. Chicago and Boston have some real political clout. They in particular, and probably the Canadian entry in Vancouver, will begin to unload their heavy artillery."

These clubs, and possibly others, will immediately serve injunctions to prevent their defectors from playing in the WHA.

They will sue on grounds of the reserve clause, and nobody can predict how many wild things may happen. To begin with, most players are Canadian. And 13 of the 16 NHL clubs are American. So there is a question of jurisdiction.

There is even the possibility that some players might play only in Canada or only in the U.S.,

which would be a pretty bush league situation for every club involved in both leagues.

"The WHA," the source concedes, "has signed over 100 pro players from previously organized hockey, and some reports we have say they could sign another 100, who are waiting for just these developments.

"The edge the NHL thinks it has in the matter, is the test in Washington, which was won by baseball, involving the reserve clause. If Washington goes the same way with hockey, these guys will be back with the establishment clubs. And if anyone thinks a Gerry Cheevers was using his multi-million dollar signing with Cleveland as a wedge against Boston, just picture Cheevers' position if he bounces back to Boston, by direction of Washington, and has to negotiate again with his Boston people.

"The real strange thing here is that Cleveland tried for 30 years to get an NHL franchise. Now it's got the WHA, and Cheevers, and others.

"Well, and this is the real kicker for not wanting my name involved, guess what happened at our summer meetings?

"Washington was awarded a franchise for 1974 in the NHL. Would you believe that nobody even knew before the meetings that Washington ever had applied for an NHL franchise?"

"Would you suppose the NHL directors were taking an edge in anticipation of this ruling that we can expect next month, or in October, at the very latest? The WHA may lose every one of those NHL names they signed. And the WHA will be at best a fourth rate operation. And Washington will be in the NHL in 1974. This was, truly, a remarkable political move by the NHL directors."

JOHN DOSER

Scholastic Notebook



Bob Thomas, Rich Russo and Laverne Dickinson, all Catholic ex-high school football players, have been in and out of the local sports pages this summer.

Thomas, former McQuaid soccer and football player, looks forward to his junior year as Notre Dame's top place-kicking specialist; Russo, the ex-Aquinas fullback powerhouse, anticipates filling big Ed Marinaro's shoes at Cornell; and Dickinson, ex-Bishop Kearney fullback, still has a chance to make the roster of the Chicago Bears.

Thomas, who played soccer and lent his kicking talent to the McQuaid football team on weekends three seasons ago, acquired a full athletic scholarship at the South Bend football factory after a great sophomore year as a place kicker.

He's due to report to ND's pre-season camp under coach Ara Parseghian Aug. 30.

Thomas, who grew up kicking the soccer ball under the watchful eyes of his father, Augie Thomas, one of a long-line of former Rochester Lancer coaches.

Camp Allegany

The CYO has openings for its new overnight campsite in Allegany State Park during the week of August 21.

This special week will be co-ed so that brothers and sisters can attend as a group. Athletics, woodland hikes, swimming, fishing, boating, campfires, cook-outs are among the many activities planned during this encampment for youngsters 8 to 12 years old.

SINGLES' DANCE

The St. Thomas More Club will hold an August dance, "Last Rose of Summer." The singles' dance will be held at the Wishing Well, on Sunday, Aug. 20, 8-12 p.m. Bill Malvaso's Trio will provide the music. Dress is casual.

led the McQuaid soccer Knights in scoring in his senior year while using his soccer style boot for McQuaid football extra points and field goals.

In fact a 45-yard field goal he kicked against Aquinas in 1969 is still considered possibly the longest ever booted in the Rochester area at the high school level. It was also the first successful field goal ever kicked by a McQuaid football player.

Russo, who gained almost 3,000 yards during his junior and senior years at Aquinas under coach Bob Rosmarino, was a reserve tailback at Cornell last year.

He watched Big Ed Marinaro from every angle from his perch on the Big Red bench.

He told a reporter that the only chances he got to play last year were in the closing seconds of every victory and those cheers you heard weren't for Russo's entry but Big Ed's exit from the game.

While Russo is hopeful, he still has competition from another Diocesan boy whose grid credentials are pretty good too — Mark Piscitelli — a senior from Seneca Falls.

Russo, who averaged 37 carries a game for Aquinas, is confident he'll be in the Big Reds' starting backfield somewhere.

He went to Cornell by his own choice. And he had the choices to make. Russo had 62 college and university scholarships from which to choose.

He says he has no regrets, pointing out that getting up for a game with Dartmouth is as exciting as it used to be when Aquinas prepped for McQuaid.

Dickinson, who went on to the University of Wyoming after playing for coach Dan Coughlin at Bishop Kearney, was one of 56 players left on the roster of the NFL Chicago Bears last week.

He's good, at least, through Aug. 28 when the NFL clubs make their next player cut to reduce the roster to 49 players. Dickinson is listed as a defensive back for the Bears.

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