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by Jeff Millar & Bill Hinds

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BASEBALL

I DON'T UNDERSTAND IT! WE ALL WON ALL OF OUR GAMES LAST WEEK AND THE AGS ARE STILL IN 1ST PLACE!

NHL 'dogs' advance in playoffs

Maple Leafs, Whalers set for second round

(AP) — Following stunning first-round knockouts, the Toronto Maple Leafs and Hartford Whalers, a pair of fourth-place teams, are ready to be underdogs again in the second round of the National Hockey League's Stanley Cup playoffs.

Another fourth-place team, the New York Rangers, could join the Leafs and Whalers Tuesday night.

"You're just seeing the tip of the iceberg with this club," Maple Leafs Coach Dan Maloney said. "For a long time our team was working hard and couldn't get over the hump. I feel this series has put us over the hump."

Toronto completed a three-game sweep of the Norris Division-winning Chicago Blackhawks with a 7-2 victory Saturday night. Toronto finished the regular season with the worst record among the 16 Stanley Cup teams, 29 points behind the Blackhawks.

Hartford, meanwhile, eliminated the Quebec Nordiques in three straight games by defeating the Adams Division winners 9-4 Saturday. While the Whalers are one of the NHL's hottest teams now, they weren't expected to win with such ease over the Nordiques, who finished with the fourth-best record in the league.

The Whalers didn't clinch the fourth playoff spot in the Adams Division until the final weekend of the season.

Those two upsets, coupled with the Philadelphia Flyers' problems with the Rangers in the Patrick Division semifinals, have been the major surprises in the NHL playoffs thus far.

The Rangers, who finished 32 points behind the Flyers in fourth place in the Patrick, are tied 2-2 in their best-of-five series and will play the deciding game Tuesday night at the The Spectrum in Philadelphia. Among other teams sweeping first-round series included the Washington Capitals, who beat the New York Islanders in the Patrick Division semifinals, and the Montreal Canadiens, who stopped the Boston Bruins in the Adams Division.

While both the Caps and Canadiens were expected to win their series, they weren't expected to win with such ease.

Elsewhere, the two-time defending Stanley Cup champions, the Edmonton Oilers, and the Calgary Flames won as expected in the Smythe Division. The Oilers ousted the Vancouver Canucks in three games and the Flames downed Winnipeg in three.

In the only other first-round series still yet to be decided, St. Louis and Minnesota will settle their Norris Division semifinal Tuesday night.

Of all the surprises, the biggest was Toronto's elimination of Chicago.

"They deserved everything they got," Chicago player Denis Savard said. "It has been seven years since Toronto advanced this far in Stanley Cup play."

Toronto's Russ Courtnall said, "We worked our necks off on every shift. The fans were really behind us here in Toronto and that helps so much."

Nicklaus erases doubts of his abilities at Masters

AUGUSTA, Ga. (AP) — "Dead, huh? Washed up, huh?"

Jack Nicklaus kept those questions in mind.

And, on the rolling, flowered hills of the Augusta National Golf Club course, site of the Masters tournament, he wrote his answer into the history of this ancient game:

Not yet.

Not Jack Nicklaus.

"I'm not the player I was 10 or 15 years ago," the 46-year-old Nicklaus said after a brilliant 30 over the back nine Sunday lifted him to another victory in one of golf's Big Four events, the tournaments around which he built his golfing life, the tournaments around which he constructed the finest record in the history of the game.

"But," he continued, flashing a long-absent, confident, satisfied smile, "I can still play a little bit at times."

And, he said, that's his plan now in what he called "the December of my career."

He'll play a little.

Not as much as he once did, not even as much as he has in the past few seasons when he restricted his schedule to about a dozen events.

"I won't play much the rest of the year — mostly around the majors. And I won't play as much next spring as I did this year," Nicklaus said.

Then he quickly added: "I'll play as much as I think I need to, to get ready for the majors."

But he'll continue to play.

"No, I won't retire. Maybe I should. Maybe I should go out on a win like this. Maybe I should just say goodbye. Maybe that would be the smart thing to do."

"But I'm not that smart," said Nicklaus, who now has won a record six Masters, a record-tying four U.S. Opens, a record-tying five PGAs and three British Opens. That's 18 major professional titles covering a 25-year professional career. No one else is even close.

The latest Nicklaus triumph may have been the most satisfying.

It came at a time when he was down, when he was playing poorly, when his pride had been hurt and his ego stung by published reports that said he was "dead, washed up, through, had no chance whatsoever."

There were constant questions about whether he would retire.

And there were reasons for the questions.

He had won only twice since 1980. He had not won at all since 1984. And, this season, he had played very poorly. In seven starts, he missed the cut three times. He withdrew from another tournament. He didn't finish higher than 39th.

And, by inference, he hinted that he, too, had thought about retiring.

He rejected it.

"I've played too well too long to quit like that," he said. "I'd played too well too long to make a short period like that the last time I played golf."

"I still enjoy golf. I still enjoy the competition. I enjoyed the competition at Pebble Beach (where Tom Watson beat him in the U.S. Open). I enjoyed the competition at Riviera (where Hal Sutton beat him in the PGA)."

"And I enjoyed this more than anything in the last six years (the last time he won a major)."

"There's nothing wrong with my golf game. If I put my mind to it, I can still play."

Sam Houston State coach accepts N.C.-Wilmington job

WILMINGTON, N.C. (AP) — Robert McPherson, who led Sam Houston State to a 27-6 mark this past season, was named the new basketball coach at North Carolina-Wilmington Monday, replacing Mel Gibson, who resigned last month.

UNCW Chancellor William Wagner made the announcement at a news conference that McPherson would guide the Seahawks, who turned in a 16-13 record last season and a fourth-place finish in the Colonial Athletic Association.

Gibson coached at UNCW for the

past 14 seasons before stepping down.

"We are pleased with the progress that our basketball program had made, and we feel that Coach McPherson is the man to lead our program to a higher level in the coming seasons," said Provost Charles Ca-

hill, chairman of the search committee for the selection of a new head coach.

McPherson, 44, has been coach at Sam Houston the past five seasons, piling up a 102-47 record as the Bearkats won the Gulf Star Conference this past season.

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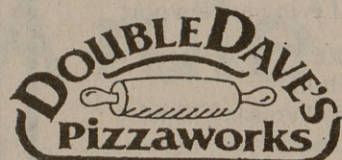
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A PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM DOUBLE DAVE

It's been a great year in AGGIELAND. From the sharply-pitched excitement of a great Football Fall... Now Spring Break is past. It's the last leg of the school year, a mellower time. We are torn between being lulled by this gorgeous Spring and the need to complete our studies for the year.

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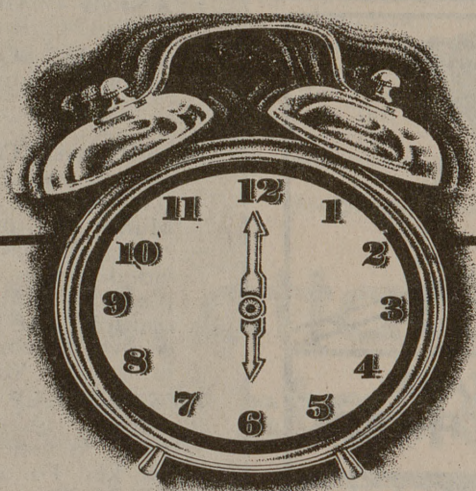


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