



AP PHOTO

Broadcaster Curt Gowdy, seen in this 1978 file photo, died Monday at age 86. He died at his winter home in Palm Beach, Fla., after battling leukemia.

Versatile Gowdy dies at 86

He called it all, from baseball to Olympics

By HOWARD ULMAN
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

FORT MYERS, Fla.

He was the smooth voice of sports history, a welcome companion who brought listeners Ted Williams' final home run, the first Super Bowl and dozens of other dramatic moments.

Curt Gowdy, who died Monday, told generations of Americans about the games they loved from the broadcast booths at 13 World Series, 16 All-Star baseball games, numerous Rose Bowls and the 1976 Montreal Olympics.

"He was the first superstar of sports television because he did all of the big events," veteran NBC broadcaster Dick Enberg said. "He's the last of the dinosaurs. No one will ever be the voice of so many major events at the same time ever again."

Gowdy died of leukemia at his winter home in Palm Beach, Fla. He was 86.

It all started as he sat on a box, with his microphone on another box, for his first play-by-play, a six-man football game in Cheyenne,

"No one will ever be the voice of so many major events at the same time ever again."

Dick Enberg
NBC broadcaster on the death of Curt Gowdy

Wyo., in subzero temperatures in 1944.

Before cable television spawned a new breed of announcer, those who use shouts and hip phrases instead of subdued sounds and straightforward description, Gowdy was a star who just wanted to tell a story, a well-liked man who stayed that way as his fame grew.

He brought a warm feel to the broadcast booth, his commentary full of good humor and enthusiasm.

He once said, "I tried to pretend that I was sitting in the stands with a buddy watching the game, poking him in the ribs when something exciting happened. I never took myself too seriously. An announcer is only as good as yesterday's performance."

In his 1960 essay "Hub Fans Bid Kid Adieu," published in The New Yorker, John Updike said Gowdy sounded like "everybody's brother-in-law."

Gowdy spent 15 years as the Boston Red Sox main play-by-play announcer from 1951-65. He left the Red Sox for a 10-year stint as the baseball broadcaster on NBC's "Game of the Week" through 1975.

He also covered many Super Bowls and NCAA basketball Final Fours.

"He's certainly the greatest play-by-play person up to this point that NBC sports has ever had," NBC Universal Sports chairman Dick Ebersol said from the Turin Olympics. "He literally carried the sports division at NBC for so many years on his back. ... He was a remarkable talent, and he was an even more remarkable human being."

An avid outdoorsman, the native of Green River, Wyo., also was host of the "American Sportsman" series on ABC from the early 1960s into the 1980s.

On that program, former presidents Jimmy Carter and George H.W. Bush appeared in fishing segments. Others guests on the fishing and hunting show were Williams, quarterback Terry Bradshaw, singer Bing Crosby, actor Andy Griffith and comedian Jonathan Winters.

George Bodenheimer, president of ESPN and ABC Sports, said Gowdy's contributions were "indelible." He said Gowdy was a "pioneer in our business and set the highest of standards for everyone in sports broadcasting."

• Honor

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE B1)

Whiteland varsity volleyball coach Debbie Gill received the WIN Award, honoring her for her commitment, knowledge and organization of women in sports. And former Center Grove athletic administrator Carol Tumey was awarded the IHSA Sportsmanship award.

As for Rakow, 17, she's beginning to overcome the debilitating disease.

Chronic pancreatitis is a long-standing condition of inflammation of the pancreas, said Steven Steiner, a pediatric gastroenterologist at Riley Hospital for Children. He treats Rakow.

Although there are several possible causes for the disease, he said, most cases don't have an identifiable cause.

Steiner doesn't know the cause of Rakow's illness, and there is no cure. But thanks to her latest surgery and pain medication, she is feeling better than ever.

In the summer of 2004, Rakow underwent her sixth surgery on her pancreas and had part of it removed. The surgery was performed by Riley surgeon Thomas Rouse.

He said the procedure is normally done for adults between ages 50 and 80 who have cancer of the pancreas.

But because of Rakow's circumstance and other surgeries not alleviating the problem, Rouse decided to perform the more extensive operation despite her young age.

"Overall, it has helped," said Rouse, who's been Rakow's surgeon since she was 5. "She has had less episodes of pancreatitis since it was done."

Rakow's health also has improved since she started taking pancreatic enzyme pills, which aid in digestion.

Her mother, Suzy Rakow, is just thankful that her daughter is still alive.

When Rakow was born, she had a cyst the size of a baseball attached to her gall bladder and liver. Doctors removed her gall bladder and the cyst.

But as she got older, she continued to have pancreatic attacks and stomach problems.

"We didn't think she'd ever live this long," Suzy Rakow said. "She'd had so many problems. Parents dream to see their child overcome all obstacles and succeed in life and become a normal person."

Rakow was nominated for the award by Gill, who said the award described Rakow perfectly.

"She's dealt with a lot of physical difficulties with her illness throughout her entire life and still managed to excel academically and athletically," Gill said. "A lot

of kids, if they have those kinds of health conditions, think, 'I better just hang it up.'

"But she never did."

As for her own award, Gill was pleased that Whiteland administrators nominated her.

"It means I was noticed by my superiors that I was doing my job," she said. "I guess it means I've done my job well, as a teacher and a coach."

Olympic gymnast Nadia Comaneci was the guest speaker at the luncheon. And Rakow couldn't have been more thrilled.

Rakow is a fan of Comaneci and the Olympics. She's read books and watched documentaries about the gymnast's life and career.

"I've always been into Nadia and (former U.S. Olympic gymnast) Kerri Strug," Rakow said. "I'm huge fans of those two. To listen to (Comaneci) speak was really cool."

Rakow vows to continue pursuing her dreams and goals despite her illness. If anything, her condition has strengthened her determination. And she was touched to win the award.

"The whole experience was humbling," Rakow said. "This has taught me that I've had health problems that not many people do have. I've gotten more confidence in myself in what I do."

"I push myself harder. It helps motivate you, too, to overcome something like that."

• Sports

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE B1)

and golf during the 1980s. Tumey also coached volleyball, basketball, cross country, track and cheerleading. She was named national girls track coach of the year in 1980.

But her goal was to gain recognition for the high school and the girls athletics program.

"I took it upon myself, with principal Melvin Vandermeer, to develop programs," said Tumey, who now works part time at Franklin College supervising teachers and interns. "The girls had an interest, and it just all fell in place."

Former Center Grove High School athletic director John Clements remembers teaching physical education with Tumey. Clements, who was athletic director from 1971-96, and Tumey taught classes in the summertime.

He admired her enthusiasm for girls sports and thought it reflected onto her students.

"She was a good physical education teacher," Clements said. "She was pretty dedicated to what she was doing. She had a number of girls participating. Obviously, her personality matched up well with the girls, or she wouldn't have had so many girls participating."

Tumey is humble about receiving the award. She only wanted to develop the Trojans' girls athletics program and give girls more opportunities to succeed in sports, she said.

"My goal was to have the Center Grove girls athletics program recognized as one of the best in the state," she said. "It's very heartwarming to see girls excel and get recognition. In turn, with that recognition comes some opportunities to participate collegiately."

• Cheater

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE B1)

But his rivals instantly wondered if the win was indeed legitimate and if the car wasn't rigged in a way NASCAR's inspectors couldn't discover.

There's no doubt it has spoiled what should be the crowning moment of Johnson's career.

"We're not excited to be in this position and have this negative thing around us right now," he said Monday as his car was inducted into the museum at Daytona International Speedway.

He'll be hard-pressed to get it, and that's unfortunate for Johnson.

Johnson is not the cheater in this situation. His only crime was trusting his crew chief to prepare him a car that was capable of competing in the Daytona 500 while meeting NASCAR's approval.

He doesn't ask questions, doesn't inquire about setups, shocks or spoilers. His only job is to climb into the car and go as fast as he can.

So when Knaus or any other crew chief tries to sneak something through tech — and make no mistake about, most in the garage are in constant search of a way to get something past NASCAR — the driver is the last one to know.

Still, Johnson will probably have to defend this win and his team for a long time to come.

NASCAR will likely lengthen Knaus' suspension this week and probably dock Johnson points that will knock him out of the lead. The team will not appeal and will not complain. They'll accept it and go on to next week's race in California, trying as best as they can to prove they are legitimate.

Jenna Fryer covers NASCAR for The Associated Press. Send comments to jfryer@ap.org.

MONDAY'S ROUNDUP

Coach in psychiatric hospital; raids uncover doping equipment

An Austrian ski coach who bolted from the Winter Games following a surprise anti-doping raid wound up in a psychiatric hospital, the latest stop on his bizarre flight from Turin, where authorities were still analyzing 100 syringes and other material seized from athletes' housing.

Authorities took Walter Mayer into custody Sunday after he crashed his car into a police blockade 15 miles inside Austria's border with Italy. Police later took him to a psychiatric facility, Austria's ski federation president Peter Schroecksnadel said.

Mayer was banished from the Olympics over allegations of blood doping at the 2002 Olympics in Salt Lake City. He resurfaced with the team in Turin, triggering police raids late Saturday, the first-ever doping sweep by police on athletes competing at the games.

Against the backdrop of the most stringent drug controls in Winter Games history, local authorities seized the syringes and 30 packages of antidepressants and asthma medication, Italian prosecutor Raffaele Guariniello told Austrian television. One Austrian athlete threw a bag out of a window containing needles and medicines as police swarmed the house, the Italian news agency ANSA reported.

U.S. skaters finally get medal, but Russians continue to dominate

At last, a figure skating medal for the United States, in ice dancing, of all things. And yet another Olympic gold for Russia.

Tanith Belbin and partner Ben Agosto snapped the U.S. medals drought in figure skating with a silver. They were behind Tatiana Navka and Roman Kostomarov, who gave Russia a gold medal hat trick: pairs, men's and dance.

No nation has swept the four skating events in one games, and Russian Irina Slutskaya is favored in the women's competition.

"I am extremely proud that we've been able to achieve this for our country," said the Canadian-born Belbin, who became a U.S. citizen on Dec. 31. Belbin and Agosto won the first dance medal for the United States since a bronze in 1976, and only the second medal of any kind. It also is the only medal for American figure skaters at these Olympics.

Dorfmeister golden again; Croatian earns sixth medal

Austrian Michaela Dorfmeister won her second gold medal of the Turin Games, and Janica Kostelic of Croatia became the most decorated woman in Olympic Alpine skiing his-

tory with a silver in the super-G.

Dorfmeister, the final of the top 30 skiers to race, overcame a course softened by the sun to edge Kostelic by .27 seconds in a time of 1 minute, 32.47 seconds.

The 24-year-old Kostelic's silver was her sixth Olympic medal (four of them gold) and her second these games. No other female Alpine skier has more than five.

Canadians win hockey gold; U.S. women settle for third place

No more Swedish surprises. Hockey is Canada's game, and a 4-1 gold-medal win against Sweden was a fitting finale for the most dominant women's team ever assembled.

The Canadians scored with pinpoint passes and dazzling pirouettes, soft wrist shots and firm tip-ins.

The victory wasn't the rematch with the United States everyone expected, but Canada still sent Sweden home with the same thrashing it had planned for its American arch rivals.

Behind Kim Martin, its 19-year-old wall of a goalie, Sweden managed a 3-2 semifinal shootout win against the United States on Friday.

In the bronze-medal game, the U.S. women hustled to loose pucks, finished their checks and showcased their superior talent, jumping to an early lead and dominating Finland in a 4-0 win.

Katie King scored two of her three goals in the first period to give the Americans a three-goal lead.

Canada gets into medal round with curling win against Americans

Canada clinched the final spot in the medal round with a late rally that secured a 6-3 win against the United States in men's curling.

The Americans (6-3) had already wrapped up a spot in the medal round. They will face Canada (6-3) again Wednesday in one semifinal. Finland (7-2) is to play Britain (6-3) in the other.

NBC sports chairman: Olympics will make profit despite ratings

NBC Universal will make a profit of between \$50 million and \$75 million from the Winter Olympics in Italy despite its ratings troubles, network sports Chairman Dick Ebersol said.

The company hasn't discussed offering free commercial time to its advertisers, the chief way the television business compensates customers for ratings that don't meet expectations, Ebersol said.

NBC promised its advertisers that the Turin Games would deliver a prime-time rating of between 12 and 14 (each rating point represents 1,102,000 households). Through Sunday night's telecast, the average rating stood at 12.1.

• Cohen

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perfect. It's about enjoying the process."

It all begins tonight with the short program. The free skate is Thursday.

Cohen didn't do much during practice, sticking to some footwork and spins and consulting with coach John Nicks. That was in direct contrast to the energized workouts by Japan's Fumie Suguri, Shizuka Arakawa and Miki Ando.

Ando, the only woman to land a quadruple jump in competition, worked on a quad salchow. Arakawa landed a few triples, did some stunning spirals, and her run-through was almost medal quality. Suguri was smooth in landing everything during her short-program practice.

"I hope that my program will really match the Olympic slogan of 'Passion lives here,'" Suguri said. "I would like to be able to express that."

Like Cohen, Slutskaya spent much of her session marking sight lines for her jumps and spins. But unlike Cohen, who spent a few minutes before a packed-in media throng in the mixed zone, the world champion declined interviews.

"Maybe somebody is thinking I'm a favorite, but it's the Olympic Games, and you never know who can win because it's a competition," Slutskaya said earlier this month. She was the 2002 Olympic silver medalist behind Sarah Hughes, Emily Hughes' older sister.

"I don't hear this, and I don't talk with people who always tell me, 'You will be first,' because it will be hard to hear. I just want to do my best."

Kostner, the world bronze medalist and perhaps the skater feeling the most pressure, also didn't do interviews.

The biggest adjustment for the 16-year-old Meissner has been living in an apartment and learning how to maneuver a hand-held shower.

"It's hard. It's a lot different from my regular home," she said, laughing. "The shower's different. It's just like a tub with a hose. (The water) goes everywhere. I take all my towels and put them down, and then I have no more towels."

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