

NBA talks 'encouraging'

TANK McNAMARA

by Jeff Millar & Bill Hinds



Flowers' efforts lead Cavs' victory, 102-95

United Press International
RICHFIELD, Ohio — Bruce Flowers had something to prove.

"I had to do something to redeem myself and get back at him (Houston forward James Bailey)," said Flowers after scoring all 9 of his points in the fourth period Wednesday night to spark the Cleveland Cavaliers to a 102-95 victory over the Rockets.

"I just had to do something on offense. I didn't mind getting knocked down but when he (Bailey) started pointing his finger at me, it got me," added Flowers, a rookie from Notre Dame.

Bailey knocked Flowers to the floor and was called for a foul at 7:50 of the final period with the Cavs leading 83-75. Thirteen seconds later, Flowers sank an 8-foot hook shot, and 37 seconds later, dropped in a 12-footer from the left baseline.

"I was boxing Bailey out when he fouled me. Bailey told (Cleveland forward Darren) Tillis 'the next guy who hits me will get it,' and I guess I was that guy," said Flowers. "This is my first year and I'm just doing the best I can."

Flowers logged only four minutes of action in the first half as World B. Free tossed in 15

points to pace the Cavs to a 50-39 halftime.

Bailey, who was held to only one field goal in the first half, poured in 20 second-half points, including a jumper from the top of the key that cut the Cleveland lead to 75-71 with 11:40 left in the game.

A basket by Flowers, a layup off a rebound by Cliff Robinson and a driving layup by rookie John Bagley in the next 90 seconds gave the Cavs six unanswered points and the Rockets couldn't catch up.

"Bailey is coming," said Houston coach Del Harris. "He is only 25 years old and since I made him a starter he has been averaging 18 points and eight rebounds. It has been a productive move."

The Rockets, who have the NBA's worst record at 13-60,

need three victories in their next nine games to avoid their worst season ever. As an expansion team in San Diego during the 1967-68 season, the Rockets finished with a 15-67 slate.

"Regardless of how we feel tonight, we will be right up there with the top eight right away next year," said Harris, whose Rockets will have two of the first three picks in the upcoming NBA college draft, which will include Virginia's Ralph Sampson.

"The actual future of the franchise is tremendous."

Free, playing with a sore left heel, topped all scorers with 28 points and dished out five assists, while Geoff Huston added 14 points for the Cavs. Bailey's 22 points paced the Rockets.

United Press International
NEW YORK — The NBA Board of Governors is scheduled to meet today and it appears the Players Association and the NBA have virtually reached agreement to avert a strike.

Sam Schulman, owner of the Seattle SuperSonics, said Wednesday the Labor Committee was ready to recommend "something" to the board.

"The last conversation I had, all the elements of the deal were not finalized, but they were com-

ing close," Schulman said.

Greg Ballard, player representative of the Washington Bullets, also sounded encouraged by the latest round of talks.

"(General Counsel Larry) Fleisher and the officers of the Players Association have been very happy so far today," Ballard said. "We feel we will reach a tentative agreement before the weekend. I would say it's 80 percent against the strike, 20 percent for the strike. The players hopefully have given a little and we feel the owners can see our

side a bit also."

The players had threatened to walk out Saturday night.

It appears the parties have reached several points of compromise to ensure that playoff action will go on as scheduled.

The reported compromises were:

— A maximum annual salary cap per team that would be between \$3.5 and \$3.7 million.

— A minimum salary level of between \$3.2 and \$3.5 million per team.

— Teams would be able to match free agent offers made to their own players by other clubs without having the contract figure affect their salary cap.

Bargaining for the players were Fleisher and players Bob Lanier, Steve Mix and Junior Bridgeman.

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Borg still alive and winning

United Press International
MONTE CARLO, Monaco — Bjorn Borg has the chance Thursday to extend his farewell party another day and reach the quarterfinals of his last Grand Prix tennis tournament, the \$375,000 Monte Carlo Open.

The 26-year-old Swede, who will retire after this tournament, upset Jose-Luis Clerc of Argentina Wednesday, eliminating the third seed 6-1 6-3 in the first round.

Borg, who resides in Monte Carlo, will face 19-year-old French Davis Cup star Henri Leconte, a player whose temperament is similar to Clerc's. The Argentine admitted to pressure in playing Borg.

"It was more than just a simple tennis match," Clerc said after a nervous performance. "The pressure on me was too great."

With a partisan center court crowd behind the Swede and a battery of television crews and photographers recording the occasion, Clerc's edginess prevented him finding any rhythm and he went down to a decisive defeat.

"I was a little surprised how easy it was," Borg said. "I said before the tournament I didn't expect too much of myself, but Clerc was so nervous in the first few games he never got into the match."

Borg plays Leconte in the third center court match on Thursday's program. The Frenchman comfortably defeated American Chip Hooper 6-2, 6-3 in Wednesday's first round.

Leconte promised to battle Borg, but he will have to conquer his temperament if he is to be the player who ends Borg's tournament career.

Borg, despite declaring he doesn't expect too much, has a further reason for playing well against Leconte. A victory would give the former world No. 1 player a quarterfinal berth against one of his fellow Swedes — Mats Wilander or Henrik Sundstrom, who clash in another second-round match.

Only three seeds remain in the tournament after the first round. Defending champion and second-seed Guillermo Vilas of Argentina plays Czechoslovakia's Tomas Smid in Thursday's opening center court match, followed by No. 5 seed Yannick Noah of France against Poland's Wojtek Fibak.

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