

TANK McNAMARA

by Jeff Millar & Bill Hinds



Houston's dome has a birthday

Astrodome celebration brings back memories

Associated Press

HOUSTON — In the past 20 years, millions of fans have surged through its gates to see everything from bloodless bullfights to championship clashes in the first-of-its-kind Astrodome, billed as "The Eighth Wonder of the World."

Athletic careers have soared and crashed on its playing field, and many of the events and performances of the past will be remembered Tuesday when the Astrodome hosts its 20th birthday celebration.

What a local radio station calls "the world's largest birthday card" will unfold accordin-like on the field, accompanied by a giant birthday cake. Film clips will flash on the giant video screen to recall past events.

A celebration prior to the Houston Astros' National League opener against the Los Angeles Dodgers will include a parade complete with clowns, elephants and some of the athletes who competed in the Astrodome.

Several athletes who created memorable Astrodome moments are to take part in the celebration.

Mickey Mantle hit the first home run in the Astrodome on opening night April 9, 1965; Elvin Hayes led Houston's basketball team to a 71-69 victory over Kareem Abdul Jabbar's UCLA Bruins in a 1968 game billed as the college basketball game of the century.

Bobby Riggs lost to Billie Jean King in a battle-of-the-sexes tennis match in 1973, and Jimmy Wynn and Bob Lillis, now the Astros manager, were members of the first Astros team to compete in the Dome.

The arena is also where Bum Phillips patrolled the sidelines as he led the Houston Oilers to the National Football League playoffs, and where Bill Virdon managed the Astros to within six outs of reaching the World Series.

It hosted four no-hitters, the last in 1981 by Nolan Ryan; a major league All-Star baseball game; an NCAA Final Four; a Muhammad Ali title fight; 17 Bluebonnet Bowls; Russian gymnast Olga Korbut; a world record motorcycle leap by Evel Knievel; a Bob Hope Special and a Billy Graham Crusade.

The Astrodome was the brainchild of former Houston mayor Roy Hofheinz, who conceived the idea after visiting the Roman Colosseum in the mid-1950s and learned that it once had an awning that was drawn over it by slaves.

The \$38 million stadium was completed in time to open the 1965 season, setting the blueprint for future all-weather sports facilities.

The Astrodome was the structural wonder of its day, but there were problems — the roof leaked and had to be repaired before the regular season started.

Fielders lost fly balls against the background of the ceiling. That problem was solved by painting the ceiling panels to provide contrast. But the darker colored roof filtered out sunlight and killed grass on the playing field.

That problem led to one of many firsts for the Astrodome — Astro-turf, or artificial turf.

Texas A&M Sportscope

A&M baseball team hosts Pan American in non-conference series

Coach Mark Johnson's Texas A&M baseball team (28-10, 5-4 in the Southwest Conference) takes on Pan American in a non-conference three-game series. The Aggies and Broncos square-off in a double-header Tuesday at 5:30 p.m. at Olsen Field and complete the series with a single game Wednesday at 3 p.m. Tuesday is helmet night with the first 1,000 people into the ball park receiving an official Texas A&M batting helmet.

No. 7 A&M netters battle SMU in home dual-match

Coach David Kent's seventh-ranked Texas A&M men's tennis team (22-5) hosts Southern Methodist (34-2) in a crucial Southwest Conference dual-match at the Omar Smith Tennis Center beginning at 1:30 p.m. Tuesday. SMU is currently tied for the lead in the SWC race with Texas Christian at 4-0. A&M is in fifth place at 2-1 behind Texas (3-1) and Arkansas (4-1).

A&M softball team will not play Southwest Texas State

Coach Bob Brock's third-ranked Texas A&M softball team will not host Southwest Texas State in a double-header that was scheduled for Tuesday at 4 p.m.

TAMU sailing team places fourth in New Orleans competition

The Texas A&M sailing team competed in the District Dinghy Championships this past weekend (April 5-7) in New Orleans and placed fourth overall. Tulane, the host school, won the regatta with a total of 26 points. The rest of the team standings were as follows: Texas, 36; Spring Hill, 46; Texas A&M, 76; Rice, 93; Texas A&M-Galveston, 94; Louisiana State, 101 and Baylor, 102.

Joe Sambito ends career with Astros

Big leagues get a Rose-y debut

Associated Press

HOUSTON — Joe Sambito, one of the top relief pitchers in Houston Astros history, was given his unconditional release Monday after he declined to accept a move to the National League club's Class AAA affiliate at Tucson.

Sambito, 32, who had been attempting a comeback from a series of elbow operations, was told last Friday that he had failed to make the Astros pitching staff.

Astros General Manager Al Rosen said Monday that Sambito had elected to take his release rather than the demotion.

"We are saddened by the fact the course of events took us to this point," Rosen said. "Joe has worked hard in his attempted comeback but we are certain that after reviewing the total situation carefully this past weekend, he made a decision which he felt was in the best interest of everyone concerned."

"We certainly wish him well in any future endeavors."

Sambito was among the top relief pitchers in the National League in 1982 when he started experiencing elbow problems that led to surgery. He missed the entire 1983 season. He returned to the Astros roster last season but was not used in game situations.

Sambito finished his Astros career with a 33-32 record, 2.42 earned run average and 72 saves.

This spring, Sambito had a 1-0 record, 7.53 era and two saves in nine games.

Associated Press

Reds 4, Expos 1

CINCINNATI — Player-manager Pete Rose resumed his chase of Ty Cobb's all-time hit mark Monday, driving in three runs with a double and a single to lead the Cincinnati Reds to a snowy 4-1 National League opening day victory over the Montreal Expos.

Rose was 2-for-3 with a walk, leaving him 93 hits away from Cobb's all-time mark of 4,191.

Royals 2, Blue Jays 1

KANSAS CITY — Willie Wilson drilled a two-run double off losing pitcher Dave Stieb in the seventh inning Monday to boost the Kansas City Royals to a 2-1 victory over the Toronto Blue Jays.

Stieb cruised into the seventh with a three-hitter and 1-0 lead before losing control.

Tigers 5, Indians 4

DETROIT — Rookie Chris Pittaro had three singles, driving in a run to start Detroit's two-run eighth inning, and Jack Morris and Willie Hernandez combined on a six-hitter as the Tigers beat the Cleveland Indians 5-4 on opening day Monday.

Morris, 1-0, was erratic, walking six while striking out six in the eight innings he worked. Camacho was tagged with the loss for Cleveland.

Red Sox 9, Yankees 2

BOSTON — Slugging outfielders Tony Armas, Dwight Evans and Jim Rice accounted for six runs with homers Monday, powering the Boston Red Sox to a 9-2 victory over the New York Yankees in the 1985 season-opener for both teams.

Backed by a lusty 10-hit attack against New York starter Phil Niekro and relievers Bob Shirley and Joe Cowley, Boston right-hander Dennis "Oil Can" Boyd earned the victory with help from Bob Stanley.

Boyd allowed just five hits, struck out five and walked four in seven innings, while Niekro, who walked home two runs in the third, saw his opening-day record drop to 0-7.

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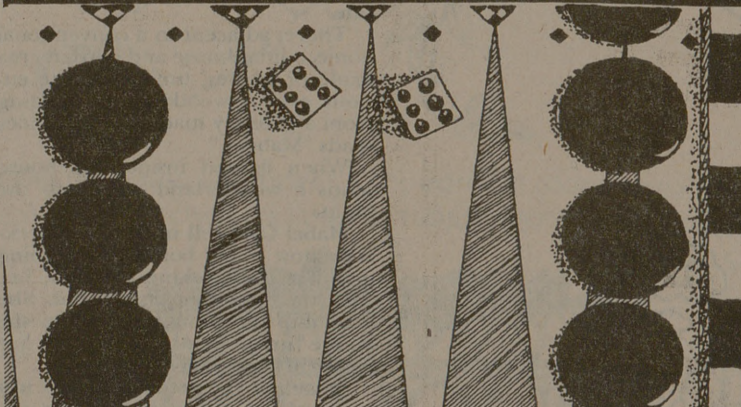
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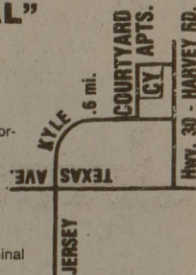
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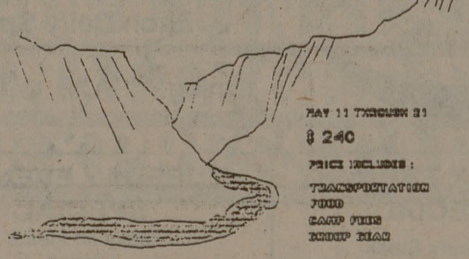
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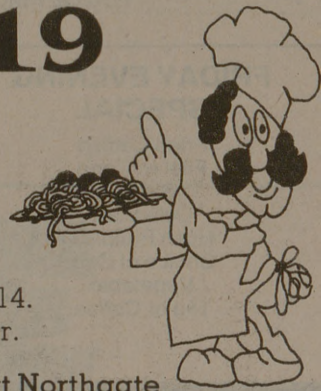
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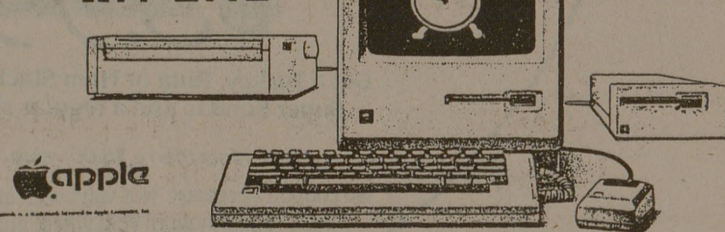
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