

# SPORTS BOARD

SPORTS, GAMING, HORSERACING

May 5, 1988



## SPORTLIGHT

By R.L. Greene

NEW YORK—What does Jesse want?

It's a question that television commentators and newspaper and magazine columnists have repeatedly been asking lately. It's also a question that tells more about the ones who are doing the asking than it does the one to whom the question is directed.

What does Jesse want?

It's a question that was never asked until Jesse Jackson was perceived as someone who could win the Democratic presidential nominee. As long as the political pundits thought Jackson was a long-shot outsider, no one cared what, if anything, Jesse wanted.

So what does this have to do with sports? Everything.

A.B. "Happy" Chandler, the former baseball commissioner and ex-governor of Kentucky, became the latest sports figure to open his mouth long enough to change feet. He follows in the headlines behind Al Campanis and Jimmy "The Greek" Snyder, both of whom also have suffered from foot-in-the-mouth disease.

Yet it could be a sign like, "What does Jesse want?"

After Campanis told a national television audience "I truly believe that (Blacks) may not have some of the necessities to be, let's say, a field manager, or perhaps a general manager," he

resigned under pressure as general manager of the Los Angeles Dodgers.

The Greek's stint as commentator and prognosticator for CBS Television ended abruptly when he said, essentially, that if Blacks became coaches, given their predominance on the playing fields and courts, there would be no jobs left for whites.

Then, almost a year after Campanis' remarks, Chandler, as a trustee for the University of Kentucky, said in a university committee meeting that he was against withdrawing university funds from investments in South Africa because of what happened in Zimbabwe.

"You know Zimbabwe is all nigger now," Chandler said. "There aren't any whites."

The Kentucky football team walked out of spring practice and said they wouldn't return until Chandler was no longer a university trustee. Chandler, who has been quick to take credit for helping break baseball's color line when Jackie Robinson was signed by the Brooklyn Dodgers, later "clarified" his statement by saying he grew up in a town that was half Black and "they didn't mind when we called them niggers."

Sports has finally reached that point where whites are so comfortable with the Blacks surrounding them that they have let their guard down, saying what really is

on their mind without first thinking, weighing their words, then cultivating an answer that would be acceptable to all who hear.

It might seem strange, but the words of Campanis, Snyder and Chandler may be sports' version of "What does Jesse want?"

There are still many barriers for Blacks in sports. There have been only three Black baseball managers in the major leagues, none currently, and no Black head coach in the National Football League since the early 1920s.

But the ill-timed comments of three men have kept the spotlight focused on the lack of Blacks in high management positions in sports, something we can be thankful for. Without their loose lips, the problem probably would never have surfaced, the complaints of the Blacks being denied a chance to advance in their chosen professions being passed off as sour grapes.

Campanis is still reeling from his comments, saying public reaction to his remarks "was a shock to me. It was hard to take because I was made out to be a racist, a bigot."

The former Dodger executive told USA Today that what he intended to say on television a year ago was that Blacks lacked the experience, especially the opportunities at the minor league levels, to prepare for roles in management at the

## CAESARS HAILS OLYMPIC ICE SKATING CHAMPIONS FOR OUTDOOR EXHIBITION MAY 30

Caesars palace is preparing for icy conditions in the Las Vegas desert on Monday, May 30, when a

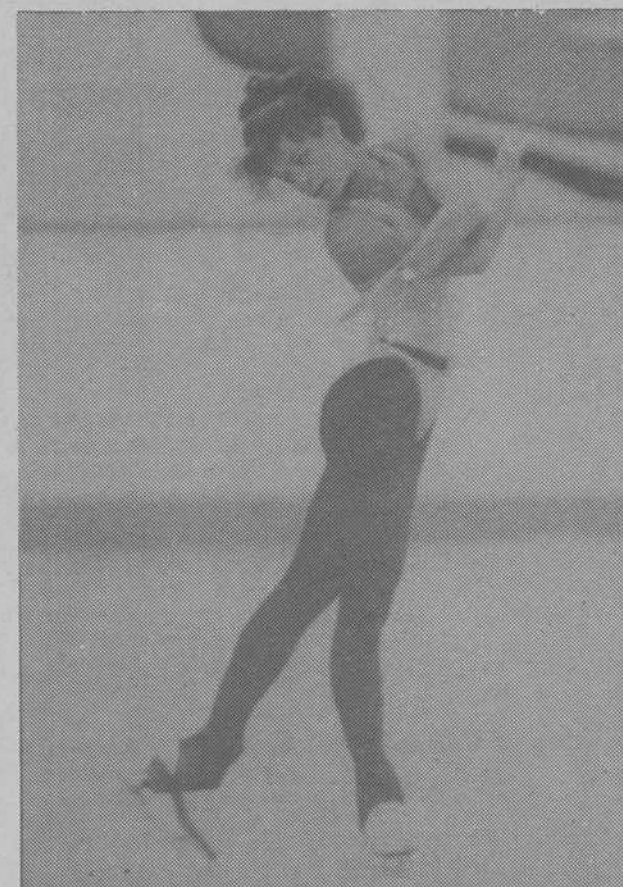
big league level. That, he said, is what he meant by "necessities."

According to baseball Commissioner Peter Ueberroth, three Blacks were offered and rejected manager's jobs. "They had good reasons to turn them down, and I don't criticize that," Ueberroth said in a national television show. He didn't say and wasn't asked who the three Blacks were, their reasons for turning down the jobs or where the jobs were.

Meanwhile, Sybil Smith of Fresno, Calif., has proven Campanis wrong in another one of his year-old remarks. He said Blacks lacked bouyancy and, consequently, have never produced a good swimmer.

Miss Smith, a senior at Boston University, became the school's first All-American swimmer after finishing sixth in the 100-yard backstroke at the NCAA championships. She had an 80-0 career dual-meet record and holds the school mark in the 100 backstroke with a time has to answer of 56.02 seconds.

What does Jesse want, indeed!



DEBI THOMAS: Warms up for women's figure skating event.

flurry of the world's top ice skaters gather in the resort's outdoor arena, as Caesars Palace presents the 1988 Olympic Champions On Ice.

Spotlighting the talents of some 25 internationally known amateur figure skaters, the show's roster of athletes includes Olympic gold medalists, Brian Boitano of the United States, East Germany's Katarina Witt, and popular Russian pair skaters Ekatarina Gordeeva and Sergei Grinkov. Silver medalists Elizabeth Manley and Brian Orser of Canada are also listed, along with U.S. Bronze medalist Debi Thomas and American duo Jill Watson and Peter Opgard.

The program of singles exhibitions, pair skating and ice dancing is part of a six-week coast-to-coast tour benefitting the U.S. and Canadian Figure Skating Associations. Slated to begin May 1, the tour has already sold out in major West Coast venues, including the Los Angeles Forum, the San Francisco Cow Palace and the Seattle Coliseum.

Tickets for the 8 p.m. outdoor ice skating exhibition at Caesars Palace are priced at \$17.50, \$20, \$30 and \$35, with special VIP box seats available at \$100 per person. Phone 702-731-7865 or 800-634-6698 for tickets and information.

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