

TANK McNAMARA

by Jeff Millar & Bill Hinds



No laughing matter

McNamara restless about disappointing season

United Press International
John McNamara will be 50 Friday and the way things have been going for him and his Cincinnati Reds lately he doesn't feel a day over 75.

The Reds have been baseball's biggest disappointment so far. They lost nine of their last 12 and 12 of their last 18 and were in last place in the National League West before Tuesday night's game with Philadelphia.

Ordinarily, McNamara is given to laughing easily and joking sometimes, too, but those Irish eyes of his aren't smiling now. His ballclub hasn't given him anything to smile about.

"I realize I don't hit or throw the ball, but that doesn't mean I can walk away from it as soon as the game is over," he says. "I try to figure out what I could've done that maybe I didn't do. I try to think of ways for us to get better and improve."

The Reds won only 11 of their 27 games during the month of May and their drop in the standings was reflected by a drop in McNamara's weight. His appetite wasn't everything it should've been nor did he sleep very restfully at night.

"It's tough to relax when the ball club isn't going well," he says. "It affects your sleep. You sleep hard, if that's the proper way to describe it, and it's not a restful sleep."

"I wouldn't say this is the worst year I've ever had. My first year with San Diego in 1974 was worse. We lost 102 games that year. What's hurting us most right now is our offense isn't producing at all. We're last in runs batted in and home runs. But I've been through it before. I'll survive."

Not if the Reds blow another one like they did to the Phillies Monday night. They'll remem-

ber that one for the rest of the season, maybe even the rest of their lives.

The Reds carried a 4-0 lead into the ninth inning when the Phillies loaded the bases with two out and went on to score four runs on Bo Diaz' checked-swing double and Garry Maddox' single.

The score was tied until the 15th when the Phillies won the game on a low throw to first by Johnny Bench with runners on first and third. Manny Trillo was the one who hit the ball to Bench and quite a bit was made of the fact that McNamara chose to have Bob Shirley pitch to him with pitcher Sid Monge on deck and the Phillies left with no pinch hitters. Monge, who spent most of his earlier career with the Angels and Indians, had batted only once in the big leagues.

"We knew Pat (Corrales) didn't have anybody left on his bench to hit for Monge," McNamara says, explaining the move, "but Shirley has walked 14 men

in 18 innings. If we had put Trillo on to fill the bases, we didn't want to take a chance on Shirley walking in the winning run.

"We got Trillo to do what we wanted when he hit that ground ball. John just threw the ball low. It stayed down and Danny (Driessen) wasn't able to come up with it."

The ballgame might not have been the Reds' only loss. Ron Reed, the second of seven Philadelphia pitchers, hit Mario Soto, who started for Cincinnati, with a pitch in the seventh inning and players on both clubs charged out of the dugouts after Soto started for Reed with a bat

in his hand.

In the ensuing scuffle, Johnson, one of the Philadelphia coaches, tried to restrain center-fielder Cesar Geronimo and aggravated a pre-existing shoulder injury which handicapped Cedenio before the game.

"That could hurt us," McNamara says. "And last night in Montreal, Tom Hume stepped in one of the creases in the Astroturf, twisted his knee. It might be another few days before he's ready to work again."

Hume, one of the league's most effective relievers, has nine saves.

Lakers topple 76ers for 2-1 NBA margin

United Press International
INGLEWOOD, Calif. — The Los Angeles Lakers did a great deal of running in the third game of the NBA championship series.

They opened Tuesday night's game against the Philadelphia 76ers with a perfectly executed running attack. They had a 12-point lead after one period, then opened the second period with an even better running exhibition and led 60-48 at halftime — with 45 of their 60 points coming on layups or dunks.

But that was only the beginning.

The Lakers went on a dizzying blitz to open the third period, and moved ahead by 25 points before slowing down to a 129-108 rout of the 76ers and a 2-1 lead in the series.

The fourth game will be play-

ed Thursday at the Forum, giving the panting 76ers a day to get their tongues back in their mouths.

Leading the Lakers in their running contest was lightning-quick guard Norm Nixon, who went over, around and through Maurice Cheeks and other defenders for 29 points and six assists. Nixon hit 12-of-20 field-goal attempts, including 8-of-10 in the second half when the Lakers blew the game open.

Cheeks scored 17 points, but spent most of the game watching a yellow jersey with the name "Nixon" on the back of it fly down the court.

"He just got his shots going, and once they started falling there was no way to stop him," Cheeks said. "I tried to deny him the ball, but that's a tough thing to do because he handles it so much."

Nixon hit just 4-of-10 shots in the first half and had only eight points at halftime, but he said that didn't concern him.

"They just weren't falling in the first half, and sometimes there's nothing you can do about it," he said. "I just kept shooting, they started to fall and I got my rhythm back."

With the Lakers leading 60-48 after the first half, Nixon missed his first shot of the third period and then hit six in a row to key a 13-2 surge that boosted Los Angeles' lead to 73-50 with 8:20 remaining in the period. Nixon hit on 5-of-6 attempts in the quarter and added a pair of free throws.

Magic Johnson scored 22 points, going 8-for-9 from the field, grabbed nine rebounds and had eight assists. Jamaal Wilkes added 17 points, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, who sat out the entire second period with three fouls, finished with 16 points and Bob McAdoo added 14, all in the first half.

The 76ers were led by Andrew Toney's 36 points. Julius Erving added 21, while Darryl Dawkins contributed 14 points and led all rebounders with 13.

Gerulaitis upset; French Open continues today

United Press International
PARIS — Jimmy Connors and Guillermo Vilas, both confident they can win the French Open title, continue today toward a seeded semifinal clash with matches they should win comfortably.

The top-seeded Connors, hoping to repeat the display of power that took him past fellow American Chip Hooper with the loss of only five games in the fourth round, meets Spain's Jose Higuera, seeded No. 14.

Higuera has had some close encounters with Connors in the past, but has only beaten him once, at North Conway, N.H., last year.

Third-seeded Vilas' opponent is Frenchman Yannick Noah, a player the Argentine has beaten three times already this year. Undeclared in 26 Grand Prix tournament matches this year, and winner of five titles, Vilas has yet to drop a set at this year's French Open and is approaching the form he displayed in his 1977 French victory.

Also, there's young Swede Mats Wilander, who has reached the last four by ousting the losing finalists of the past two years, and now faces Argentine fourth-seed Jose-Luis Clerc in the semifinals.

Following his five-set victory over second-seed Ivan Lendl of Czechoslovakia Sunday, the 17-year-old Wilander Tuesday eliminated fifth-seeded American Vitas Gerulaitis.

The women's semifinal lineup was completed Tuesday, with second-seed Martina Navratilova and defending champion Hana Mandlikova advancing to the final four.

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