

SPORTS BRIEFS Associated Press

NFL

TAMPA, Fla. — Tony Dungy, interviewed but passed over by four other teams hiring head coaches in the last 10 years, agreed to a six-year contract to coach the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

Dungy, Minnesota's defensive coordinator for the past four seasons, replaces Sam Wyche, who was fired Dec. 27. The Bucs were 7-9 last year — their best record since 1982 — but lost seven of their last nine games.

TEMPE, Ariz. — Rod Woodson, Pittsburgh's ailing star cornerback, was given the go-ahead to play in Sunday's Super Bowl. If Woodson does play against the Cowboys, his four-month comeback from a knee injury would be one of the most remarkable in NFL history. He tore cartilage and his right anterior cruciate ligament in the Steelers' opener.

SANTA CLARA, Calif. — Bill Walsh could be on the verge of returning to the San Francisco 49ers.

The 49ers called a news conference for today, and team spokesman Dave Rahn said Walsh, president Carmen Policy and coach George Seifert would be there. Rahn would not confirm reports that Walsh, who coached the 49ers to three Super Bowl titles, would rejoin the team in a yet to be defined role.

DALLAS — Green Bay Packers assistant coach Gil Haskell has been transferred to a rehabilitation facility while recovering from a skull fracture sustained in a sideline accident in the NFC championship.

Haskell, 52, was injured when his head hit the turf as he was knocked on his back in a sideline collision during Dallas' victory over the Packers on Jan. 14.

Baseball

CHICAGO — The Chicago White Sox, looking to add more power and protection in their lineup for Frank Thomas, acquired outfielder Danny Tartabull from the Oakland Athletics for two minor leaguers.

Chicago sent left-handed pitcher Andrew Lorraine and outfielder Charles Poe to Oakland. Tartabull, 33, hit .236

with eight home runs and 35 RBIs in 83 games last season for Oakland and the New York Yankees.

NEW YORK — The St. Louis Cardinals traded outfielder Bernard Gilkey to the New York Mets for three minor leaguers.

Gilkey, 29, who hit .298 last year with 17 homers and 69 RBIs, became expendable when the Cardinals signed Ron Gant as a free agent. The Cardinals received pitchers Eric Ludwick and Erik Hiljusz and outfielder Yudith Ozorio.

BOSTON — The Boston Red Sox signed free agent outfielder Alex Cole Monday to a one-year contract that clears the way for them to acquire reliever Heathcliff Slocumb from Philadelphia.

The Red Sox reportedly are ready to send outfielder Lee Tinsley, reliever Ken Ryan and outfield prospect Glenn Murray to the Phillies for Slocumb. Cole, 30, hit .342 for Minnesota last season.

College Basketball

Massachusetts, the only unbeaten Division I team, remained No. 1 in the college poll, but the Minutemen's grip on the top spot slipped a bit.

Last week, Massachusetts (16-0) was picked first on all but two of the ballots from a media panel. This week, with two more voters participating, the Minutemen received 57 of 66 first-place votes and 1,641 points, 52 more than Kentucky (15-1), which was No. 1 on eight ballots.

Kansas and Connecticut, which received the other first-place vote, each moved up one spot to third and fourth, while Cincinnati, which lost its first game of the season Sunday to Alabama-Birmingham, dropped two spots to fifth.

PITTSBURGH — Marcus Camby, eight days after his frightening collapse, practiced with No. 1 Massachusetts and will decide at the last minute whether he is ready to play tonight against Pittsburgh.

The junior center missed three games after fainting before a Jan. 14 game against St. Bonaventure. Doctors do not know what caused the episode, although many possibilities have been ruled out.

Gamecocks looking for third straight win

Carolina has a tough task ahead tonight as Erick Dampier and preseason SEC West favorite Mississippi State come to town.

ROBBIE MEEK Sports Editor

The South Carolina Gamecocks will face one of their toughest challenges of the season tonight against preseason SEC West favorite Mississippi State.

The Gamecocks are 10-4 overall and 4-2 in the conference, putting them in a tie for second place. USC is riding a two-game winning streak heading into the final game of their three-game home stand, tonight.

Carolina defeated Alabama on Saturday night 90-67. The MSU Bulldogs have lost three of their last four games.

The Bulldogs will bring one of the best centers in the country into tonight's match: 6-foot-11-inch Erick Dampier. Dampier is leading the SEC in rebounds, with 9.4 per game; field goals, shooting 62.6 percent; and blocks, with 3.6 per game.

The Gamecocks will be at a disadvantage, since they will have to defend Dampier without starting center Nate Wilbourne. Wilbourne will miss the next two games with a severe ankle sprain. Wilbourne is averaging 14.3 points per game and is leading the team with 6.4 rebounds per game.

Playing without Wilbourne will mean freshman reserve center Bud Johnson will have to step into the starting role. Johnson is coming off his best career outing against Alabama with 14 points and 4 rebounds in 22 minutes. Johnson is averaging 5.5 points and 5.7 rebounds per game.

The Bulldogs will also bring a good veteran backcourt into tonight's game. Sophomore Marcus Bullard and senior Darryl Wilson are tenth and eleventh, respectively, in the SEC in assists. Bullard is second in the SEC in three-point percentages and sixth in three-pointers per game. Wilson is fifth in the SEC in three-point percentages and third in

free-throw percentages.

The Gamecocks come into the match led by guards Larry Davis and Melvin Watson. Davis, who was named SEC Player of the Week this week, is averaging 18.4 points per game and is ranked fourth in the SEC, eighth in three-pointers per game with 2.2, and first in free-throw percentages. Watson is averaging 13.9 points per game and is ranked ninth in the conference in assists with 4.2 per game.

The Gamecocks will try to improve on their best SEC start ever. The game will begin at 7:30 p.m. The Gamecocks' next contest will be at #2 Kentucky Saturday.



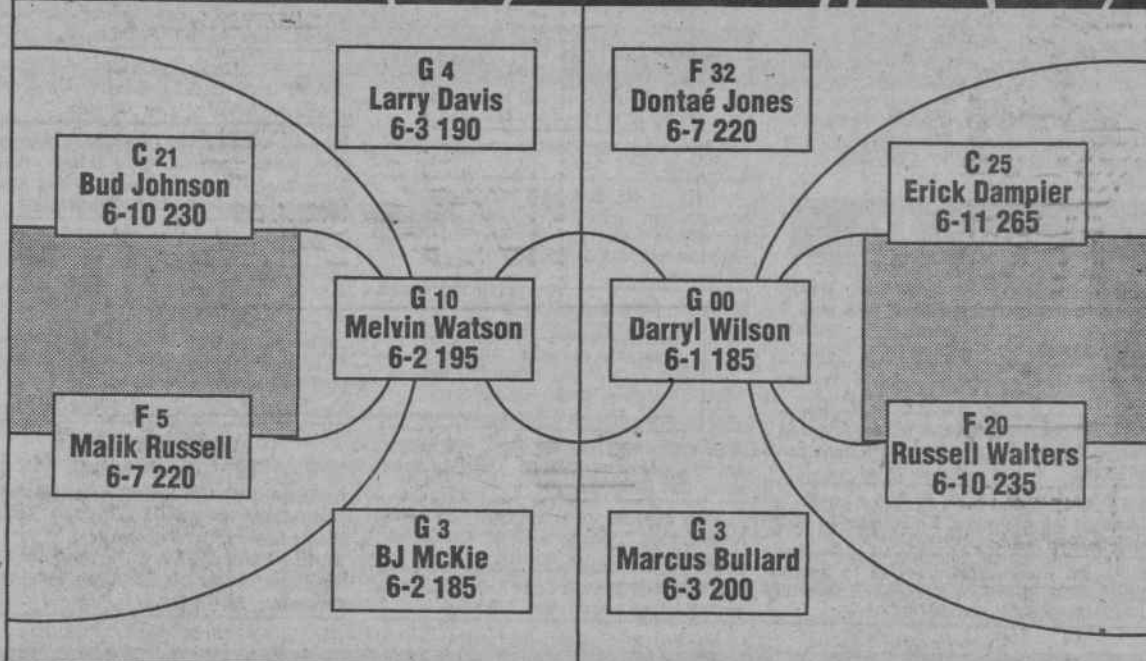
JOHNSON



Tyson Pettigrew The Gamecock

Guard Larry Davis, who was named this week's SEC Player of the Week, will lead the Gamecocks into a 7:30 contest tonight against Mississippi State.

South Carolina (10-4) vs. Mississippi St. (11-4)



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