

Several athletes bending rules of etiquette

In previous years, in two major professional sports, tennis and golf, the participants were not usually seen and heard making outlandish demonstrations intended to taunt and to disturb the performance of their opponents.

Things have changed lately, and a growing problem needs to be addressed by the tournament associations.

In better times, tennis players like Chris Evert, Billie Jean King, Margaret Court and Martina

Navratilova, played many brilliant matches with hardly a sound being uttered, and those in attendance were just as quiet.

The sound of the ball hitting the racket was all that was heard.

The same courtesy was also extended to opponents in golf matches, like those played by Arnold Palmer, Sam Snead, Ben Hogan, Gene

Sarazen, Byron Nelson and Calvin Peete.

Because these sports were, in the beginning, played by those considered in the upper income and social brackets of their respective communities, manners and etiquette seemed to go along with the competition.

But two sports, tennis and golf, have descended to the include those of the lower rungs of society allowing everyone an opportunity to make a living, but not to ascend the throne of respectability and better manners.

On the way up to the top, some of today's current athletes have put etiquette aside and sometimes resort to certain acts that could hardly be interpreted as fair gamesmanship; some of their practices could even be called something worst — degrading.

Gamesmanship has really taken a new turn in the past



SPORTS PACE

By Huel Washington

two years since the entry of a group of women from the old Soviet Union who have come to the Women's Tennis Association's professional tour. There were 15 in this year's Australian Open.

Until 1990, when Monica Seles appeared on the tour, the players only occasionally "grunted" while hitting a shot.

A number of players complained about Seles, whose grunt utterances were heard as she won her way to championships in the 1990 French Open and the 1991 Australian and 1991 United States Opens, among her nine grand slam titles.

The association was sty-

mied at first, and after a while, she was asked to limit her grunting to a minimum. There were no fines imposed, just warnings from the umpires in the chair.

The males, especially those like the late Arthur Ashe, for the most part, played politely in almost eerie silence — except for an occasional outburst at the umpire or linesman by John McEnroe and Jimmy Connors over a line call.

But last year, the Russian women, with their grunts and gestures, won Wimbledon, the French, and U.S. Opens — grunting and groaning on every shot.

Maria Sharapova, a 17-year-old from the Ukraine, not only won Wimbledon, but took home a million dollar check for winning the final tour championship in Los Angeles last year defeating Serena Williams. That's a lot of grunting.

Only a spectacular comeback in the 2005 Australian Open last week by Williams kept Sharapova and her grunts out of the final.

While broadcasting the Australian Open for the first time, Hall of Fame announcer Dick Enberg said the grunts of Serena and Maria sounded like a "torture chamber" instead of a tennis match. Williams decided, at times, to match Sharapova in grunting.

But for the most part, Williams depended on her shot making skills to win the points and the match.

Although Williams is an American citizen, and Enberg, the pride of Hillsdale, Michigan, is also American, there were times during this particular match that he and broadcast partner Mary Carillo seemed to be pulling for the Russian.

"When she doesn't grunt," Enberg said of Sharapova, "she doesn't win the points." When Sharapova stopped screaming, I thought, am I missing something? C'mon.

Several years ago, on the last hole the Ryder Cup, when a putt placed the United States ahead to win the four day tournament between Europe and the U.S., the Americans ran onto the green joyously and embarrassed their opponents. The Europeans tend to take offense to this kind of jubilation in times of victories.

When Europe won the matches this year, the winners were gracious; demonstrating to the Americans that

there is such a thing as class that accompanies winning.

No one likes to lose. But as Ashe said, "You have to go into a facade when you are on the court. You have to suppress many of the emotions that you feel while trying to win the match."

As the captain of the U.S. Davis Cup team, Ashe was able to curtail many of the emotional outbursts that John McEnroe seemed not to be capable of suppressing during the match.

Lleyton Hewitt, the runner-up to Marat Safin in the Australian Open, has decided that if the Russian women can do it, so can he.

And he does, louder and louder.

Unfortunately, the predominant African-American male on the tour, Hewitt, who has also gone in for in-your-face pumps and aggressive salutes, has become more and more of an irritating player than a real tactician, according to James Blake. Hewitt yells after an opponent's error instead of after superb shots are made. To some, like Blake, that is disturbing.

Juan Ignacio Chela of Argentina was so disturbed by Hewitt's actions during their match that Chela drew a \$2,000 fine for spitting at him during a changeover.

Some people think tennis needs a boost to get people out to see the matches. But with a purse of \$14.5 million at the Australian Open, the fans already have a reason to come out and see the best in the world. Let's limit the theatrics, and play tennis, ladies and gentlemen.

Was that a fist pump by Tiger Woods when he won his first tournament last week? Naughty, naughty.

Emotions are bound to get out of hand when the winner forgets the other fellow.

McNabb third Black QB to play in Super Bowl

By Donald Hunt

Special to Sentinel-Voice

PHILADELPHIA (NNPA) — When Donovan McNabb helped the Philadelphia Eagles overcome the albatross of losing three consecutive NFC championships by defeating the Atlanta Falcons, he immediately catapulted himself into the national spotlight.

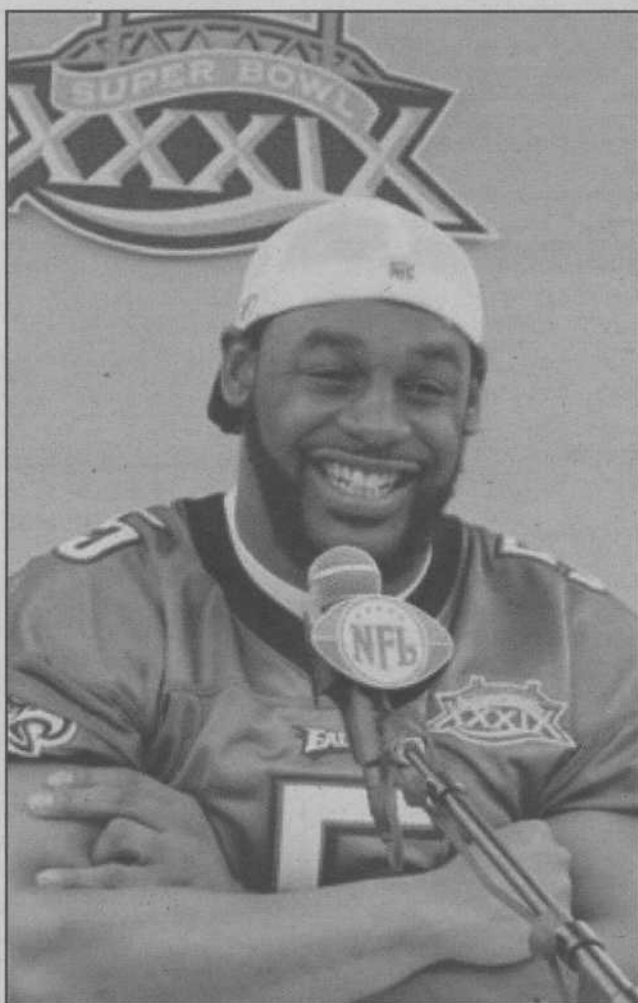
McNabb will be just the third Black quarterback in 39 years to play in a Super Bowl game as a starter.

Even before Sunday's title game, the match-up between McNabb and Atlanta's Black quarterback, Michael Vick, meant the NFL was definitely going to have an African-American quarterback in Super Bowl XXXIX in Jacksonville, Fla., on Feb. 6.

McNabb will have the honor of taking his place in history. With the Super Bowl being played in February, this accomplishment is quite noteworthy for Black History Month.

McNabb saw this moment coming last week, and he was well aware of the progress Blacks have made at this position.

"This is an opportunity for an African-American quarterback to represent in the Super Bowl," he said. "We've kind of stepped over the negative steppingstone of people saying an African-American quarterback can't lead his



Philadelphia Eagles QB Donovan McNabb talks with reporters at Alltel Stadium in Jacksonville, Fla., on Tuesday.

team to a Super Bowl. It hasn't happened since Steve McNair."

McNair led the Tennessee Titans to Super Bowl XXXIV against the St. Louis Rams on Jan. 30, 2000. Tennessee came within an eyelash of defeating the Rams. McNair completed 22 of 36 passes for 214 yards and ran for an-

other 74 yards in his only Super Bowl appearance. He hit wide receiver Kevin Dyson with a 10-yard pass, but Dyson was tackled just inches away from a touchdown that could have won the game as time expired, giving the Rams a 23-16 victory.

A year ago, McNair had his best season, sharing co-

MVP honors with Indianapolis Colts star Peyton Manning. The Titans quarterback missed most of this season with a bruised sternum.

Doug Williams was the first Black quarterback to win the Super Bowl. Williams had the greatest day of his pro career when he led the Redskins to a 42-10 romp over the Denver Broncos in Super Bowl XXII on Jan. 31, 1988. He set four Super Bowl records — most yards passing in a game (340), most yards in a quarter (228), most TD passes (4) and longest completion (80 yards).

There are 90 quarterbacks in the National Football League. Sixteen of them are Black. The starting quarterbacks who are African-American include: Daunte Culpepper (Minnesota Vikings), Aaron Brooks (New Orleans Saints), Bryon Leftwich (Jacksonville Jaguars), Vick, McNabb and McNair.

The Jaguars have three Black quarterbacks — Leftwich, David Garrard and Quinn Gray. This season was the first time in NFL history that all of one team's quarterbacks were Black.

And now, with McNabb going to the Super Bowl, this has been a historic season for African-American quarterbacks.

Donald Hunt writes for the Philadelphia Tribune.

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