Network awaits verdict on prime time basel

NEW YORK — "Monday Night Baseball," country cousin of "Monday Night Football," got its severest test with that five-hour marathon in St. Louis the other eve-

marathon in St. Louis the other evening. The jury is still out on whether it passed or flunked.

A.C. Nielsen Co., which keeps tabs on such things, said it won't know until Wednesday how many viewers stuck it out with the New York Mets and St. Louis Cardinals in the interval of the state of

The American Broadcasting Company, which paid \$50 million for the privilege of broadcasting major league baseball in prime time, had to do some quick shuffling of its schedules. Apparently, no harm was

"We are committed to stay with the baseball game no matter how long it lasts," an ABC spokesman

cial," scheduled to go on at 11:30 p.m. got off the track at 2:07 a.m.

Meanwhile, Del Unser, Mets' outfielder who had made a costly two-run mistake in the first inning, redeemed himself with that 17thinning home run that broke a 3-3

ABC said it received a minimum of phone calls complaining of the delay in the Fonda film, a biographi-

deadlock and won the game for the

game or clicked off the set and went

That's something for Nielsen to figure out.

First sampling of audience tastes reveal that "Monday Night Baseball" will have a long hard climb if it hopes to match the prime time performance of "Monday Night Football," a

resounding success.

There are obvious reasons. Virtually every football game has some sort of impact on the chamearly summer, attaining a climax in the fall just before World Series

Nielsen reports that the baseball inaugural a week ago — offering an intriguing pitching duel between the Yankees' Catfish Hunter and Baltimore's Jim Palmer — placed third behind CBS and NBC in the ratings.

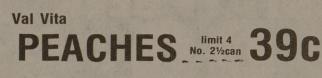
The baseball game had a 21 per cent share of the audience compared with CBS' 36 with reruns of "All In The Family" "Maude" and "MediJohn." Football's weekly rating was around 37.

Baseball's three-man announcing team of Bob Prince, Warner Wolf

keeping interest alive during a 35 minute rain delay and the prolonged game of four hours, 46 minutes.

"We were in the booth a good 6% hours," Prince said. "But the hours," Prince said. "But there was no chance to get bogged down. was a great game — a sort of sudden

t	their 17-inning game which didn't end until 1:36 a.m. EST.	In this case, the 11 o'clock news didn't start until 2 hours, 36 minutes later and the "Henry Fonda Spe-	delay in the Fonda film, a biographical feature. Most of the viewers either got wrapped up in the ball	some sort of impact on the cham- pionship races. Baseball is inclined to laze along through the spring and	The Family," "Maude" and "Medi- cal Center" and NBC's 30 with "Rich Little," "Joe Forrester" and "Jigsaw	death. Any pitch might end it—an finally one did. Actually, we all had fun."
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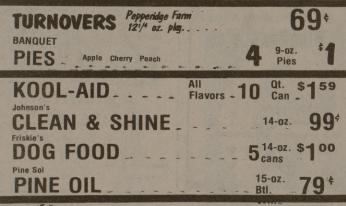
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