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Sutton posts 55th shutout in Astro win over Braves

HOUSTON — Don Sutton's 55th career shutout started the Houston Astros final Domestand of 1981 powerfully, and it seemed to give manager Bill Virdon hope the Astros could sack up the division second-half title before going on the road for the final time.

Sutton, a master of National League hitters in the second half, three hit the Atlanta Braves Tuesday in the opener of an eight-game series in the Astrodome, and the win assured the Astros of maintaining at least a three-game lead in the Western Division with 12 games to play.

On the road, however, loomed two games against the second-place Cincinnati Reds and then three games against the Los Angeles Dodgers to end the regular season.

The Braves, who barely scratched Sutton for three singles, were pushed 6½ games back of Houston. They've all but been eliminated, but Virdon said it

wasn't his plan to knock off teams one at a time from the bottom.

"All we've got to do is win more than we lose," he said. "Of course, it's going to go down to the last three days in Los Angeles anyway. I hope not. Maybe it won't. What it will come down to is we'll have to beat the Dodgers to beat Cincinnati for second place."

If he could find a way to rotate in Sutton, 10-8, more than twice the rest of the season, his chances would be brighter. The 36-year-old righthander is 6-1 with a 1.75 earned run average since the strike break. He has pitched the last 26 innings without allowing an earned run.

"I didn't think I pitched that well tonight," Sutton said of his no-walk, three-strikeout performance. Catcher Alan Ashby said Sutton came to him after the fifth inning and complained his back was hurting. "He wanted to make sure we had somebody ready," Ashby said.

Major League Baseball

American League				National League			
East				East			
Detroit	26	16	.619	St. Louis	22	18	.550
Boston	24	17	.585	Montreal	22	19	.537
Milwaukee	25	18	.581	New York	20	21	.488
Baltimore	21	19	.525	Chicago	18	21	.462
New York	21	20	.512	Philadelphia	17	23	.425
Toronto	19	20	.487	Pittsburgh	17	24	.415
Cleveland	20	22	.476				
West				West			
Kansas City	23	18	.561	Houston	27	14	.659
Oakland	21	18	.538	Cincinnati	24	17	.585
Minnesota	20	22	.476	San Francisco	22	18	.550
Texas	18	21	.462	Los Angeles	22	19	.537
Seattle	17	24	.415	Atlanta	20	20	.500
Chicago	16	25	.390	San Diego	13	30	.302
California	14	25	.359				

Tuesday's Results	Wednesday's Games	Tuesday's Results	Wednesday's Games
Seattle 3, Texas 2 Oakland 3, Toronto 2 Oakland 4, Toronto 2 Milwaukee 10, Boston 8 Detroit 6, Baltimore 3 Cleveland 6, New York 4 Kansas City 2, Minnesota 1 California 1, Chicago 0	Seattle at Texas Milwaukee at Boston Detroit at Baltimore Oakland at Toronto Cleveland at New York Minnesota at Kansas City Chicago at California	Houston 3, Atlanta 0 Chicago 4, St. Louis 3 Pittsburgh 5, New York 3 Montreal 6, Philadelphia 2 Cincinnati 3, San Diego 2 San Francisco 5, Los Angeles 2	Atlanta at Houston Cincinnati at San Diego Los Angeles at San Francisco New York at Chicago Philadelphia at St. Louis Pittsburgh at Montreal

Astro Howe injured

HOUSTON — Houston Astro's best hitter in 1981 Art Howe will undergo surgery to repair a torn Achilles' tendon, but will wait until the end of this season.

"With a tear, you're looking at about six weeks in a cast, plus rehabilitation to get ready for next year," Howe said Monday. "It's just something that I have to have done in order to play next season without an operation."

Howe said the operation will probably be performed in Philadelphia by Dr. Joseph Torg, who operated this year on Pitt-

sburgh's Bill Robinson.

But Howe said he plans to suffer through the rest of this season, including the playoffs and world series, if necessary.

Injuries are not unknown to Howe, 34, who has had broken jaws, chipped teeth, hamstring pulls and the Achilles problem. He has to ice down his ankle before and after each game and must walk with special orthopedic shoes.

"It's on both sides now. I just hope I don't tear it anymore the rest of the year than it already is torn. The worse you tear it, the longer the rehabilitation period," he said.

Ex-Ranger pitcher wins first game of season against old teammates

ARLINGTON — Seattle Mariners pitcher Ken Clay won his first game of the season, and it could not have come at a worse time for the Texas Rangers.

Suddenly finding themselves back in the race for a spot in the American League West Division playoffs this week, the Rangers were hoping to gain additional ground on division-leading Kansas City.

But Clay, who entered the game with a 0-6 record, scattered six hits over seven innings as the Mariners came from behind to take a 3-2 victory Tuesday night.

Coupled with Kansas City's 2-1 win over Minnesota, the Rangers dropped four games back with 11 games remaining.

"I go out and do the best job I can no matter who I'm pitching against," said Clay. "Those guys (Texas) winning the pennant doesn't put any money in my pocket. In fact, if we play the role of spoiler for the rest of the way, I'd be happy."

Clay, traded to Seattle by Texas last season, en-

tered the game with a 4.74 earned run average and had little difficulty as he struck out a career-high 11 batters.

He gave up a run in the fourth inning, but retired 11 straight batters until Leon Roberts reached base on an infield hit in the eighth.

Roberts later came on to record his sixth save in the game.

"It got to be more of a mental thing," Clay said. "I've been pitching well ever since I began. I haven't had anything to show for it, but I'm pitching well and keeping the team in the game."

Texas took a 1-0 lead in the fourth when Pat Williams singled home Buddy Bell, who had led off the inning.

Seattle pushed across three runs in the sixth, putting together a walk and three singles to lead 3-2.

Cougar QB out for year

HOUSTON — University of Houston quarterback Audrey McMillian has undergone surgery to repair a dislocated shoulder, fulfilling a recent and disturbing trend among Cougar field generals — injuries.

McMillian is sidelined for 1981 after injuring his right shoulder in

Saturday's game at Miami, and Coach Bill Yeoman said he would apply to the Southwest Conference to get McMillian another year's eligibility.

"I can't imagine him not getting another year," Yeoman said. "Yeoman now has had four starting quarterbacks injured in two seasons. The Cougars run from a veer option offense which exposes their running quarterbacks to injury."

"When we recruit we're gonna look for bigger kids like we used to have," he said. "From 1965 to 1977, we had only one quarterback hurt. Now, nobody doesn't

get hurt. One of the reasons teams have bigger kids hitting the field is because of the trend among Cougar field generals — injuries. It is

McMillian, a 5-11, 160-pounder, suffered a season-long dislocation of his left shoulder in 1980 after replacing Chinn, who had been injured in a transfer from El Paso, Gerry Dickens.

Wilson receives daily treatment for a slight hamstring muscle which he suffered in spring training. His sore leg did not bother him as he played the second half in a 12-7 loss to Miami.

The game against Utah State, 2-1, is Houston's final tune-up game before beginning Southwest Conference play. The Cougars are 1-1.

McMillian's replacement against Utah State in the Astrodome Saturday is 6-1, 205-pounder Lionel Wilson. Behind him are freshman Quince Harris and Jasper and a transfer from El Paso, Gerry Dickens.

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