

## Rules to put excitement in punts

by L.C. Johnson  
January 18, 2001  
Knight-Ridder Tribune

ORLANDO - Fourth down the most important down in football? That could be the case in the XFL.

League founder Vince McMahon wanted rules that would make the game faster, more physical and more enjoyable when the eight-team league kicks off Feb. 3. The rules, announced Tuesday, offer a blend of college football, the NFL and the Arena Football League, along with some measures the league hopes will make fourth down one of the most exciting plays in the game.

"McMahon did not like the fair catch," said Mike Keller, XFL vice president of player development. "As a result, fourth down will be the most exciting down in the XFL. We're not going to have the fair catch, but we're going to hold in the gunners until the ball is kicked. It will give the (return) guy the chance to catch the ball without getting his clock cleaned."

"The other thing... is that when the ball goes past 25

yards, it's a live ball. If the ball hits the ground, no longer are you going to see a bunch of guys circling the ball waiting for it to roll dead."

And the point-after kick is dead. Instead, teams must run or pass for the point.

XFL rules require the receiver/defender to have just one foot in bounds on a reception/interception, just like in college. Likewise, the rules governing overtime will be similar to college in that each team will take possession at the opponent's 20 (it's the 25 in college).

An old NFL rule that allowed defensive backs to employ "bump-and-run" coverage will be adopted. But there is a twist in that the offense will be allowed to run a man in forward motion outside of the tackles, as permitted in the arena league.

In an effort to shorten games, XFL teams will have 35 seconds to get a play off after the previous one is ruled dead and 25 seconds after any clock stoppage.

"We're not going to have those 31/2 and four-hour games," Keller said.

## NBA Report: Denver goes from threat to threatening

by Sam Smith  
January 22, 2001  
Chicago Tribune

CHICAGO -- After their threat to boycott practice, the constantly underachieving Denver Nuggets won 14 of 18 for their best record in 15 years at this point, and it has caught some notice.

"If that's what's working for them, maybe we should try boycotting a practice," Vancouver's Shareef Abdur-Rahim said.

Grizzlies coach Sidney Lowe had a different take. Denver "is tough, athletic. I think they're on a mission and I predict they're going to go deep, deep into the playoffs, very deep," he said.

"When they're going, these guys are as good as anyone. They've got a great post-up guy, Antonio McDyess, who gets points in the post or off offensive rebounds. He can face up and shoot it. Then they have great perimeter shooting -- not good, great."

The test for the Nuggets comes now, with eight of 11 games on the road before the All-Star break. If they play well maybe Denver will start to notice. The Nuggets are on pace to draw fewer fans than last season and are averaging 14,170 with one sell-out.

The kid can play: The Pacers are making noises about getting in the playoff race again and Jermaine O'Neal has been a big part of it. The 22-year-old power forward/center, who skipped college, is averaging 13.6 points, 9.6 rebounds and 2.7 blocked shots over 33.1 minutes.

A year ago O'Neal had "The Year of the Resurrection" tattooed on his right arm along with a drawing of a superhero character designed by his cousin. It never happened in Portland, but O'Neal has blossomed after a trade for Dale Davis that Portland figures to regret for years.

"He hasn't even really played yet," Pacers veteran Sam Perkins said.

"When this man realizes what he has and looks at it long-term, he can be the best player in the NBA one day. If he works at it, nobody can stop him in my mind."

And in O'Neal's mind as well. "If I make the jump shot, nobody in the league will be able to guard me," he said. "Even now I can get to the 1/8 basket 3/8 whenever I want without being able to shoot it consistently."

Family feuds: Lakers coach Phil Jackson, watching Jeff Van Gundy get pummeled stepping between Marcus Camby and Danny Ferry, recalled the famous Doug Collins fight with the Pistons' Rick Mahorn in which assistant John Bach tried to protect then-Bulls coach Collins and wound up with torn tendons in his hand. Jackson said he goes by the adage: "Don't grab anybody who's going to tear your arms off."

Jackson shouldn't joke. That Kobe Bryant-Shaqille O'Neal feud may be worse than reported. After scoring 41 points Friday against Houston, O'Neal broke his weeklong silence to take another jab at Bryant: "All nights -- not most nights, all nights -- I can score. And I've always been an unselfish player. If I get doubled, I set up my teammates."

Bryant, meanwhile, got the first

triple-double of his career last week after Magic Johnson challenged him to try for one in hopes of defusing his feud with O'Neal. But Bryant was having teammates shout out how many assists or rebounds he needed during the game as Michael Jordan did in the late 1980s when he got 10 straight triple-doubles to prove he could do anything Magic could do.

Twan time: Antoine Walker has been getting a lot of the blame for Rick Pitino's failure in Boston, even from broadcaster Howard David.

"Walker is part of the problem," David said. "He cares about winning the scoring championship, not the team championship. He has one thing in mind -- scoring -- and there's an epidemic of this around the NBA."

Added ex-Celtic Danny Ainge: "Walker is a nice player, but if he's expected to take you to the Promised Land, you're in a lot of trouble. I'd explore what I could get for him."

Obviously stung, Walker ran up 47 points against the Kings.

Around the league: The Rockets are saying they won't trade Hakeem Olajuwon, who is saying he wouldn't mind being dealt, presumably to a contender. But any deal is difficult because Olajuwon makes \$16.7 million and Houston won't take on any long-term contracts as it seeks to get salary-cap space. Miami remains in pursuit and Olajuwon is lobbying to be released to try to finish with a contender. ... The staggering Sonics, dealing with Gary Payton behavior issues again, are listening to Toronto, which is offering Corliss Williamson for Brent Barry.

Coach Nate McMillan wants to ease his backcourt overload, but the talk is

if the Sonics miss the playoffs again -- they're barely over .500 since McMillan took over -- they'll look to deal Payton after the season. ... Detlef Schrempf showed up at a Portland practice last week and said he might return later in the season.

Interesting dilemma for Suns owner Jerry Colangelo, who released Diamondbacks pitcher Bobby Chouinard after a domestic-violence arrest and said the club has a zero-tolerance policy on such acts. But Jason Kidd, arrested for domestic violence on Thursday, is the Suns' best player.

Chouinard was a mediocre relief pitcher. ... One of the Spurs' biggest problems has been Tim Duncan's free-throw shooting, about 45 percent. He missed all seven in a loss to the Knicks. ... Glen Rice is suffering from plantar fasciitis and the Knicks say the foot injury could be a lasting problem. ... Tyrone Nesby, who had to be removed by arena security after cursing out coach Leonard Hamilton on the Washington Wizards' bench, complained about not starting the next game.

Just Jazzy: It's wild even with the normally staid Jazz. Last week the team had Olden Polynice suspended after he was convicted of impersonating a police officer for chasing motorists in Salt Lake City and flashing a badge. Greg Ostertag was briefly suspended for skipping practice after a dispute with coach Jerry Sloan and John Starks was suspended for violating team rules regarding travel with the team.

## Siragusa: goose is loose, ready for Donovan-like fun

by William Gildea  
The Washington Post  
January 22, 2001

OWINGS MILLS, Md. - Driving along one day, Artie Donovan pointed to a restaurant in Timonium, Md. "Up there," he said, "is where I used to have my radio show. They must have had 500 people in this place, listening to this goofy radio show. Ordell Braase and I were on it."

"On my radio show, Miller was the sponsor. And I'd say, 'Give me another Miller.' And I'd open a can of Schlitz. The liquor store here, they used to send me up 12 cans of Schlitz on the house so I could drink the Schlitz."

Fast forward 40 years.

Now Baltimore is enjoying the Ravens and their players just as it used to love the Colts of Donovan, Braase et al. Baltimore is in a time warp: This season, fans have gathered in the basements of their row houses on Sundays to root for the Ravens on TV; drive almost anywhere in Baltimore this week and you will find a bar/restaurant planning a Super Bowl Sunday bash when the Ravens will play the New York Giants. There are no second chapters?

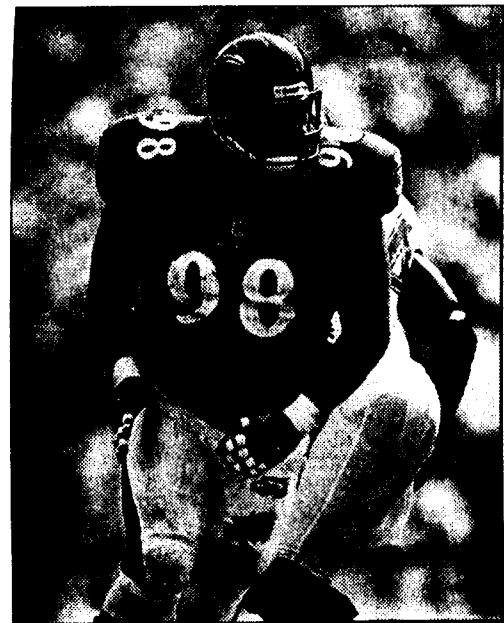
There's even a second Artie Donovan - he would be a reincarnation of Donovan if Donovan weren't still around and planning his own Super Bowl party.

Tony Siragusa is a defensive tackle, as Donovan was; Siragusa is a jolly, round giant; the team prankster, the same as Donovan - Siragusa is 6 feet 3, 340 pounds; Donovan was 6-2 and claims to have played at 280 although "I got up to 335"; the stories of what Siragusa can eat and what Donovan used to eat sound mythic except they are true: Siragusa plays and Donovan played alongside another mammoth tackle, Sam Adams (6-6, 330) and Big Daddy Lipscomb (6-6, 283), respectively - as they said in Baltimore then and are saying again, it would be easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than to run between the tackles; both Siragusa and Donovan grew up following the Giants, Donovan in the Bronx when the Giants played at Yankee Stadium and Siragusa in the north Jersey town of Kenilworth, near Giants Stadium.

Both had sports-mad fathers - Art Donovan Sr. was one of boxing's greatest referees; Pete Siragusa coached his three sons in youth football before he died of a heart attack in 1989 when Tony was playing for the University of Pittsburgh. Both Donovan and Siragusa had religious mothers, loving but strict - Mary Donovan, who used to pack Art Sr.'s little bag with his ref's stuff in it; Rosemarie Siragusa, who ruled Tony and his girlfriend, Kathy Giacalone, could not live together before marriage, which finally took place after a 12-year

courtship.

Siragusa and Donovan have had a laugh together - Siragusa calls him "a good guy, a great guy." But still Siragusa says: "I don't like being compared to people. I am who I am. When I first came to Indianapolis, they were comparing me to the Refrigerator (the Chicago Bears' William Perry). I like



With the Baltimore Ravens, Tony Siragusa's job is to stop opponents' inside running game.

opening one, but not being compared to one."

Comparisons, however, are inescapable with the 33-year-old Siragusa. During a game in October when he was carted off the field and taken to a hospital only to return and play, longtime Colts fans recalled a game from the 1960s when the diminutive Colts flanker, Jimmy Orr, was removed to a hospital during a game and returned.

Orr ran back into the huddle to the roar of the Memorial Stadium crowd and promptly caught a touchdown pass in the right corner of the end zone at the closed end of the stadium - "Orrsville."

Siragusa topped even Orr's return because his injury was frightening. His spinal cord was said to have been "bruised" or "strained." Nevertheless, he hustled back to the stadium from the shock trauma unit and trotted back into the game against Tennessee as fans chanted "Goose." Later

he said he didn't want to miss the fun.

In the Ravens' practice facility locker room, Siragusa has been given two lockers. He has too much stuff for one, like 11 or more pairs of shoes. Adalius Thomas, a rookie defensive end, occupies the locker next door. "He does things that nobody else can do because he's Goose, he has his own style," Thomas said. "He keeps us laughing. But Goose is pretty athletic for a big guy. He has the ability to get loose and maneuver his way into a quarterback."

But that rarely happens. When Siragusa came wide open at the line of scrimmage and fell on Oakland quarterback Rich Gannon in the AFC title game, drawing a fine of \$10,000 by the NFL, it was as if the Raiders had left a door open. Siragusa had no sacks in 1997 and 1998 and none this season.

"He blocks up the middle," Donovan said. "He doesn't get off the line of scrimmage. He takes the run away from

them. But when 340-something falls on you like he did on Gannon, something's got to give and it's not going to be the ground. ... Hey, he's fatter than I was."

Unlike Donovan, a Hall of Famer, Siragusa is a self-made player. In high school, he was a New Jersey state wrestling champion. In college, he kept a boa constrictor and a tarantula as pets. But he went undrafted by the



WASHINGTON POST PHOTO BY MICHAEL ROBINSON-CHAVEZ. Ravens' Tony Siragusa, 340-pound radio show host, jokes around with Keith Mills during a broadcast. He packs the house Thursdays at a Baltimore area bar.

NFL in 1990; he went out for a long walk to decide what to do with the rest of his life. His life was football; he caught on as a free agent with Indianapolis.

Indianapolis gave him a signing bo-

nus of \$1,000 - \$674 after taxes. He spent it all on dinner with friends.

After football, he wants to have his own cooking show on TV - although others say he has a future in the World Wrestling Federation.

Siragusa and Donovan both are renowned as radio hosts. Siragusa works out of a place called the Barn, in Carney, a few beltway exits away from where Donovan did his show. Every Thursday night the Barn is jammed with people dressed in purple for Siragusa's hour of chaos beginning at 7. Last Thursday night's crowd included a woman carrying a stuffed raven and a man with a fake goose.

"Who let the Goose loose? ... Goose, Goose, Goose," went the chants. It was body to body, hundreds stuffed in the bar, with another 50 or so held back at the door, trying to peer in the steamed-up windows.

Siragusa swallowed two crab cakes in what was announced as an unofficial record time of 19 seconds.

Brian Billick, the Ravens' coach, phoned in.

"A lot of people sort of refer to me as a Refrigerator guy," Siragusa told Billick on the air. "You know, the Refrigerator carried the ball in the Super Bowl. You think there's a shot at the Goose maybe carrying the ball on the short yardage?"

The Barn erupted in cheers.

"I'll tell you what. I'll tell you what," Billick tried to reply through the din.

"I'll give everyone Brian's address after he gets off and his home telephone number," Siragusa shouted.

"What do ya think, Bri? Do you think I got a shot?"

"I'll tell you what. I'll make you a deal," Billick said. "If we're up by four touchdowns, okay, we'll work something up for you then."

"If we're up by four touchdowns..."

"You're going in at fullback and we'll give you the ball," Billick promised.

"Oooooooh, ha-haaaaaa, yes," Siragusa screamed. "I'm in. Hey, Trent (Dilfer, the quarterback), I know you're listening. You better score four or I'm gonna kick your butt."

"There's some motivation right there," Billick added.

The crowd screamed approval.

It did again just before he signed off, after he sang, not badly, a Sinatra song; if only Rosemarie and the guys in Jersey could have heard him, but then, they've heard him. Finished, Siragusa cried out: "C'mon, ladies and gentlemen. Let's hear it for me."

## He needs a ring to complete this outfit

by Shav Glick  
Los Angeles Times  
January 23, 2001

David O'Leary, Ferdinand joined Leeds for a record \$26-million transfer fee in November.

•When the New York Giants' 6-foot-7, 300-pound Keith Hamilton stepped off the plane in Tampa, Fla., for the Super Bowl, he was wearing a black suit and black mock turtle neck, and two silver necklaces, one with a diamond cross and the other with a diamond rectangular medallion. He also wore a diamond watch, a diamond bracelet and a diamond earring in his right ear.

"Might as well look good," he told New York Daily News reporters. Asked what the outfit cost, Hamilton said, "About 150." As in \$150,000.

•Trivia time: Which stadium has hosted the most Super Bowls, Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum or the Rose Bowl?

•Sounds logical: Venus Williams, on her motivation to win the Australian Open:

"I make a 24-hour trip just to come. The ticket is pretty expensive. I feel that I deserve to reward myself by at least some type of title."

•Get used to it: New Philadelphia Phillies Manager Larry Bowa has vowed to change a franchise that has learned to accept losing.

"I don't accept losing," Bowa said.

"I deal with losses. I don't accept them. Anybody who accepts losing is in the wrong sport. You start accepting losing and you'll get your brains beat in."

•Bad timing: "Albertson's will tear through Texas Motor Speedway like a Tornado," trumpeted a news release for the Albertson's 300 Busch series race at the track.

Two days earlier, a series of tornadoes had ripped the Dallas-Forth Worth area, killing four people and causing \$500 million in damages.

•Rough sport: Soccer star Rio Ferdinand injured his knee so severely that he might sit out two games in Britain's Premier League. He was hurt sitting with his foot propped up on a coffee table, watching TV.

"He had (his foot) on the table in a certain position for a number of hours and strained a tendon behind his knee," said Leeds spokesman

•Concern: When Whitey Ford, his old New York Yankee teammate, had a recurrence of cancer, Yogi Berra's reaction was to call him up and ask, "You dead yet?"

•Super matchup: Trent Dilfer vs. Kerry Collins. Columnist Tom FitzGerald of the San Francisco Chronicle says, "This should quiet the talk that Jeff Garcia can't take a team to the Super Bowl."

•More FitzGerald: "Prediction: New York will hold Jamal Lewis to 41 yards in 25 carries, with one touchdown. What they'll be calling Jamal after the game: MVP."

•Another view: Mark Kriegel of the New York Daily News has another candidate:

"There can be no debate as to this year's MVP: Ed Garland. That's Ray Lewis' defense attorney."

•Different sport: Tony Siragusa, the Baltimore Ravens' 340-pound-plus tackle, was fined \$10,000 for falling on top of Oakland Raider quarterback Rich Gannon and separating Gannon's shoulder, even though there was no flag thrown on the play.

"I don't understand why I'd be fined," Siragusa said. "This isn't tennis."

•The other side: When Raiders center Barret Robbins was asked if he'd like to retaliate and hurt Siragusa, he said, "What do you do? He's so big, you hurt your neck trying to hit him."

•Trivia answer: Rose Bowl 5, Coliseum 2.

•And finally: Wayne Chrebet, the New York Jets wide receiver, is not that sorry to see the Bill Parcells era end. Asked about what he felt when the former coach was in the general manager's role, he told Paul Needell of the Newark Star-Ledger:

"Fear! You didn't see him too many times, but you knew he was always lurking around one of those corners. You could have one bad play in the game, and believe me, you were going to hear about it."