

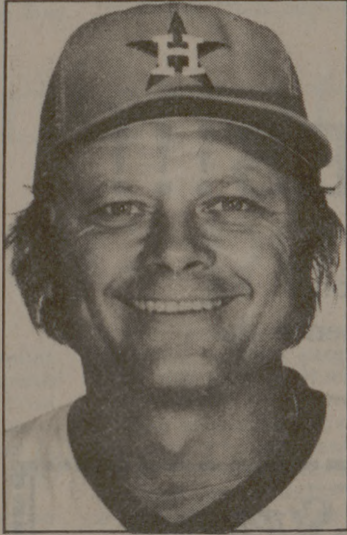
TANK McNAMARA

by Jeff Millar & Bill Hinds



Astros topple Giants; SF six games behind

United Press International
HOUSTON — Rookie Bill Doran was confident his first major league RBI would come eventually. But for rookie teammate Kevin Bass, who had yet to see his first major league hit or RBI, the pressure was beginning to build.



Joe Niekro's eight-hitter gives Houston 8-1 triumph

Both collected their first major-league RBI Wednesday night and helped the Houston Astros defeat the San Francisco Giants 8-1.

"I just keep trying to hit the ball hard. I knew it would come eventually, just like my first hit with the field," Doran said. "I'm just happy to be here and have the opportunity. Even though I always dreamed of making the major leagues and I was always confident I was good enough, I'm still surprised that it happened. I feel very fortunate and I'll just continue to play hard and enjoy the game."

The Astros won behind the pitching and hitting of Joe Niekro, 14-10, who has now allowed just three earned runs in his last 35 2/3 innings. Niekro went the distance, striking out seven and tossing an eight-hitter.

"I really struggled most of the first six innings. I had trouble getting my knuckleball where I wanted it. The defense really bailed me out, especially the double play in the fourth by (Dickie) Thon and (Phil) Garner," Niekro said.

"The last three innings I was in command of all my pitches. I

think I struck out five of the last nine and all but one were on knuckleballs. This has been my best year ever as far as control, consistency and ERA. Even in my two 20-win seasons, I was not as sharp overall."

The loss broke a five-game winning streak from San Francisco, which has won 23 games this year coming from behind in the last three innings.

"We can afford to lose our momentum. Nobody really considers us still a serious threat. But we're still only six games out," second baseman Joe Morgan said.

"I believe we would have come back, that's our style." The Astros took a 1-0 lead in the second. Garner led off with a single but was picked off by starter and loser Altee Hammar, 9-8, but shortstop Johnny LeMaster dropped the relay throw at second. Doran then doubled Garner home.

Houston took a 2-0 lead in the fifth when Doran drew a one-out walk, advanced to second on a wild pitch, went to third on an infield hit by Luis Pujols and scored on a sacrifice fly by Niekro.

Open upsets continue

United Press International
NEW YORK — Chris Evert Lloyd can be excused if she thinks her task has been made much easier.

Evert, the second seed, managed to get by Bonnie Gadusek, 4-6, 6-1, 6-0, in the quarter-finals of the U.S. Open Wednesday. Andrea Jaeger, the No. 4 seed, also survived a shaky first set in beating Gretchen Rush of Pittsburgh, 3-6, 6-1, 6-0. But Tracy Austin became the second favorite to fall in the women's section, as she was toppled by No. 5 Hana Mandlikova, 4-6, 6-4, 6-4.

The third-seeded and defending champion Austin fell prey to the Czechosla-

kian's aggressive net game and vigorous groundstrokes, the same fate that befell top-seeded Martina Navratilova the day before. "She won it," Austin said of Mandlikova. "I was disappointed on the way I played the big points because that's where I think I am the toughest."

While Mandlikova went on to face Pam Shriver — Navratilova's eliminator — in the semifinals, Evert drew Jaeger and said her match against Gadusek would help her prepare.

"Basically Andrea has the same type of game," Evert said. "She hits a lot of loopy balls and is very patient."

Rush was not overly disappointed with her performance at the Open.

"I came here as a wild card — and only found out the Tuesday before the tournament started," Rush said. "I hadn't played tennis the whole week before that and I had a cram session in tennis. Things went my way for a while and I really feel good about the way I played and my results here."

In today's feature matches, two men's quarter-final matches were scheduled: No. 2 seed Jimmy Connors against upset-minded Rodney Harmon of Richmond, Va., and, at night, fourth-seeded Guillermo Vilas facing unseeded Tom Gullikson.

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