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FEBRUARY 7, 1999
SPORTSSUNDAY
THE TAMPA TRIBUNE
48 DAYS TO GO

TOM McEWEN
The Morning After

McGriff set, eager to slam kids' cancer

Fred McGriff didn't have the numbers expected of him by the Devil Rays last year. Didn't hit the homers or drive in the runs expected of him.

OK. But, Fred McGriff is about to hit a homer, a grand slam, today and Monday. His golf tournament at the Old Memorial course will raise a dugout full of money for children's cancer research, enough for his four years of sponsoring the celebrity tournament to some $600,000. And the research is paying off.

Included in the success stories were two kids Fred McGriff first met with cancer, who got him involved in research campaign fundraising.

"I visited the pediatric center at St. Joseph's Hospital. The kids with cancer will get you, man. They are so full of faith," said the strapping McGriff, a picture of health. "If I could, I'd do all I could to see kids everywhere are all healthy. You do what you can."

THIS IS ONE fine fellow, Fred McGriff, a Tampa native and Jefferson High graduate whose youth included cooking and sweeping out a Burger King at Himes and Columbus, selling Cokes at old Tampa Stadium and sneaking into Cincinnati Reds' spring games at old Al Lopez Field. He has done only good as an adult, and as a big-league baseball player, except for, in his mind, not fulfilling the big expectations held for him during the Devil Rays' inaugural season.

"I can't tell you how many times driving the 40 minutes home from Tropicana Field I said to myself aloud, 'Fred you sucked. Fred you sucked.' I know I didn't do all that was expected, which was simply everything. I tried so hard. Maybe that was it, trying so hard because of the expectations, because I was playing at home.

"I dug myself a hole, a deep hole. I was climbing out of it when the season ended. We'll do better this year. I will. We will. It's a 25-man roster. We all must play. You know I don't seek headlines, never have, never will. Lowkey personally, that's what I want, and success for the team."

And for cancer research to stop a real enemy.

See, about five years ago, Fred's longtime buddy, Carlton Ball, wanted him to get involved in research funding for cancer in kids.

"We went to the same church," Ball said. "Our families became friends. One day when Fred and I were going to an LSU-Florida game at Gainesville, we started talking about it. I suggested a softball game or home run derby, but Fred said all his pals played golf in the off-season, how about a tournament. He'd get the celebrities, if we decided to do it."

Ball made sure Fred visited the St. Joe's pediatric cancer center, made sure he met the kids of Melissa Helms and Lisa Trammell, who were fighting cancer, so, "the kids will get you," became "The kids got me."

He was hooked and in time the children of Melissa and Lisa were cured, causing the big-smiling Fred McGriff to smile even bigger.

SO WE CAN start there, with three years of Avila hosting the McGriff Tournament, and arriving today when Old Memorial, of which Fred is a founding member, hosts an auction tonight and 18 holes of golf Monday. The field, at $7,500 a foursome, will be full.

The field Monday will include fellow Tampa native Tino Martinez, Larry Rothschild, Jose Canseco, Ken Griffey Jr., Kenny Rogers, Carl Everett, John Smoltz, Denny Neagle, Doug Williams and Trent Diller, a 1-handicapper.

Fred McGriff's single purpose?

"To raise money for kids' cancer research. And we found this way to do it. I didn't think it would evolve to this. But it has."

"I'm blessed. My family is blessed. This is what we can do."

Could say that in a day of so many nerds in sports, here we have McGriff and Friends and they are doing this great thing in his hometown, our town. But, don't have to. It's obvious.

Bruce runs past pain of cancer

ST. PETERSBURG – Running is good therapy for Kim Bruce, who will compete in Saturday's Gasparilla Distance Classic.

By BILL WARD
of The Tampa Tribune

Throughout her six-year battle with bone cancer, doctors have repeatedly told Kim Bruce to back off from running, especially those grueling 26.2-mile races called marathons that can break down even the healthiest immune system.

But the way Bruce sees it, running has been her most indispensable ally against such a formidable opponent. No wonder she has made up her mind to take part in Saturday's Gasparilla Distance Classic 15-kilometer race in Tampa. Even if the fight with cancer has temporarily sidetracked her Olympic dreams, the thought of not running along picturesque Bayshore Boulevard in one of the area's biggest road races is heartbreaking to Bruce.

"Believe me, there's days when I don't move from bed and couldn't run, even if I wanted to," said Bruce, who turns 36 on Monday. "But if I'm able to get out the door, running will always help me feel better. It's sometimes the only time I don't feel the pain."

There has been a lot of pain since she first learned of the bone cancer in her shin in 1992. The first few months of radiation and chemotherapy treatments were so bad her husband, Jim Bumbel, built a bed in the bathroom next to the toilet so Bruce wouldn't have to keep getting up to vomit. Then there's the pain in her bones, an acute ache that bone cancer patients must endure even with heavy medication.

All the while, Bruce was trying to hang on to her running career in her native Michigan, a pursuit that was earning her money and had her on the edge of qualification for the U.S. Olympic women's marathon trials in 1996. She had run fast enough to qualify — 2 hours and 48 minutes at the Detroit Marathon — but it had come before the start of the qualification window. Not long after that personal best effort, she was undergoing treatments and unable to log the training necessary to run that fast.

See BRUCE, Page 4 ▶

BILL WARD/Tribune photo

"Believe me, there's days when I don't move from bed and couldn't run, even if I wanted to."
Kim Bruce

Bolts put out fire after tempers flare

TAMPA – While tempers flare at a staff meeting, rumors persist that the Lightning are for sale.

By ROY CUMMINGS
of The Tampa Tribune

You can't go on losing the way the Lightning have been and expect everyone to keep their cool. Sooner or later, someone is going to say the wrong thing or their words are going to be taken wrong and somebody's going to snap.

That's what happened Friday at the Ice Palace, where Coach Jacques Demers and associate coach Rick Paterson stormed out of a staff meeting after a heated exchange with radio announcer Larry Hirsch.

Hirsch

Hirsch was attempting to explain a self-devised marketing scheme to approximately 50 Lightning staffers, but the meeting turned ugly when coaches took umbrage when Hirsch called the Lightning "a car with four dead tires" and suggested they revert to having two-a-day practices.

According to several staffers who were either present or had knowledge of the meeting, Demers berated Hirsch, saying it was not an announcer's place to offer suggestions on how to prepare a team for a game. Demers then walked out, at which point Paterson reiterated Demers' comments before walking out as well.

Demers and Paterson refrained from commenting on the matter, but Hirsch said the blowup was the result of a misunderstanding.

"Sometimes you can say things that don't come out right," Hirsch said. "My purpose wasn't to say the team wasn't working hard or that the coaches weren't doing the right thing.

See BOLTS, Page 11 ▶

Still in groove

DAYTONA BEACH – Picking up where he left off, defending champion Jeff Gordon takes the pole for the Daytona 500.

By LISA MAGENHEIMER
of The Tampa Tribune

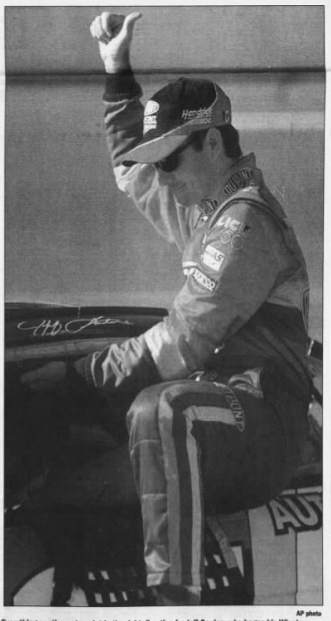
Jeff Gordon opened the 1999 NASCAR Winston Cup season Saturday by checking off yet another accomplishment on his career to-do list.

The three-time series champion circled the 2.5-mile Daytona International Speedway with a fastest lap of 195.067 mph, knocking rookie Tony Stewart down a notch to capture his first pole for the season-opening Daytona 500 on Feb. 14.

While the No. 24 DuPont Chevrolet started in the coveted position at the 1996 Pepsi 400 and was the demanding Daytona 500 in '97, Gordon said Saturday's effort is significant in its own respect.

"I think we've kind of surprised ourselves here, through testing and through this weekend, what we're capable of," Gordon said of his second pole in 13 starts at Daytona. "We've been qualifying for the last five or six years for the Daytona 500 and we've never

See DAYTONA, back page ▶



AP photo

Everything continues to point in the right direction for Jeff Gordon, who began his Winston Cup season on a positive note.

Daytona front row

AP photo

Tony Stewart didn't show any rookie jitters during his qualifying run at Daytona on Saturday.

Jeff Gordon	Chevrolet	195.067 mph
Tony Stewart	Chevrolet	194.599 mph

■ Qualifying Times/ 2
■ Notebook/ Stock page

BUD SHOOTOUT

■ When: Today, 1 p.m.
■ TV: WTSP-Channel 10

AP photo

USF's Shaddrick Jenkins, left, and Artha Reeves gang up on Tulane's Waltari Marsh.

Bulls ride Green Wave to big win

NEW ORLEANS – South Florida plays one of its best basketball games of the season, beating Tulane easily.

By H.A. BRANHAM
of The Tampa Tribune

This city's Mardi Gras celebration has begun, so it was only fitting that the South Florida Bulls danced all over Tulane on Saturday afternoon.

USF's 83-62 victory at Fogelman Arena was a party from the outset, despite the small crowd of approximately 1,000.

▶ Florida falls to Ole Miss Page 9

The Bulls led 17-4 after only eight minutes, and would lead by as many as 27 (73-46). The final 19-point victory margin was the Bulls' second-highest of the season.

With four players scoring in double figures — forward B.B. Waldon led with 20 points — USF (11-9, 4-6 in Conference USA) revived its season and its postseason possibilities by maximizing its main attribute, defense. Early, trapping half-court pressure visibly unnerved the Green Wave, especially freshman point guard Waltari Marsh. Tulane (9-11, 3-8) missed its first seven shots and committed six turnovers, five by Marsh, in the first eight minutes

See USF, Page 9 ▶

SATURDAY SHAKEDOWN

DePaul stuns No. 3 Cincinnati and Alabama stops No. 5 Kentucky on an upsetting Saturday.
— Details, Pages 8-10

inside USF baseball team makes call to arms, Page 6 · Brother act has Brandon ready for playoffs, Page 12

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