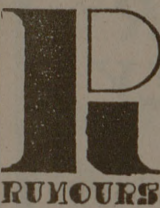


RUMOUR:

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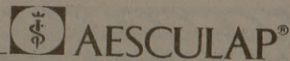
FACT:

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Red Sox ace will be ready for playoffs

BOSTON (AP) — Roger Clemens, the ace of the Boston Red Sox pitching staff who escaped a line drive to the elbow with only a bruise, said Thursday he was "almost positive" he'll be ready for the opener of the American League Championship Series next week.

The 24-game winner, who was struck on the elbow of his pitching arm Wednesday night by a ball sharply hit by Baltimore catcher John Stefero, said his right arm was "a little sore, a little puffy. But I think it's going to be all right."

Team physician Dr. Arthur Pappas said there was a bruise over a bone and that the amount of swelling would determine how soon Clemens could pitch again.

A few hours before Clemens was injured, Boston Manager John McNamara had named him the starting pitcher for Tuesday's playoff opener at Boston against the California Angels.

"Pappas, I'm sure, is going to look at me and we're going to go cautious with it," Clemens said, "but I'm almost positive that I'm not going to miss my Tuesday start."

It was the latest in a series of injuries to the Boston pitching staff. Veteran Tom Seaver is an uncertainty for the playoffs because of a knee injury.

Clemens said he had put a little something extra on the ball he threw to Stefero, and was out of position when it was hit.

"I was trying to get the ball down. I pushed off real hard and fell to the left, which really isn't me," he said. "Usually I'm set up perfectly to take any kind of ball hit back to me."

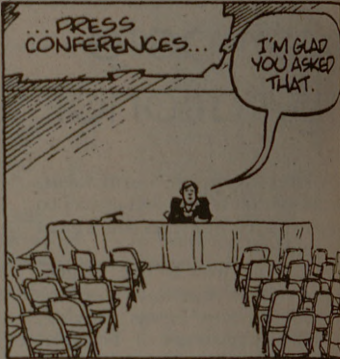
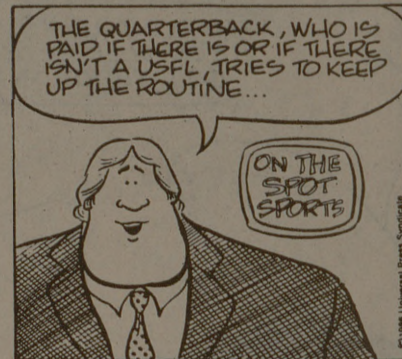
When Stefero swung at what Clemens said was a "with-the-seam fastball which will run away from a left-handed hitter," it came right back at him.

"I wanted to take it in the back if I could. But my arm was just right there. And then, it hit me smack on the elbow," he said after losing his chance to become Boston's first 25-game winner since Mel Parnell in 1949.

Clemens said he was probably out of position because he had to keep his pitches down since umpires seem to be using a smaller strike zone late in the season.

"I don't know whether it is for the hitters or not. But it seems like the zones are getting a little bit tighter this time of year," he said.

TANK McNAMARA®



by Jeff Millar & Bill Hinds

Whitmire sets another bet as she takes on Letterman

HOUSTON (AP) — Mayor Kathy Whitmire and talk show host David Letterman have placed their bets. Whitmire says the Houston Astros will win the National League Championship Series, while Letterman is betting on the New York Mets.

If the Astros beat the Mets in the best-of-7 series, an enlarged photo of Whitmire and a team picture of the Astros will hang behind Letterman's desk for four consecutive nights of his show.

If the Mets win, a bigger-than-life-size poster of Mets outfielder Mookie Wilson will adorn the mayor's office.

Letterman called Whitmire

Wednesday afternoon to pose the friendly wager, the mayor's spokesman, Paul Mabry, said.

Mabry said Whitmire agreed to the photograph wager "after we told her who Mookie Wilson was."

Letterman phoned Whitmire during his show — taped in midafternoon, Houston time — and aired during the show, which began at midnight Wednesday. As he talked to the mayor, Letterman displayed a huge photograph of the mayor.

"There was some good-natured bantering back and forth about the series," Mabry said. "She expressed a lot of confidence about the Astros, and he's pulling for the Mets."

"At one point he proposed a

\$1,000 wager and when she didn't blush immediately, he backed off," Mabry said.

There was a slight change of stakes, however. The photograph of Whitmire that Letterman proposed using was her long-since-discarded "Tootsie" look. Mabry said a more current photo of the mayor was being mailed to Letterman to use.

Letterman's wager was prompted by a bet placed earlier between Whitmire and New York Mayor Ed Koch.

In that wager, if the Astros win a Houston Proud banner will be flown in Central Park. If the Mets win, an "I Love NY" banner will be waving across from city hall at Tranquility Park.

Owner says Rangers not for sale

ARLINGTON, Texas (AP) — Texas Rangers owner Eddie Chiles says he won't sell his team after all and is looking forward to a successful future.

He said his decision was influenced by both the franchise turning the first net profit in its 15-year history and encouraging signs in the energy industry and baseball in general.

He vowed to maintain the Rangers' payroll near its 1986 level, which ranked 25th in baseball, according to figures distributed at last week's owners meeting.

"I'm not looking for options," Chiles said. "I could look for another buyer sure, if I wanted to. Right now I don't want to. We have a hell of a baseball team and the finest management group in baseball."

With his national oil-field service company, Western Company of America, in dire financial shape, it

Rangers raise ticket prices

DALLAS (AP) — The Texas Rangers raised their ticket prices, citing an increase in state taxes and operating costs.

The price hike was 50 cents for 22,895 of Arlington Stadium's 42,876 seats, with field and mezzanine boxes going up from \$8.50 to \$9; reserved seats jumping from \$7.50 to \$8 and plaza seats going from \$6.50 to \$7.

seemed certain he would have to sell the team.

Chiles said that if it ever came down to selling Western or the Rangers, it would have to be the Rangers. But for now he is looking

forward to enjoying the team's success.

The Rangers hit more home runs this year than in any previous season. And of course the bottom line is they've won more games than ever before.

The Rangers this year have managed to keep their payroll at a low level mostly by keeping nine rookies on the roster at the league's minimum salary level of \$60,000.

With those players eligible for salary arbitration, it appears the salaries will increase reflecting the team's success. Chiles said that won't be the case.

"If you agree with that, of course you are going to lose money," he said. "That's what has happened in baseball for the last 10 years. I don't agree with it. I don't agree with the supposition the Rangers' salaries are going to go up every year. Management has to control salaries."

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