

Snyder bids to own Redskins

Businessman needs blessing from league to take over team

WASHINGTON (AP) — Daniel Snyder needs 24 votes to become the owner of the Washington Redskins for a record \$800 million. He launched his appeal with a promise heard often on the campaign trail: job security for all.

Immediately after an agreement was announced Monday for Snyder's group to buy the team and Jack Kent Cooke Stadium for the record price for any sports franchise, the 34-year-old communications executive and lifelong Redskins fan promised to retain coach Norv Turner and general manager Charley Casserly, along with every other Redskins employee.

"Football will be a new business for me," Snyder said. "And I am going to need experienced football personnel to run the team."

The proposed sale will be examined by the NFL's finance committee and will be submitted before league owners at their May 25-26 meetings in Atlanta. If approved, Snyder will become the youngest majority owner in the league.

The promise to keep Turner and Casserly is one of the reasons the trustees of Cooke's estate expect three-fourths of the 31 NFL owners to approve this deal when so many were opposed to a previous \$800 million bid that included Snyder but was headed by New York real estate magnate Howard Milstein.

Snyder is putting more than \$100 million cash behind his bid, whereas Milstein's financing was highly leveraged. Snyder also was well-received when he appeared before the NFL owners in Phoenix in March, while Milstein's contentious history as part-owner of the NHL's New York Islanders made many NFL owners uncomfortable.

Furthermore, Snyder appears to have the support of league officials, including commissioner Paul Tagliabue, personally involved in the negotiations.

"The league officials worked closely with the Snyder group so that its proposed financing would meet league requirements," said a league source, speaking on condition of anonymity. "That financial structure satisfied league staff on its initial review."

Milstein pulled out of the process at a league meeting April 7 when it became obvious he would not have the 24 votes needed for approval. When Milstein and Snyder were partners, Snyder strongly hinted at major personnel changes if they emerged with the team.

Now his theme is stability. "I am writing to assure you that if I am approved, I intend to retain all of you," Snyder wrote in a letter to all employees at Redskin Park, the team's practice facility in Virginia. He added that he believes he will be able to show NFL owners he is "a worthy applicant" to buy the Redskins.

Neither Turner nor Casserly would comment on the development.

Snyder's minority partners include family members and New York Daily News publishers Mort Zuckerman and Fred Drasner. Zuckerman also publishes U.S. News & World Report. The purchase price would shatter the \$530 million paid by Alfred Lerner last year for the expansion Cleveland Browns.

Cooke, who became the Redskins majority owner in 1974, died April 6, 1997. Rather than leave the team to his son John, he instructed that the team and stadium be sold and the money used to establish a scholarship fund.

John Kent Cooke was among sev-

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DANIEL SNYDER
Prospective Washington owner

eral bidders, but he could not match the \$800 million offer made by the Milstein-Snyder group in January. Cooke made a new offer this month after Milstein withdrew, but once again it was substantially less than \$800 million. He took the offer off the table last week when it became apparent the trustees were negotiating only with Snyder.

"The executors and their representatives stated that accepting the highest bid was their fiduciary obligation required to fulfill my father's wishes and to comply with the law," Cooke said Monday. "None of these claims is correct, and the result of this decision is a loss of a family business and a personal tragedy to me."

"Some have speculated that my father did not want his family to continue with the Redskins. This, too, is false. He simply did not think it was possible to do so in the early 1990s, with the downturn of the economy and a downturn with our family businesses and with the ever-present demands of inheritance taxes."

In a statement, the trustees said they chose Snyder over Cooke because Snyder's offer would mean more money for scholarships and that Cooke's would require special waivers of NFL rules because of its financial structure.

Snyder is chief executive of Snyder Communications in Bethesda, Md., a marketing firm that employs 8,000 people in 80 locations in 12 countries. It is particularly big in marketing of pharmaceuticals and long-distance telephone services.

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BCS ponders using new poll

PHOENIX (AP) — Bowl Championship Series officials meeting this week in Phoenix discussed the possibility of adding one or more polls in determining the nation's best football teams.

The organization is made up of the Fiesta, Sugar, Orange and Rose bowls in which the nation's two top-ranked teams meet on a rotating basis.

Tennessee beat Florida State 23-16 in the Fiesta Bowl in January to win the national championship. Those teams were rated the top two by a computerized formula the series used.

They also were ranked best in polls by The Associated Press and USA Today/ESPN.

The three other major bowls are obligated to take the champion of certain conferences, but are free to pick at-large teams for opponents, subject to certain criteria.

Critics said with three polls used in the formula, one might have undue influence on the outcome and suggested that at least a fourth be added.

Additionally, critics objected that some highly ranked teams were bypassed last season. Some said the bowls should be forced to select teams based on rankings and that conference champions also should have to have a certain ranking in order to be eligible.

However, the bowls and ABC, which broadcasts those games, say

they want freedom to pick teams that will sell tickets and generate television ratings.

The officials reached no decision during the current meeting but are expected to take up the matter again when they meet in July.

"It's a work in progress," said Paul Hoolahan, executive director of the Sugar Bowl. "People have been toying with different aspects of how they might improve this formula."

Tom Hansen, Pac-10 Conference commissioner, agreed to an extent.

"You keep chasing your tail in a circle is what you do," Hansen said. "We will continue to work on all of this, but we can't make everyone happy."

Druckenmiller charged with rape

■ The former Hokie QB is accused of raping a Virginia Tech undergrad.

CHRISTIANSBURG, Va. (AP) — San Francisco 49ers quarterback Jim Druckenmiller has been charged with raping a Virginia Tech student while at the college he attended, a prosecutor said Friday.

The woman and a detective testified before a grand jury on April 13, and the indictment was unsealed Friday by the order of a Montgomery County judge.

Druckenmiller, the team's third-string quarterback, is expected to turn himself in to police before his initial court appearance Wednesday, Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney Peggy Frank said.

The alleged rape happened in a house on March 4 between 3 a.m. and 4 a.m., Frank said, and the woman went to the hospital later that morning. She declined to disclose other details.

The woman asked that the indictment be sealed until the case came up in open court, the prosecutor said.

"She's got a few more weeks of school, and she was concerned about getting through that with some sort of

privacy," Frank said.

Under NFL policy, any player charged with a violent crime is required to undergo immediate clinical evaluation and counseling. Conviction or admitting to a violent crime could bring suspension without pay by the league or a fine.

Judge Ray Grubbs ordered the indictment unsealed after The Roanoke (Va.) Times filed a motion arguing that the information should be made public.

The one-paragraph indictment provides no details of the crime, saying only that Druckenmiller had sex with the woman "against her will, by force or through the use of physical helplessness."

The prosecutor declined to say whether alcohol was involved in the woman's condition of helplessness. She said Druckenmiller is not accused of using threats or intimidation to have sex with the woman.

If convicted of rape, Druckenmiller could face five years to life in prison.

Citing advice from his lawyer, Druckenmiller declined to discuss the indictment.

"I feel very confident I'll be available for this season. I do believe justice will prevail," he said during the

opening day of the 49ers mini-camp.

San Francisco Coach Steve Mariucci met Thursday with Druckenmiller about the charges.

"We've discussed it briefly," Mariucci said. "Neither one of us can really say much of anything at all regarding this issue, but he explained his side to me and, as you know, there are two sides to every story. Hopefully, this will all be resolved soon."

Kirk Reynolds, a spokesman for the 49ers, said Druckenmiller and his teammates underwent physical examinations Thursday at the 49ers' headquarters in Santa Clara, Calif.

Druckenmiller, a strong-armed passer, was the 49ers' top pick and the 26th selection overall in the 1997 draft as the top backup to starter Steve Young. Coach Steve Mariucci called him the team's quarterback of the future, but he has played little.

As a rookie in 1997, Druckenmiller played in four games, one as a starter, and completed 21 of 52 passes for 239 yards and one touchdown. But he also threw three interceptions, two inside the opponent's 20-yard line.

Last season, he did not throw a pass, and Ty Detmer became the No. 2 quarterback behind Young.

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