

Rangers Prez Ryan Feeling Good, Back To Work Friday

ARLINGTON, Texas (AP) — Nolan Ryan knows his cardiologist would probably prefer for him to cut back on his non-stop workload as CEO, president and part-owner of the AL West-leading Texas Rangers. Yet, the Hall of Fame pitcher who played a record 27 seasons in the major leagues is showing no signs of slowing down.

Ryan, who has dealt with a heart condition since double-bypass surgery in 2000, was back at Rangers Ballpark on Friday, only days after being hospitalized because of an incident with his heart. "Good, everything's going fine," the 64-year-old Ryan said before the Rangers played their first home game since the All-Star break.

Ryan was released from a Houston hospital Tuesday. He had spent two nights there after experiencing tightness in his chest while at his home in Georgetown. He was back at work after resting for a couple of days at his Texas home.

"I look at it from a bright side because everything, the last cardiogram I had was in 2007, and it was pretty much identical," Ryan said. "Nothing has changed in four years, so that's a very big plus."

At times because of his condition, Ryan said he can have "classic heart attack symptoms" or discomfort and tightness in his chest. Nitroglycerin pills usually relieve the problem, but when they didn't last weekend, his cardiologist wanted him to go to the hospital for tests.

Ryan became president of the Rangers in February 2008. Next month will mark the one-year anniversary of Ryan's ownership group finally gaining control of the team after an extended process that ended with a court-ordered auction. That auction came only months before the Rangers went to the World Series for the first time in franchise history.

Then two weeks ago, just before the All-Star break, a Brownwood firefighter had a fatal fall during a Rangers home game. Shannon Stone died less than an hour after reaching over a rail to catch a ball tossed his way and fell about 20 feet to the concrete behind the left-field wall July 7.

While Ryan acknowledged stress and fatigue could be factors in his heart episodes, he didn't want to blame the latest on anything in particular.

"I can't say I'd correlate any certain thing to it," Ryan said. "It can come from fatigue, it can come from stress. I don't know what all."

Ryan pitched for the New York Mets, California, Houston and Texas. He holds the records for most no-hitters (seven) and strikeouts (5,714).

Former Hawkeye Spalding Injured In Vehicle Crash

CEDAR RAPIDS, Iowa (AP) — A former Iowa football player is severely injured following a rollover crash in eastern Iowa.

Authorities say 24-year-old Kyle Spalding, a walk-on with the Hawkeyes from 2006-09, was pulled from a minivan that crashed about five miles south of his hometown of Belle Plaine.

The Iowa County sheriff's office says the crash was reported around 2:20 a.m. on Friday.

Spalding was airlifted to University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics. His condition was not immediately available.

The Cedar Rapids Gazette reports that Spalding was a three-time all-state football player at Belle Plaine High. He did not see game action for the Hawkeyes.

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Fighting Sioux NCAA Nickname Meeting Set For Aug. 12

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — Days after it was postponed because of a state lawmaker's death, a meeting between North Dakota and NCAA officials to discuss the University of North Dakota's Fighting Sioux nickname has been rescheduled for Aug. 12.

The meeting, to be held at the association's headquarters in Indianapolis, is set three days before the NCAA intends to impose sanctions on UND for the continued use of the nickname and a logo that features the profile of an American Indian warrior. The NCAA considers them offensive to American Indians, but the North Dakota Legislature earlier this year approved a law that requires UND to keep both indefinitely.

Grant Shaft, president of North Dakota's Board of Higher Education, confirmed the new meeting date to The Associated Press on Friday.

The university, as part of an October 2007 settlement of a lawsuit against the NCAA, agreed to drop the nickname and logo by Aug. 15, 2011. The new pro-nickname law, which was signed by Gov. Jack Dalrymple in March and takes effect Aug. 1, prevents UND from meeting that deadline.

Rep. Al Carlson, R-Fargo, the North Dakota House's majority leader and the sponsor of the pro-nickname legislation, has advocated meeting with NCAA officials to discuss public support in North Dakota for the nickname and the NCAA's reasons for opposing it. The association has repeatedly said it will not change its policy of discouraging the use of American Indian logos, nicknames and mascots at member colleges.

The meeting had been scheduled for

Monday, but was postponed after the death of the North Dakota Senate's Republican majority leader, Bob Stenehjem, of Bismarck. Stenehjem was killed in a traffic accident in Alaska, where he had been on a fishing trip.

Stenehjem had intended to make the trip. His deputy, Sen. Randy Christmann, R-Hazen, said Friday no decision had been made about whether another senator would go instead.

"I would think that we probably should have" a senator as part of the delegation of North Dakota officials, Christmann said.

The original group also included Carlson, Shaft, Gov. Jack Dalrymple, UND President Robert Kelley, athletics director Brian Faison, and Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem, who is Bob Stenehjem's brother.

A spokesman for Dalrymple said Friday

the governor would attend. Shaft, Wayne Stenehjem and Carlson said they would attend. Carlson said he would travel directly to Indianapolis from San Antonio, where he will be attending a National Conference of State Legislatures meeting that week.

A UND spokesman could not confirm Friday whether Kelley and Faison would be present.

The NCAA sanctions for using the nickname and logo include a ban on UND hosting any postseason tournaments, and a prohibition on UND teams wearing the nickname or logo on uniforms during post-season play.

The nickname and logo's continued use has raised other concerns. The Big Sky Conference, which UND hopes to join next year, has said the issue will complicate the school's conference membership.



Ryan



MARLIN LEVISON/MINNEAPOLIS STAR TRIBUNE/MCT

Bert Blyleven's career arc with the Minnesota Twins proved as circuitous as his signature curve ball, but the pitcher will wear a Twins hat for his induction into baseball's Hall of Fame on Sunday.

Blyleven

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manage the game. Blyleven was a great talent. We thought we could improve the team by letting him go, and that turned out to be not necessarily true.

"Even though we traded him, there was always an allure to having him back. He's the kind of player you have on a championship team. I hated to see him pitch for Pittsburgh, for God's sake."

Blyleven pitched for five teams, winning World Series titles in 1979 with Pittsburgh and in 1987 with the Twins.

"That was life in the big leagues," said former Twin Jerry Terrell, who played with Blyleven in the '70s. "Mr. Griffith was not an easy man to play for. My first three years combined, I made less than a high school teacher at that time. The only reason I got a raise is that the minimum salary went up a couple of thousand dollars."

"You know what's great? That Bert did come back, and when he did, he performed just as good as when he left. That shows you the class of that young man. I mean, old man, now. He was a professional and he loved the game, wherever he pitched."

Near the end of Blyleven's first stint with the Twins, he met Clark Griffith at the Plaza Hotel in New York.

"I told Clark I wanted to stay with the Twins," Blyleven said. "I wanted to be with one team my whole career. You wanted to be like Harmon Killebrew, although Harmon had to finish his career in Kansas City, which was sad to see."

"I said, 'Clark, your dad gave me a 20 percent cut.' Clark said he hadn't heard anything. 'Let me go see what I can do.' That was the last I heard until after I got traded."

"Listen, he's a good man. It's a good family. They had to do what they had to do."

When he pitched against the Twins, Blyleven liked to remind them what they had lost. The first

Jim Kaat Still Enjoying The Hall

BY MARK HERRMANN

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COOPERSTOWN, N.Y. — Jim Kaat always has had a special place in his life for the Hall of Fame, even though the reverse never has worked out.

He has a photo of his dad on the steps of the museum in 1947. "He went to Lefty Grove's induction," Kaat said. "I first came here as a college freshman in '56, I went to school with some fellows from Herkimer, N.Y., and I went on vacation here. The first induction that I witnessed was Casey Stengel and Ted Williams in '66."

The former pitcher, whose long career included a stint with the Yankees, is back again to honor former Twins teammate Bert Blyleven, who will be inducted Sunday.

"I've been to a lot of these, for former teammates, and this one is really special for having seen Bert come up as a young kid and having seen him grow," Kaat said.

On Friday, Kaat was signing memorabilia a half-block from the

Hall and some fans told him he ought to have his own plaque. Kaat characteristically accepted the compliments graciously. The thing is, Kaat did have a borderline Hall of Fame career. He just never got to the high side of the border. So it's only natural to wonder if all these trips are bittersweet.

"No, it's all sweet," he said. "It's such a special week to be here in Cooperstown."

He still looks fit and still enjoys baseball, especially the strong pitching in today's game. "I don't know if that's cyclical or just a lot of good young pitchers with great arms. It's almost gone on too long to say it's because of the (lack of) steroids," he said. "But it's good to see."

For Kaat, it was great to see Blyleven elected after a long wait. "In a perfect world, you could say, look, if you're a Hall of Famer, you're a Hall of Famer," he said. "But if you go back through the history of the voting, there were a lot of great players who took three or four years to get in. The main thing is now that he did get in."

time he returned to Minnesota with the Rangers, Blyleven beat the Twins with a two-hit shutout.

"Gene Mauch was the Twins manager," Blyleven said. "He was always in the dugout, but he decided to coach third that night. He was going to distract me. By the seventh inning, I was tipping my hat to the crowd as I'm shutting them down, and finally, by the seventh, Mauch said, 'I can't do anything with that guy, he's in his own little world.'"

Sunday, Blyleven will enter baseball's most exclusive universe. Despite his two departures, he began his career as a Twin, won a World Series as a Twin, made his last at-

tempt to extend his career with the Twins, and will enter the Hall of Fame as a Twin.

"How many times, in a family, are there ups and downs, peaks and valleys, mood swings?" St. Peter said. "I think Bert and the Twins are a lot like that. I think, at the end of the day, Bert always felt like the Twins were his team, and our organization always viewed Bert as a Twin."

"You don't take it for granted, and the decision is now made by the Hall of Fame, but when you look at his body of work and what he means to our franchise, it's pretty easy to conclude that the TC logo is the one he should be wearing in Cooperstown."

AP Source: T'Wolves Interview Portland Assistant Bickerstaff

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Portland assistant Bernie Bickerstaff interviewed with the Minnesota Timberwolves on Friday and former Houston coach Rick Adelman was scheduled to come in on Saturday as the team searches for a new coach.

A person with knowledge of the process told The Associated Press on Friday about the interviews. The person requested anonymity because the team is not commenting publicly on its coaching search.

Bickerstaff is 415-517 in just over 13 seasons as a head coach. He is the father of former Timberwolves assistant J.B. Bickerstaff, who agreed to take a job as an assistant in Houston earlier this month. But J.B. is highly thought of in the Timberwolves organization, and some view him as head coach material in the not-too-distant future.

To that end, one of the scenarios that Timberwolves president of basketball operations David Kahn is considering hiring Bernie Bickerstaff, who has head coaching experience in Charlotte, Denver, Washington and Seattle, to serve as a tutor for a year or two before handing things over to his son for the long haul.

The Timberwolves have also interviewed Terry Porter and Mike Woodson and could bring in Don Nelson soon as well.

The news of Adelman's interest in the position comes as somewhat of a surprise, with

some league observers believing the 66-year-old preferred to land with a team that had more veteran leadership. The Timberwolves are the youngest team in the league, and their lack of a veteran leader or two to stabilize the locker room was one of the biggest reasons they finished with a league-worst 17-65 record last season.

But from a pure talent standpoint, there is plenty to be intrigued about, especially for a coach who runs the kind of wide-open, share-the-ball system that Adelman ran so well in Portland and Sacramento.

The Timberwolves have a pass-first point guard in Ricky Rubio, one of the best passing big men in the game in Kevin Love and some dynamic, if unproven, scorers in Michael Beasley, Wes Johnson and No. 2 overall pick Derrick Williams.

Adelman is 945-616 (.605) in 20 seasons as a head coach of the Trail Blazers, Kings, Warriors and Rockets. He has coached 19 full seasons, leading the Blazers to the NBA finals in 1990 and 1992. He coached the Warriors to back-to-back losing seasons in 1995-96 and '96-97, the only times he has coached a full season and had a team finish with a losing record.

Adelman and the Rockets parted ways in April, with Houston hiring former Wolves executive and coach Kevin McHale to take over.

Softball: US Tops Australia At World Cup

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — Valerie Arioto tripled home the go-ahead runs in the bottom of the sixth inning, lifting the United States to a 5-2 victory over Australia at the World Cup of Softball on Friday night.

Australia, the bronze medalist at the 2008 Beijing Olympics and the 2009 World Cup runner-up, came back from a 2-0 deficit to tie it before giving up three unearned runs. Stacy May-Johnson reached on third baseman Stacy Porter's fielding error with one out and advanced on a groundout before Justine Smethurst walked Brittany Schutte intentionally to bring up Arioto with two outs. Arioto hit a liner into shallow left that Verity Long-Droppert missed on a diving attempt. The ball rolled to the wall and two runs scored.

Taylor Hoagland added an RBI single for the final margin.

Keilani Ricketts (1-0) gave an RBI single to pinch hitter Jodie Stevenson — the first batter she faced after entering in the top of

the sixth — and then got four straight outs before giving up a walk and single to bring the tying run to the plate with two outs in the seventh.

Chelsea Thomas earned the save for the second straight night, striking out Chelsea Forkin to end the game.

Third baseman Jenae Leles, one of only three players on the U.S. roster with past national team experience, left the game in the fifth after twisting her right leg while fielding a bunt. She was on crutches after the game, but coach Ken Eriksen said she should be able to play Saturday.

The United States has suffered only three losses at the World Cup, once last year to Canada and twice at the inaugural event in 2005, but is in rebuilding mode after several veterans decided not to play for the national team this year. No Olympians remain on the team.

On Saturday, the Americans face their top two rivals — 2008 gold medalist Japan and Canada.

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