

Surprise clubs lead the way in AL, NL races

United Press International

Dwight Gooden of the Mets helped blow away the American League in Tuesday night's All-Star game, and now he's hoping to do the same with New York's opposition in the National League East.

Gooden, the major's strikeout leader, gave the AL a glimpse — and only a glimpse — of the fastball and curve that has made him one baseball's hottest gate attractions. He combined with Fernando Valenzuela of the Dodgers to fan a record six straight in the NL's 3-1 triumph.

Gooden and the rest of the Mets now embark on their goal of capturing their first NL East title since 1973. New York, with the fourth-best record in baseball at 47-34, has won nine of its last 10 games and the Mets begin the second half of the season with a four-game series in Atlanta.

Other NL games Thursday will send Los Angeles at Chicago, Cincinnati at Montreal, San Francisco at Pittsburgh, San Diego at St. Louis and Philadelphia at Houston.

Gooden leads a young staff that includes 10-game winner Ron Darling, Walt Terrell and newcomer Bruce Berenyi and top-flight relievers Jesse Orosco and Doug Sisk. But players and fans alike are most im-

pressed with Gooden, the 19-year-old who last year at this time was pitching in a Double-A All-Star game in Chattanooga, Tenn.

"He is an impressive young pitcher," said Baltimore manager Joe Altobelli, who guided the AL stars Tuesday night. "He has a live fastball and is not afraid to throw the curve. If nothing happens to his arm, he's going to be a great asset to his game."

Philadelphia manager Paul Owens had the luxury of managing Gooden in the All-Star game but won't be as fortunate the second half of the season.

"I've never seen a young fellow with the type of poise he has," Owens said. "That's the way he's been pitching all along. That's why I had no fear of selecting him."

The Cubs are having a great season themselves, trailing the Mets by just one-half game. They appear to be going for broke this year and the trades for veteran right-handers Rick Sutcliffe and Dennis Eckersley, plus the return of injured Scott Sanderson, have strengthened their suspect starting rotation.

The Phillies, led by exciting rookie second baseman Juan Samuel, trail New York by just 3 1/2 and the Cardinals and Expos are just 7 1/2

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games off the pace and cannot be counted out.

In the Western Division, the Padres, led by All-Star outfielder Tony Gwynn, the league's leading hitter at .355, have a five-game spread over Atlanta and a 6 1/2-game bulge over Los Angeles.

San Diego is one of only three major-league franchises never to have made the playoffs and should get a strong challenge from the Dodgers, whose injured roster could heal in time for a strong pennant run.

The morning after another rugged night with National League white lightning, American Leaguers resume their division races with two key questions.

Are the Detroit Tigers running out of gas and are the Chicago White Sox just getting up a head of steam?

The Tigers and White Sox go into the second half of the season with seven and one-game leads, respectively, in the Eastern and Western Division, but going in opposite directions in recent weeks.

The Tigers, once 35-5, have traveled at a 22-22 pace which has enabled the Toronto Blue Jays to move to within seven games of first place and the Baltimore Orioles, the defending world champions, to stand 11 1/2 off the pace. Neither gap is too big to be overcome should the Tigers continue to play at a .500 clip.

The White Sox lead both the Minnesota Twins and California Angels by one game and the last-place Texas Rangers by 7 1/2 for that matter. But they won nine of their 10 games prior to the All-Star Game and could be generating a momen-

tum similar to the second-half drive in 1983 that enabled them to finish first by 20 games.

"We won't win if we keep playing the way we have in recent weeks," acknowledges Manager Sparky Anderson of the Tigers. "The Blue Jays have come along fast and the Orioles can be relied on to play better in the second half of the season than in the first."

"We're in first place after a slow start," says General Manager Roland Hemond, whose White Sox adopted the slogan, "let's do it again this year." "We didn't mean it quite that literally, however."

The league returns to action Thursday with Boston at Seattle, Toronto at Oakland, Milwaukee at California, Cleveland at Texas, Detroit at Minnesota, Chicago at Baltimore and Kansas City at New York.

In New York, there is the spectacle of George Steinbrenner's New York Yankee millionaires floundering 20 games behind the Tigers in the East.

Dave Winfield is leading the league with a .370 mark and Don

Mattingly ranks fourth, but Yankee starting pitchers have been hit so hard so often that the New York brain trust (a euphemism for Steinbrenner) is considering abandoning the great experiment of the spring.

That, of course, was switching Dave Righetti, a fine young starting pitcher, to the bullpen. The tactic was based upon the assumption that the Yankees would be a contender and, therefore, require the services of a late-inning "game-saver."

Righetti was a conspicuous absentee from the American League All-Star squad in San Francisco Tuesday night primarily because he hasn't received enough opportunities to show whether or not he is a star reliever.

Steinbrenner's disappointment has been heightened, of course, by the unexpected rise of the cross-town rival New York Mets to contenders' status in the National League.

Wholesale changes are certain at season's end unless the Yankees make a strong run during the second half of the campaign — and they have shown no signs of doing so halfway through the year.

Stars, Wranglers ready for USFL championship

United Press International

TAMPA, Fla. — George Allen and Jim Mora are taking a similar approach to Sunday's second annual United States Football League championship game.

Allen, head coach of the Arizona Wranglers, and Mora, coach of the favored Philadelphia Stars, both said Wednesday they are approaching Sunday's USFL finale like it was just another game.

"I'm trying to stay on the same schedule we had in Arizona," Allen said. "We're going to practice under the lights. That's what we had to do at Arizona for the last two months because of the heat."

"I suppose it would have been nice to have had an extra week to prepare (like the NFL teams have for their Super Bowl), but I don't know that it really matters," Mora said. "The way it has turned out, our (practice) schedule is the same as it was for all our Sunday games."

The Stars, who advanced to the championship with playoff victories over New Jersey and Birmingham after a 16-2 regular season, and the Wranglers, winners over Houston and Los Angeles after going 10-8, both arrived in Tampa Tuesday evening and got in their first workouts

here Wednesday.

"I think it was a plus to have all that heat because the last half of the season we've been very strong," Allensaid. "With an older club, we out-conditioned some of the younger clubs. We won a couple of games in the fourth quarter because of our conditioning."

"I'm still doing things the way I did years ago. It may be a little old fashioned, but this team has worked very hard and long and they've had a good attitude."

Philadelphia has beaten the Wranglers all three times they have met during the two years of the USFL.

Last year, when the Wranglers were the Chicago Blitz, the Stars came from a 24-7 deficit with 21 points in the fourth quarter to win 31-24 in regular season play and scored 24 fourth-quarter points in a playoff game enroute to a 44-38 overtime victory.

This year, the Stars, down 21-6 at the half, rallied to beat the Wranglers, 22-21, without the services of Philadelphia running ace Kelvin Bryant who missed that game because of an injury.

"The Wranglers (on a six-game winning streak) have played very

well of late and we can't afford to let them get an early lead on us again," Mora said. "We were lucky to win that first game (this past season) and I hope we don't get behind again because I don't know if we could come back again."

"We match up well against Philadelphia," Allen said.

Sunday's contest will feature the passing of Philadelphia's Chuck Fusina against Arizona's Greg Landry and the running of Bryant against Kevin Long and Tim Spencer of Arizona.

Fusina was the USFL's top-rated quarterback while throwing for 3,827 yards and 31 touchdowns during the 18-game regular season. Landry, a 16-year pro veteran, threw for 3,534 yards and 26 touchdowns.

Bryant, the Most Valuable Player in the USFL in 1983, rushed for 1,406 yards during the regular season and 269 in two playoff games, including 154 last week against Birmingham. Spencer and Long were the 1-2 runners in the Western Conference with 1,212 and 1,010 yards respectively.

TANK McNAMARA

by Jeff Millar & Bill Hinds



Denver Gold owner accused of 'tampering' with Houston's Davis

United Press International

DENVER — Denver Gold owner Doug Spedding may name a new head coach over the next few days, but he also can expect something else — a USFL tampering charge for his attempts to lure an assistant coach away from the Houston Gamblers.

Officials expect Spedding to announce by the end of this week the hiring of Darrell "Mouse" Davis, Houston's offensive coordinator, as the Gold's new head coach.

But Jay Roulier, a part owner of

the Gamblers, doesn't like the way Spedding has gone about trying to sign a new coach and plans to take action.

Whether or not Davis is signed, Roulier said he will press tampering charges against his fellow USFL team owner for the way he approached Davis about the job.

"We're going to make an issue of this, not to prevent Mouse from going to Denver, but to let Spedding know that he can't flout league rules and get away with it," Roulier said.

"All we wanted was for Doug to ask our permission to talk to Davis as league rules provide. He flat didn't do that, and we have a well-documented case of tampering to present to the league."

According to Roulier, Houston co-owner Jerry Argovitz asked Spedding several times in recent weeks whether he wanted to talk to Davis about the Denver job, formerly held by Craig Morton. Each time, Spedding would say no and then contact Davis anyway.

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