

Houston Closes Gap Behind Cincinnati

Ryan Tosses 3 Hitter In Astro Win

By KEN RAPPOPORT
AP Sports Writer
So far, Nolan Ryan hasn't been the "money" pitcher the Houston Astros expected. But he looked like a million dollars Thursday.
The high-priced, but inconsistent, right-hander came through with one of his best efforts of the season, a three-hitter that led the Astros to a 2-1 victory over the San Diego Padres.
It couldn't have come at a

better time, either, for the Astros.
"We've got to turn this around quick or we're not going to make it," said Ryan, 7-8, whose Astros had lost six of seven games prior to the opener of a four-game series in San Diego.
The victory, incidentally, moved the Astros within a half-game of the front-running Cincinnati Reds in the National League West.
The three-team NL West

race goes into higher gear tonight when the Reds start a weekend series against the Los Angeles Dodgers, tied with Houston for second place. The Montreal Expos and Pittsburgh Pirates, tied for first in the East, also begin a vital weekend series with each other.
In other action Thursday, the Philadelphia Phillies stopped the New York Mets 8-1; the San Francisco Giants defeated the Atlanta Braves

5-1 and the St. Louis Cardinals nipped the Chicago Cubs 10-9 in 10 innings.
Cesar Cedeno set up the winning run for the Astros when he led off the ninth inning with a single off Padres starter John Curtis, 4-8, stole second, took third on a grounder and came home on Jeff Leonard's sacrifice fly. Leonard also had an RBI single in the fourth.
Phillies 8, Mets 1
Mike Schmidt homered and

drove in four runs and Nino Espinosa pitched his first complete game of the season with a five-hitter to help Philadelphia beat New York.
Schmidt collected four hits and hit his 31st homer leading off the ninth inning off Ed Glynn, the third Mets pitcher. Earlier, he had a bases-loaded single and an RBI-double.
Espinosa, 3-3, walked two and struck out three in his eighth start of the season. Pat Zachry, 6-6, was the loser.
Giants 5, Braves 1
Jack Clark's third-inning

grand-slam home run, the third of his career, led San Francisco over Atlanta.
With one out in the third, Larry McWilliams, 8-9, walked pitcher Al Hargesheimer and Jim Wohlford and Darrell Evans singled to load the bases, then Clark hit a 1-2 pitch over the left field fence at Candlestick Park for his 22nd homer of the season.
Bob Horner hit his 24th homer for the Braves in his second to account for Atlanta's run.
Hargesheimer, 3-2, gained the victory and Greg Minton

notched his 13th save as the Giants halted the Braves' four-game winning streak.
Cardinals 10, Cubs 9
George Hendrick drove in the winning run with a one-out single in the 10th inning to lead St. Louis over Chicago despite three Cub home runs.
Dave Kingman belted a three-run homer, his first since June 4 for Chicago. Also homering for the Cubs were Bill Buckner, who belted a two-run smash, and Mike Tyson.
St. Louis squandered leads of 5-2 and 9-5, with Chicago

rallying for four runs in the eighth inning to tie the game at 9-9.
In the St. Louis 10th, Tony Scott singled off George Riley, 0-3, to ignite the Cards' winning rally. Scott moved over on a sacrifice by Keith Hernandez and Ted Simmons was intentionally walked before Hendrick's drive off Bill Claudill, the Cubs' sixth hurler.
Jim Kaat, 5-5, worked 21-3 scoreless innings in relief for St. Louis to pick up the victory.

Watson Unsteady Going Into Tourney

By HAL BOCK
AP Sports Writer
It's entirely appropriate that Tom Watson is spending his weekend playing in a golf tournament sponsored by a bank. After all, Watson's personal balance sheet reads like an accountant's ledger.
Nobody ever has won more money in one year by hitting a wee ball into a hole than the \$462,636 that Watson earned last season.
For 1980 with five tour victories to his credit, his official PGA income total is a hefty

\$393,725. And that doesn't even include his \$60,000 payoff for winning the British Open, since the tour money list doesn't count that tournament.
So we're talking about \$453,725 so far and here he is again, aiming at the \$72,000 first place payoff in this weekend's \$400,000 Manufacturers Hanover Westchester Classic.
It will not be easy, though, simply because Watson is in a rut on the carefully manicured Westchester

Country Club Course, where he has never won.
"It's strange, but every year I play this course, I shoot the same score...278, 279," Watson said. "I go up and down, a 64 one day, a 72 the next. There's no consistency to my game here. I always shoot at least one round of 72 or 73 and that puts you out of the tournament. It's been that way for four or five years and that's just not good enough to win. I need to get a little lower than that to win."

OK, how do you do that?
"The two things you need to have working on this course are your putting and short iron games. I'm driving well but that alone won't win it here," he said.
Every golf course has its own personality, its own easy holes and its own tough ones. Before he played his practice rounds and then teed off in Thursday's opening round, Watson had played Westchester mentally over and over again.
"No. 4, No. 11, No. 12, No. 15 and No. 16," he said, rattling off Westchester's key holes. "Play those holes well and you'll score well here. You can win if you play those holes well."
Watson has four of those holes figured out. The problem has been No. 4.
"I don't know, it's just been a tough hole for me," Watson said. "If you go off to the left, you can get a double or triple bogey. I'm usually short on it."

Pirates Meet Montreal Pittsburg, Reds Vie for Titles

PITTSBURGH (AP) — Mike Easler of the Pittsburgh Pirates, enjoying the best season of his major league career, brings boundless enthusiasm to the ballpark every night.
But he expects to feel an extra tingle tonight when Pittsburgh opens a four-game series with the Montreal Expos, tied with the Pirates atop the National League East.
"This is going to be a great series," bubbled the 29-year-old outfielder. "The stage is set, two first-place teams going at each other. You know everybody will be up."
Easler, a .242 lifetime hitter, is batting .356 this season with 15 home runs and 47 RBIs.
He has platooned in left field with Lee Lacy, who is hitting .346, and he has also subbed in right field lately for injured Dave Parker.
"I just love it. The more I play, the better I feel. I'm getting stronger every day," said Easler.
He has equal optimism when it comes to the Pirates, even though the club could use a weekend at a health spa.
"We're known for rising to the occasion. When we have to win, we do," Easler said.
Dick Williams, manager of the Expos, said he expected it to be a grudge series as well as a crucial series.
"We had only one player in last month's All-Star game

(for which Pittsburgh Pirates pitcher have stepped to the fore.
Jim Bibby takes a 14-2 record into tonight's start against Montreal's Steve Rogers. Eddie Solomon is 7-3.
"Head to head against the top contender. That's the way

the guys like it," said Madlock.
"After the season, a lot of guys on this team will be going in for surgery. But nobody is thinking about that now. We're ready for the stretch drive."

Cincinnati Hits Division Penthouse

LOS ANGELES (AP) — To say it's been a strange season for the defending National League West champion Cincinnati Reds is an understatement. They've gone from the penthouse to the outhouse and back again.
"It's very satisfying," were Manager John McNamara's words after the Reds moved into first place Wednesday night with a 4-3 victory over the San Diego Padres. "So many had written us off. It's a good feeling."
"Give these people (the Reds' players) credit. They kept battling back."
Those words would seem strange coming from the skipper of a team that won its first eight games of the season, and shortly later were 11-1, 12-2 and 20-11. But that's how the Reds began 1980. Then they went sour.
From 20-11, Cincinnati lost 33 of its ensuing 57 games to fall far out of first place at 44-44. But since then, the Reds have won 18 of 27 contests to vault back into the lead.
Now 62-53, the Reds open a crucial — at least for now — three-game series with Los Angeles tonight at Dodger Stadium. Entering the game, Cincinnati holds a half-game lead over both the Dodgers and Astros in the red-hot NL West race.
Both the Reds and the Dodgers were idle Thursday. Houston gained ground with a 2-1 victory over the San Diego

Padres and the San Francisco Giants, now only five games off the pace, moved up a notch, beating Atlanta 5-1.
Tom Seaver, the erstwhile ace of the Reds' pitching staff, but currently only 4-6, will hurl for Cincinnati tonight against Jerry Reuss, 13-4.
Seaver only recently returned to action after being on the disabled list with a sore arm. The Dodgers knocked him out in the second inning last Saturday.
On Saturday afternoon, Paul Moskau, 8-4, is scheduled to pitch for the Reds against Don Sutton, also 8-4, in a nationally televised game, while Mario Soto, 5-5, is slated to hurl for Cincinnati against Bob Welch, 10-7, in the finale Sunday.
The Dodgers won two out of three games at Cincinnati last weekend after losing the series opener, but were swept in a three-game series by the Atlanta Braves earlier this week at Dodger Stadium.
"If we are in a lull, we're going to find ourselves 3 1/2 games back," said Los Angeles second baseman Davey Lopes after the Dodgers' 2-0 loss to Atlanta Wednesday night. "We better wake up, that's all there is to it."
"If any one of the three teams hits a hot streak, it could be all over, certainly for the other two," said Los Angeles pitcher Burt Hooton. "And San Francisco obviously is not that far back."

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Mavericks Sign Free Agent
DALLAS (AP) — The Dallas Mavericks announced Thursday they have signed free agent forward Ira Terrell, a former Southwest Conference star who has languished in relative obscurity for the past three seasons.
Maverick director of player personnel Dick Sund acknowledged that Terrell may be a "long shot," but said the team "would not be inviting Terrell to camp if we didn't feel he had a shot at making the club."
Terrell was the SWC's all-time leading rebounder, racking up 1,077 boards for Southern Methodist University between 1972-76. Drafted by Phoenix, he averaged 13.2 points and 7.9 rebounds in 1976, but was sidelined by a knee injury the next year, and waived in 1978.
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— Ecclesiastes 3:1

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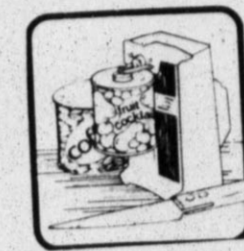
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