

Thursday, October 5, 1995

SPORTS LOOK *The Associated Press*

BASEBALL

■ **NEW YORK** — Mickey Tettleton, who batted .556 and drove in 11 runs for the Texas Rangers, won the American League player of the week award for the final week of the regular season.

Cleveland's Albert Belle, who hit 17 homers in September, was selected AL player of the month. Seattle's Norm Charlton was chosen AL pitcher of the month after compiling a 2-0 record and 11 saves.

■ **MADISON, Wis.** — Gov. Tommy G. Thompson said he needs a miracle to muster enough Senate votes for final passage of a \$250 million stadium plan to keep the Milwaukee Brewers in Wisconsin.

Following postponement of a planned Senate vote, Thompson said he was still three votes short of the 17 needed for approval in the 32-member Senate.

And he said Thursday, the final day of the current legislative session, would be the day for the Senate "to cut the bullet" and decide whether to endorse the plan to help finance the project through a sales tax hike in five counties. The Assembly narrowly approved the package last week.

Brewers owner Bud Selig has said he cannot afford to keep the team in Milwaukee beyond this season unless he gets a high-tech, convertible roof stadium with 75 luxury skyboxes.

The team has lost \$39 million since 1990, state auditors said.

■ **SAN DIEGO** — The San Diego Padres called a news conference for today, apparently to announce that center fielder Steve Finley has agreed to a new contract.

The Padres also may announce that third baseman Ken Caminiti signed a new contract. Caminiti said more than two weeks ago that he had agreed to a two-year, \$6 million contract but hadn't signed it yet.

Finley and Caminiti came over in a 12-player deal with the Houston Astros in December. Finley's .297 average and 104 runs scored were career-highs. Caminiti's .302 average, 26 homers and 94 RBIs were career-bests.

BASKETBALL

■ **DENVER** — Antonio McDyess, the No. 2 overall pick in the NBA draft, signed with the Denver Nuggets.

The 6-foot-9 forward from Alabama was obtained from the Los Angeles Clippers on the day of the draft with guard Randy Woods for Rodney Rogers and the rights to Brent Barry.

McDyess averaged 13.9 points and 10.2 rebounds a game for the Crimson Tide last season.

■ **EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J.** — Ed O'Bannon, the first-round draft pick

who led UCLA to the 1995 NCAA basketball championship, signed with the New Jersey Nets.

The 6-foot-8 forward, drafted ninth overall, will receive between \$3.25 million and \$3.90 million over three years.

O'Bannon, the outstanding player of the Final Four, led UCLA to the title by averaging 20.4 points a game last season. He missed his freshman year because of a torn ligament in his left knee.

■ **INDIANAPOLIS** — The Indiana Pacers, in a series of moves to get under the salary cap, released Vern Fleming and LaSalle Thompson and signed free agents Eddie Johnson and Ricky Pierce.

Johnson and Pierce are both 36 years old. Each is a 13-year NBA veteran who has won the league's Sixth Man award. Also let go were little-used reserves Lester Conner and Greg Kite.

Fleming, the Pacers' first-round draft pick in 1984, is the team's career leader in assists (4,038), games (816) and seasons (11).

HOCKEY

■ **UNIONDALE, N.Y.** — Claude Lemieux, the Stanley Cup MVP for New Jersey last season, was traded twice, ending up in Colorado in a three-way deal featuring disgruntled stars who are among the NHL's top forwards.

The Devils sent Lemieux to the New York Islanders for right wing Steve Thomas. The Islanders then traded Lemieux to the Avalanche for left wing Wendel Clark.

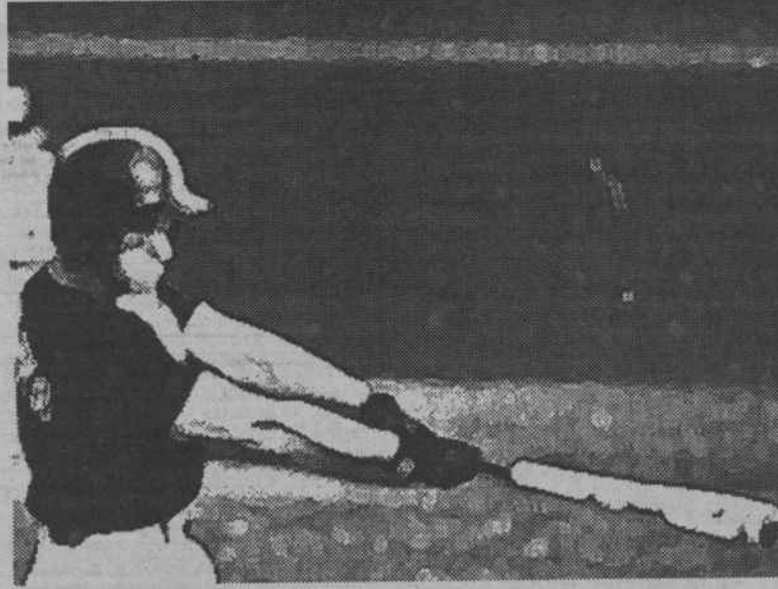
Lemieux scored 13 postseason goals in leading the Devils to their first NHL championship. But the 30-year-old right wing angered New Jersey management by challenging the validity of a contract he faxed to the team in the offseason, then failing to report to camp because of the dispute.

Clark contends the Avalanche are reneging on a promise to renegotiate his contract, which has one year left.

Thomas had refused to report to training camp, demanding \$1.7 million a year. Immediately after being traded, he signed a multiyear contract with the Devils.

■ **WINNIPEG, Manitoba** — The Winnipeg Jets retained star left wing Keith Tkachuk, matching an offer from the Chicago Blackhawks believed to be worth \$17 million over five years.

Tkachuk, 23, selected 19th overall in the 1990 draft, had 22 goals and 29 assists in 48 games last season. The former Boston University and 1992 U.S. Olympic star has 94 goals and 97 assists in four seasons with the Jets.



Playoff system adds to excitement

PATRICK DOHERTY
Senior Writer

It has been suggested that the current system of baseball playoffs, which includes three rounds of playoffs and a "wild card" for each division, are detrimental to the game and increase the chances that a "mediocre" team can unjustly keep a superior team from reaching the World Series.

I believe that the current system is not as detrimental as it appears. Consider this, Braves fans: What if the Giants had ended up with 104 wins in 1993, and the Braves had ended up with 103? The Braves would have been out of the NL championship series unjustly. In all fairness, it is clear that in '93 three teams deserved the right to challenge each other for the championship of the National League: the Braves, Giants and Phillies. Clearly, the lessons of 1993 show us that a wild card is desperately needed in baseball.

The argument against the wild card is that teams play a 162-game season (most of the time), and that the wild card would detract from the achievement of the individual teams over a very long regular season. Consider this, though, why should the championship of a 162-game season come down to the last five games of the year? Is this sort of "regular season playoff" any more just than a wild card, divisional series? I propose that it is no more intrinsically just to let two great teams battle for a pennant in the last few games of the season than it is to play a postseason series with a wild card team added.

The counter to this pro-wild card argument is the situation this year - two great NL teams have clinched pennants, the Braves and the Reds. They should, in all likelihood, play for the National League Championship. The Rockies (the Wild Card) lost nine of 13 games vs. the Braves, why should they play a series with the Braves? Why risk an unjust upset of the Braves that would keep them from the NL championship series? The reason is clear: we can't have a wild card some years when it seems "right" and then not in other years. It needs to be consistent, and the advantages to the wild card clearly outweigh the potential disadvantages.

The argument remains, however, from the base-

ball purists, that any kind of division within the two leagues, and any kind of post-season before the World Series, is bad. The argument suggests that the regular season champions of each non-divided league face each other in a World Series as it was done before the '60s. The purists' point is that the two best teams in baseball will face each other and that there will be no risk of upset beforehand in a league championship series, having "mediocre" teams making it to the oh-so-holy World Series.

Receive this, however, what is the point of a World Series at all if we should be so concerned about deciding the best team during the regular season? This was the N.Y. Giants' argument in 1904. They refused to play the champion of the American League in a World Series because they felt that they were too good to play, and risk being upset by, a team from such an upstart league. The point is: the World Series is as much a forum for upsets and baseball injustice as a league championship series or a divisional, wild-card playoff.

The 1986 World Series and the 1991 World Series are examples of how superior teams were upset by lesser teams because of one stupid play by each of the losing teams. In 1986, Buckner sealed the Boston Red Sox' fate in game six by letting a routine ground ball pass through his legs at first base. The N.Y. Mets went on to win the series in seven games. And who can forget Lonnie Smith's baserunning blunder that cost the Braves the 1991 Series and probably lost John Smoltz a shot at Cooperstown (Don't believe me? Look how much consideration they're giving lifetime losing record pitcher Jack Morris. Coincidence? I think not). The Twins won that seventh game, which they wouldn't have done if Lonnie had just kept going.

If the current system of baseball playoffs are really as bad as the purists would make us believe, then there is only one logical end to their argument:

to bring the two leagues together and have the regular season champ of the dual-league crowned "world champion" with no post-season at all. Is this really what we want? I don't think so. I still believe, even after the strike, that the World Series is the greatest American sporting event in existence (followed closely by the NCAA Division I basketball tournament). And even though I support the current wild card, I can see some possible changes that would bring the system more in line with what the purists want.

For instance, keep the three divisions and the card, but make intra-divisional play a big deal. Instead of having the Braves play the Phillies and the Rockies 13 games each, have the Braves play the Phillies 19 times and the Rockies 10 times during the regular season. This would add a lot more relevance to the divisional titles. A team would truly be a divisional champ, not just a team who did better in the NL than the second-place team.

There could also be a wild card "cap." Say, if a potential wild card team doesn't win at least 90 games, there would be no wild card and no wild card series that year. The team with the best record of the other three divisional champs would get a bye to the league championship series to await the winner of the other divisional series.

In the end, though, I believe it is clear that the logical end to an anti-card argument leads us to no post-season at all, which means no World Series. This would certainly be a tragedy, and even the purists would not want this. So my suggestion is this: Keep the wild card, think of how much good it could do and remember how much good it has done for Don Mattingly and the city of Denver.

My last suggestion is a simple one (perhaps a contradictory one, which would certainly not be a first for me), instead of arguing about the playoff system let us merely sit back and enjoy all of the spectacular play to come in the next few weeks, especially the first World Series in two years. And maybe, just maybe, we'll forget about O.J. for a millisecond.

Panther rookie Collins adjusting to life in NFL

Associated Press

Kerry Collins knows the day is coming.

He may throw four or five interceptions and fumble the ball away a few more times. He may get sacked 10 times. He may complete only one or two passes.

Whatever the exact circumstances end up being, Collins knows he's going to have one of those performances that all NFL rookie quarterbacks experience, the kind that can make them start doubting their abilities.

Collins, the Carolina Panthers' top draft pick, had a very solid game in his first start. But the simple fact remains that he's still a rookie, and eventually, he's going to play like one.

"As a quarterback, you want to com-

plete every pass and win every game," he said, "but there's going to be times when things aren't going well. And as a rookie, it's going to happen more times than if you're a veteran. When that day comes, I just have to try to come back from a game like that and be the kind of quarterback that I want to be on a consistent basis."

Collins completed 18 of 32 passes for 234 yards and a touchdown Sunday in the Panthers' 20-13 loss to the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

While the numbers were good, what impressed the Panthers' coaches even more were Collins' intangibles. He was said to be a very calm, dependable leader in the huddle. He sensed the rush and avoided being sacked. He changed the cadence in his count so well that he drew the Buccaneers offside four times.

Not only did he change several plays at the line, but in each case, he made the correct audible, according to quarterbacks coach and offensive coordinator Joe Pendry.

Even though the net result was another loss that dropped the expansion Panthers to 0-4, the performance distinguished Collins from the debut of some other current NFL starting quarterbacks.

John Elway, for example, was yanked after throwing for 14 yards on 1-of-8 passing in his first start. Chris Miller was intercepted four times in his inaugural game as a starter.

In fact, of the current starting quarterbacks in the NFL, only Chris Chandler, Boomer Esiason and Jim Everett won their first contests.

Collins was helped by the fact that

the Panthers had a bye Sept. 24, meaning he had two full weeks of practice to prepare for Tampa Bay. This week, he gets only three practices before Carolina plays at Chicago on Sunday.

"It'll be tougher on Kerry because we only have three practices," Pendry said. "But by the same token, it'll be a little easier since he has one game under his belt."

Collins anticipates that the Bears will try to take advantage of his relative youth and see if they can induce him into one of those "rookie" games.

"I expect the Bears to come out and probably try and blitz me and try and get me rattled," he said. "But I've just got to stay confident and know my reads and know what my role is in this offense. And if I do that, I think I'll be fine."

Women's match versus Wofford canceled

Staff Reports

South Carolina men's and women's soccer matches were both cancelled Wednesday night due to rain; however, UNC-Charlotte officials later deemed the field to be in good playing shape and the men's game was played.

The Gamecock women were scheduled to play Wofford at The Graveyard, while the men were at UNC-Charlotte for a South Region matchup.

If the men's match vs. UNC-Charlotte had been cancelled as planned, it would not have been rescheduled. The Gamecocks, ranked No. 15 in the Soccer America national poll this week,

next play Sunday at 4 p.m. against No. 8 North Carolina at The Graveyard.

The game is the first contest to be televised nationally from The Graveyard and will be shown on the Prime Sports Network. South Carolina headed into the UNC-Charlotte match with a 5-2-0 record and a three game winning streak. Plan to expect a game summary in Friday's edition of The Gamecock.

No makeup date for the women's match has been set at this time. Next up for the Carolina women is a Southeastern Conference match at The Graveyard, Oct. 11 against Florida. The Gamecocks are 6-6 on the year and 0-4 in the SEC.

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