

NewsBriefs

OBITUARIES

IVAN HLINKA

Former Pittsburgh Penguins coach and the coach of the Czech national team **Ivan Hlinka** died Aug. 16, near Prague after the car he was driving collided with a truck late on the night before.

Hlinka was returning home from meeting with New York Rangers forward Jaromir Jagr after receiving assurances from Jagr that he would play for the Czech national team later this month at the World Cup of Hockey. He had been reappointed as the coach of the Czech squad in May.

The 54-year old Hlinka centered the Czech team during the 1970's and 1980's helping his unit win the world championship in 1972, 1976 and 1977. He was on the Olympic squad that finished third at the 1972 Olympics in Sapporo, Japan and second at the 1976 Olympics in Innsbruck, Austria.

Hlinka coached the Czech team to the gold medal at the 1998 Nagano Olympics. He served as the Penguins coach during the 2000-01 season, leading them into the third round of the playoffs. He had a 42-32-9 record with the Pens before being replaced after only games into the 2001-02 season. He then returned to his homeland, serving as the general manager for the Czech team at the 2002 Olympics.

He is a member of the International Hockey Hall of Fame. Hlinka played for the Vancouver Canucks from 1981-81, scoring 42 goals and 81 assists in 137 games.

JOE FALLS

Joe Falls, a longtime sportswriter for *The Detroit News* and a member of the Baseball Hall of Fame, died Aug. 12 in Detroit. He was 76.

The cause was heart failure after his diabetes steadily worsened over the last two years.

Falls began his journalism career in 1945, when he went to work as a copy boy in the New York office of *The Associated Press*.

He transferred to the Detroit bureau in 1953 and joined *The Detroit Times* in 1956. When the *Times* closed in 1960, Falls moved on to *The Detroit Free Press*, eventually becoming the newspaper's sports editor.

In 2002, Falls was inducted into the writers' wing of the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, N.Y., where he was given the J. G. Taylor Spink Award.

Falls covered 50 World Series, 20 Kentucky Derbys, 15 Super Bowls, 20 Masters, 25 Indianapolis 500's and United States Open golf tournaments.

ROBERT QUIROGA

Former IBF super flyweight champion **Robert Quiroga** was recently found stabbed to death in San Antonio, Texas. He was 34. In 1990, Quiroga defeated Juan Polo-Perez to win the title in England. He successfully defended his crown five times.

(Thanks to Chuck Greenwood, Bruce Cristaldi, George Kuhaj, Kit Kiefer, John McMurray, Allan George Bernard Malamud, and Ross Forman for their contributions to this section)

YOUR TURN

To contribute to this section, please send an e-mail to scott.fragale@krause.com, or write to Scott Fragale, SCD, 700 E. State St., Iola, WI 54990.

News in Brief

DEMAND STRONG FOR INITIAL MCFARLANE COOPERSTOWN FIGURES

With its recent release of the Cooperstown Collection of Sports Picks figures, McFarlane Toys has entered the retired players market. The debut series features Yogi Berra, Bob Gibson, Reggie Jackson (Yankees jersey), Brooks Robinson, Nolan Ryan (Rangers) and Tom Seaver (Mets). There are also scarcer chase figures for each player in the series.

The figures hit store shelves in late July, about the same time as the football figures from Series 8 hit. Despite the competition from the football figures, Todd McFarlane said the Cooperstown figures were outselling the Series 8 football figures. "The feedback has actually been very good," McFarlane said.

"It was surprising a bit because I knew we didn't necessarily have all the big retired players because some of the players that were on the list we were given have gone out and gotten separate representation. I still think we had a pretty solid line, but I wouldn't say it was the best we could have had if I could have had my choice of every single retired player." He added the Cooperstown figures were produced in smaller quantity than a normal series of baseball figures.

— Bert Lehman

DIABLOS LITTLE LEAGUE TEAM WINS GRAND PRIZE IN UPPER DECK CONTEST

For one Little League team that spent their spring cracking open packs of Upper Deck baseball trading cards the chance to hang out with Ken Griffey Jr., dream has become a reality for The Triple AAA Diablos Little League team of Tucson, Ariz.

The Diablos have won the Grand Prize in the Upper Deck Company's Rip Into It & Win contest — an opportunity to participate in a hitting clinic. Cincinnati Reds outfielder Ken Griffey Jr. The official announcement was made recently during the Little League World Series in Williamsport, Penn.

The Griffey clinic — to be held after the conclusion of the 2004 MLB season — will provide the Diablos with a once-in-a-lifetime chance to hang with Griffey Jr., and experience the drills utilized by professional players. In addition, Upper Deck has awarded a \$5,000 cash prize to the league that sent in the most wrappers, which is Continental Ranch Little League, the Tucson league of which the Diablos are a part. The next top four leagues will each win a top-of-the-line pitching machine.



(From left) Tristar's Mandy Fuerst, Rich Tiberi and Planet Collectibles owner Mark Kinman display the first of two Babe Ruth baseballs as part of the Hidden Treasures promotional giveaway. The ball was valued at \$10,000.

FIRST OF TWO SIGNED RUTH BALLS FOUND — Rich Tiberi, a bank vice president, found the first of two Babe Ruth-signed baseballs randomly inserted with boxes of Tristar Hidden Treasures Autographed Baseballs.

The ball, valued at \$10,000, was formally presented to Tiberi at the store where he purchased the product, Planet Collectibles in Florence, Ky. "This Ruth baseball will, by far, be the most prized item in my collection," Tiberi said. Tristar Hidden Treasures Autographed Baseballs Series 2 is now available, and also features a Roger Maris autographed baseball.

VINTAGE BASEBALL STOLEN FROM SPORTS COLLECTIBLES

In late August, a 1931 game-used autographed baseball was stolen from Gilbert Sports Collectibles in Wisconsin Dells, Wis. The ball was autographed by Lefty Grove and Mickey Cochrane. The baseball is discolored with a blemish.

The stitching is red and blue. Also taken was a certificate of authenticity from Gilbert Sports Collectibles signed by Gene Gilbert, and a Letter of Authenticity signed by Kathy Tibbets. Any assistance and information should be directed to either Officer Jesse C. Weaver Wisconsin Dells, WI Police Dept., 608-253-5300 Ext.817, Case No.041898WD, or Gilbert Sports Collectibles, 608-356-3389 and genegilbert@jvl.net.