

OUR CENTURY

1993

AT A GLANCE

Demjanjuk home, and somewhat free

John Demjanjuk was free — up to a point. Wearing a bulletproof vest and accompanied by bodyguards, he was ushered aboard a plane in Jerusalem and his handcuffs were removed. After 6½ years in solitary confinement in Israel, he had been released.

While protesters and reporters waited at Cleveland Hopkins International Airport, his plane landed at Medina Municipal Airport and he was whisked off to an undisclosed location.

Evidence made public after the breakup of the Soviet Union had shown that "Ivan the Terrible," who tortured Jews before leading them to the gas chamber, was a man named Ivan Marczenko, not — as concentration camp survivors had testified — Demjanjuk. The Israeli Supreme Court ruled he could not be prosecuted on evidence he had been a guard at other Nazi camps.

Outside the Seven Hills home of the retired autoworker, police stood by while Jews, Ukrainians and at one point the Ku Klux Klan took turns demonstrating for and against Demjanjuk. He would never again be able to live a normal life.

At year's end, the Justice Department once more moved to deport Demjanjuk, who had been stripped of his citizenship. His legal battles would continue.

The baseball season began with a tragedy that cost two lives and ended another career but knit the Indians into a family. It ended in nostalgia as an era came to a close.

On the quiet night of March 22, a motorboat crashed into an unlit dock on Little Lake Nellie, near the Indians' training site in Florida. Two Indians pitchers were killed — Steve Olin, the promising young reliever, and Tim Crews, a veteran of the Tribe had signed as a free agent. Bob Ojeda, projected to be the No. 2 starter, was critically injured.

Manager Mike Hargrove, his wife, Sharon, and Andre Thornton, the former slugger who became a church elder, were pillars of strength, and the stunned players knotted tightly around them. Baseball's top officials gathered for a memorial service.

Patti Olin continued to attend games with Indians wives, though with an aching heart. She spoke of how much she appreciated the fans' support. "I'd like to give them all a hug," she said. "And if you see me at a game, don't be afraid to give me a hug. I can always use a hug."

Said Sharon Hargrove: "This is a major-league wife."

The grieving team finished 76-86, in sixth place, though Kenny Lofton led the league with 70 stolen bases and Albert Belle had a league-leading 129 runs batted in.

With Jacobs Field under construction, nostalgia for Municipal Stadium brought nearly 2.2 million fans to see the old place. On Oct. 4, the Indians lost, 4-0, to the Chicago White Sox. Afterward, 72,000 fans watched Mel Harder, who had thrown the first pitch in the Stadium in 1932, throw a ceremonial last pitch. The ground crew, in tuxedos, dug up home plate. Bob Hope sang "Thanks for the Memories."

Mayor Michael R. White's first four years had gone so smoothly that only David Lee Rock, an unknown, unemployed 47-year-old, filed to run against him. White spent his time campaigning for the "Vision 21" school board slate, named after Superintendent Sammie Campbell Parrish's plan for the next century.

All four won, meaning White's people now held all seven board seats. White defeated Rock 76,000 to 14,000. His percentage of the vote — 87.8 — was a record for a contested mayoral election. For the first time in memory, every council member was re-elected.

A boat docked outside Shooter's restaurant in the Flats exploded in a fireball, killing Charles and Marla Hoffman. Brothers Dan, Dave and Vince Viancourt, all off-duty firefighters, rescued 9-month-old Chuckie Hoffman from the flames and pulled an unconscious man from the river.

The brothers were awarded the Carnegie Medal for heroism. After a bitter court fight, a relative from Colorado won custody of Chuckie.

The death of 23-year-old Michael Pipkins outraged blacks. The coroner ruled he had died as a result of a headlock applied by two policemen who arrested him, but city prosecutors declined to bring criminal charges against them. The police eventually were ruled negligent and were given long suspensions.

In February, college freshman Mark Sotka pleaded guilty to the kidnapping and fatal stabbing of 16-year-old Angel Ormston of Mentor-on-the-Lake. Her body had been found in December 1992, five months after she disappeared.

However, the 1990 stabbing of 16-year-old Lisa Pruett of Shaker Heights remained unsolved. A jury acquitted another college student, Kevin Young.

All-Stars Brad Daugherty, Mark Price and Larry Nance led the Cavaliers to 54 victories, only three fewer than the franchise record. Price hit 77 free throws in a row, one short of tying the league record.

The Cavs eliminated the New Jersey Nets from the playoffs in the deciding fifth game at the Coliseum. For the fourth time in six seasons, they faced the Chicago Bulls, who disposed of them in four straight.

Lenny Wilkens, who had become the second-winningest coach in NBA history, resigned. Mike Fratello succeeded him. Wilkens was quickly hired by the Atlanta Hawks.

Browns bombshell: A hero is fired

By Fred McGunagle

It was the most shocking Cleveland story since — well, nobody could remember.

The Browns released Bernie Kosar, the town's football, civic and personal hero, in the middle of the season. They didn't even trade him for somebody else. They just fired him.

"I have a tremendous amount of respect for Bernie as a person and as a competitor. But my reasons are his lack of production and loss of physical skills," said Coach Bill Belichick.

It had been less than two weeks since owner Art Modell signed Kosar to a contract that guaranteed him \$5.3 million for 1993 and promised him \$23 million over the next six years. Modell had said he looked on Kosar as almost a son, but now he backed his coach.

Clevelanders could talk about nothing else. The Plain Dealer carried 17 Kosar stories the next day, Nov. 9. Many Browns players spoke up in Kosar's defense. Opposing coaches were incredulous.

Call-in polls by television stations ran about 50-50 on the firing, but die-hard Browns fans were livid. "Unbelievable" and "unforgivable" were among the reactions of those calling The Plain Dealer. Some said the 29-year-old Kosar was over the hill, but a more typical comment was "I think Belichick should be run out of town on a rail."

Another caller hit a deeper note: "Our kids are devastated."

Kosar was the most popular athlete Cleveland had ever known. Over the years, others had been admired and a few had been loved, but Clevelanders knew them only through newspapers. Kosar, as accommodating with the media as with fans, had been on television often.

Clevelanders knew him. He was their buddy Bernie. He had grown up in Boardman as a Browns fan. When he was 6, he trick-or-treated wearing a Browns uniform. He had announced he would leave the University of Miami with a year of eligibility left only if he could play for the Browns. He wanted to come to Cleveland when not many people did, and Clevelanders appreciated it.

On the field, Kosar was slow-footed but quick-witted. His passes were awkward, but time after time he completed them in the clutch. Fans sang "Bernie, Bernie" to the tune of "Louie, Louie," ending "Super Bowl!"

Off the field, Kosar gave himself to the city, sponsoring charity golf tournaments and visiting children in hospitals. "He wants no publicity. That's the only way he'll do it," said Joseph Smith, treasurer of the Cleveland Catholic Diocese.

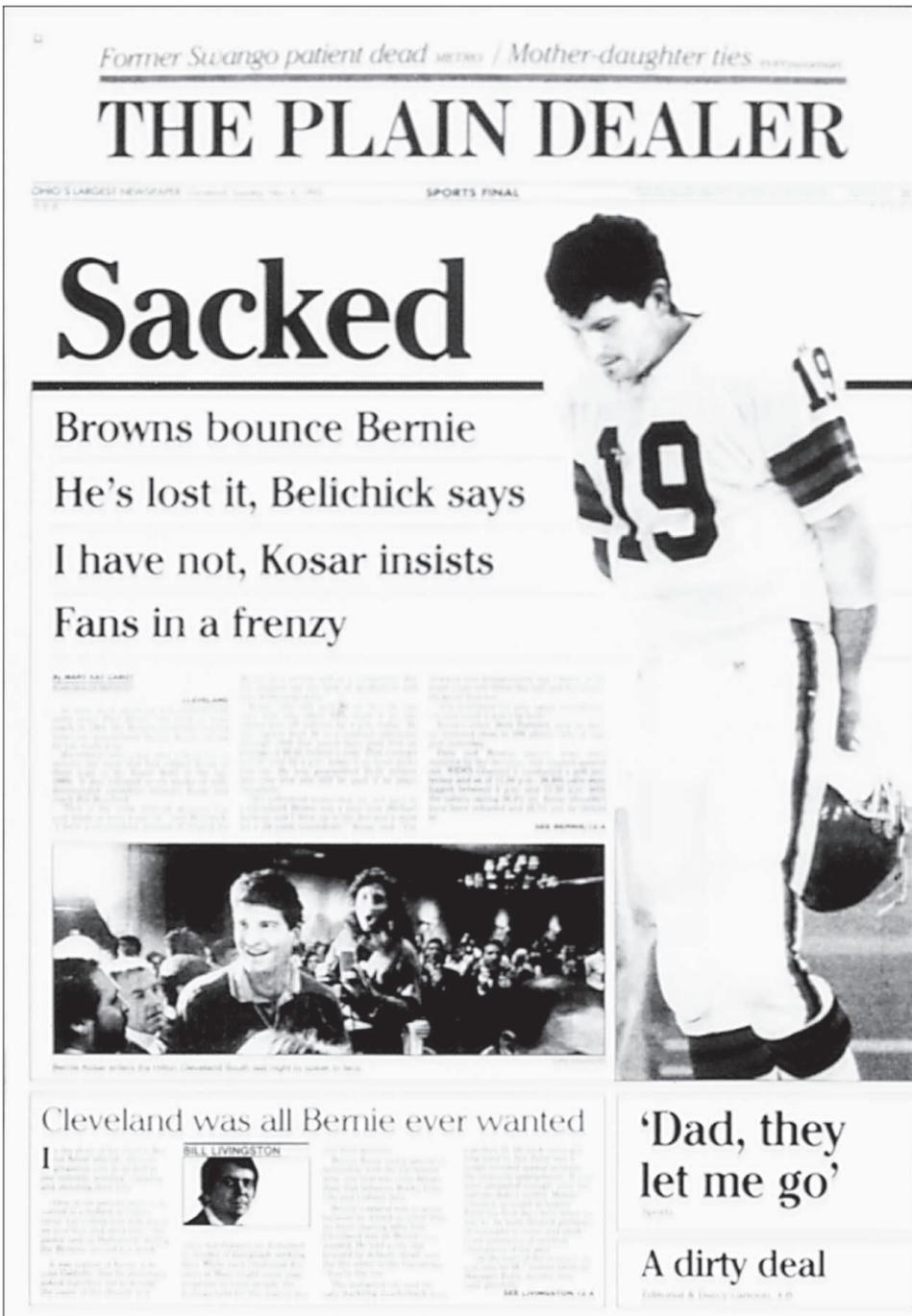
"People need heroes," said Donald Freedheim, psychiatry professor at Case Western Reserve University. "And he was sort of the identity of the Browns, a symbol of Cleveland. When you lose the big symbol of the town, there's a loss of identity and a sense of unrest."

In contrast, Belichick had alienated fans since his arrival in 1991. Modell described him as "painfully shy," but on television that came across as surly and arrogant. He would look down to the right and left rather than look the camera in the eye. He made plain his disdain for the opinions of sportswriters and fans. He traded away fan favorites like Brian Brennan and Webster Slaughter.

But Belichick had reason to want Kosar out. The quarterback had been openly critical of his conservative play-calling, which featured scatback Eric Metcalf. It appeared many of Kosar's teammates agreed with him. The fans certainly did. They booed Belichick's frequent calls of "Metcalf up the middle." Belichick was in danger of losing control of his team.

The day he was released, Kosar, after visiting a cancer patient in a hospital, kept a promise to appear at the Hilton Inn South. Police helped him in through a window to avoid the mob jammed into the lobby. In the meeting room, 450 diners and uncounted standees greeted him with what The Plain Dealer called a "standing-on-chairs ovation." It added: "Occasional chants of 'Bill must go' gained momentum during Kosar's appearance but he refused to

Photo researcher:
David G. Jardy
Plain Dealer Library



take the bait."

The Dallas Cowboys showed what they thought of Kosar's "diminished skills" the next day. They signed him to a million-dollar contract for the rest of the season to fill in for injured quarterback Troy Aikman.

The following Sunday, with a list of plays taped to his wrist, Kosar led the Cowboys to a 20-15 win over the Phoenix Cardinals. He completed 13 of 21 passes for 199 yards and a touchdown with no interceptions. "They let me fire it around out there," he beamed after the game.

The Browns, meanwhile, committed seven turnovers while losing, 22-5, to the Seahawks in Seattle. They had cut Kosar while their second quarterback, Vinny Testaverde, was out with a separated shoulder. Third-stringer Todd Philcox completed only nine of 20 passes for 85 yards, no touchdowns and two interceptions.

The Dallas game drew almost as large a Cleveland TV audience as the Cleveland game. WJW Channel 8 said it would carry Cowboys games the rest of the season.

Browns ticket-holders showed their opinion in the Stadium the following Sunday as the Browns lost, 27-20, to the Houston Oilers. Many wore "Kosar 19" jerseys. The Plain Dealer reported: "From the opening kickoff, the crowd was chanting 'Bernie, Bernie' and 'Bill must go.'"

One or two signs backed Belichick. But dozens attempted to catch the NBC cameras with "Needed: Browns Coach" and "Nobody wants Belichick in Cleveland." One proclaimed: "Hey Bill, Lorena Bobbitt wants your next cut."

"Jump, Art, and Land on Bill," said one facing Modell's upper-deck loge.

Kosar went on to get a Super Bowl ring as backup quarterback for the



The Plain Dealer front page Nov. 9 was just about all Bernie Kosar. In a Plain Dealer photo from the day day, Brown owner Art Modell appears to wipe a tear from his eye at the press conference announcing Kosar's departure.

Cowboys, then signed with the Miami Dolphins for 1994. The Browns, who had been 5-3 at the time of Kosar's release, lost six of eight after he left.

As the year ended, Mayor Michael White warned that other cities were trying to lure the Browns. Modell said: "I prefer not to comment on that." Later, he met with White and White said he promised the franchise

would remain in Cleveland as long as he owned it. "I believe him," White said.

Modell said nothing. It was clear that the relationship he had once enjoyed with Browns fans was gone.

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LOOKING AT A YEAR

Jan. 17: On the second anniversary of the start of the Gulf War, U.S. warships fire 40 cruise missiles into what the United States says is a nuclear weapons plant in Iraq.

Feb. 26: Muslim terrorists bomb New York's World Trade Center, killing six and wounding more than 1,000.

April 19: After a 51-day siege, fed-

eral agents use armored vehicles to attack the Waco, Texas, compound of the Branch Davidian sect, led by David Koresh. Eighty-six Branch Davidians, including 17 children, die.

May 9: Pope John Paul II offers harsh criticism of the Mafia during a Mass in Sicily.

Sept. 13: Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestine Libera-

tion Organization leader Yasser Arafat shake hands on the White House lawn after signing an agreement on Palestinian occupancy of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

Oct. 4: The Russian army crushes a rebellion against the government of Boris Yeltsin.

Dec. 22: Centuries of white rule in South Africa end as the parliament votes itself out of existence.

Deaths: Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, tennis star Arthur Ashe, migrant worker leader Cesar Chavez, ballet dancer Rudolf Nureyev, actress Audrey Hepburn, trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie, Nixon chief-of-staff Bob Haldeman, former Texas Gov. John Connally, aviator Jimmy Doolittle, the Rev. Norman Vincent Peale, Philippine ex-President Ferdinand Marcos.