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New York, Boston get short vacation before Series start

NEW YORK (AP) — It was a very short "pardon" for New York Mets Manager Davey Johnson. The Boston Red Sox, meanwhile, are back to playing with their own money.

The Mets and Red Sox, survivors of the National League and American League playoffs, are back at ground zero again as they prepare to open the World Series Saturday night at Shea Stadium.

The Mets earned their third World Series berth by beating the Houston Astros in a dramatic 16-inning game Wednesday, taking the best-of-seven NL series in six games.

The Red Sox completed their dramatic comeback from a 3 to 1 deficit in games with two easy victories over the shell-shocked Angels back in Boston's friendly Fenway Park.

"We were down to our last pitch," said Boston second baseman Marty Barrett, who was named the Most Valuable Player in the AL playoffs. "They had already uncorked the champagne Sunday and when we came back, we felt like we had nothing to lose."

Now, the pressure begins again in this "shuttle" series.

"The Red Sox are kind of close to us because (General Manager) Lou Gorman, who used to work for us, is up there, and we see them down here on our television sets," Mets General Manager Frank Cashen said. "It's going to be kind of a little neighborhood battle and that's going to be fun."

Both Johnson and Boston Manager John McNamara were forced to spend their best pitchers in winning the playoffs. That means New York's Dwight Gooden and Boston's Roger Clemens, the aces of their re-

spective staffs, won't be available for the Series opener.

McNamara, managing in the Series for the first time in his 14-year managerial career, is expected to go with left-hander Bruce Hurst, 13-8 during the regular season and 1-0 with a 2.40 earned run average in two playoff starts.

Johnson will counter with right-hander Ron Darling, 15-6 during the regular season but with no decision and a 7.20 ERA in five innings of playoff work.

Darling will be pitching with mixed emotions against his boyhood heroes.

"If I had worked out a scenario in my own mind, this would be it — Boston and us," said Darling, who was born in Hawaii but grew up in Millbury, Mass. "I didn't pitch badly in the playoffs. I'm glad to be getting another chance."

For the first time, the World Series will use the designated hitter when the game is played in the American League park, but not when the games are played in the NL park. That means Darling and the rest of the Mets' staff probably will avoid Boston slugger Don Baylor until the Series moves to Fenway Park on Tuesday night for the scheduled third, fourth and fifth games.

"I'm glad I'm pitching against the Red Sox at Shea," Darling said. "Who wants to face Baylor?"

Baylor, who was traded to the Red Sox by the New York Yankees in the spring, batted .238 with a team-high 31 home runs during the 1986 season. He hit .346 in the playoffs and was the only Boston player to hit in all seven games.

Odds makers make Mets 12-5 favorites

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (AP) — Odds-makers have made the pitching-rich New York Mets prohibitive 12-5 favorites to beat the Boston Red Sox in the World Series, the most lopsided opening odds since the 1950 baseball championships.

Legal sports book operators in this gaming city say the odds even could go higher as a betting public, enamored with the Mets, lines up to place money on their favorite team.

"Everything is Mets, Mets, Mets," Mel Exber, owner of the Las Vegas Club, said. "It's like an election, it's a landslide."

The odds so favor the Mets that a bettor would have to bet \$24 on the Mets winning the World Series to win \$10. Bettors who favor the Red Sox can put up \$10 to win \$20 if the Red Sox take the series.

Exber, who has been running sports books since the mid-1940s, said the opening line is the biggest since 1950 when the New York Yankees were 3-1 favorites over the Philadelphia Phillies. The Yankees won that Series in four games.

"The Mets are obviously the superior team, there's almost no comparison," Exber said. "The starting pitchers for the Red Sox can't compare to the Mets' starters, and the Red Sox haven't seen pitching like this in the American League."

Russ Culver, who sets odds at

Bally's sports book, said the Mets shouldn't actually be such huge favorites. If it were not for the public's fascination with the National League team — a fascination that causes them to bet heavily on the Mets — Culver said the team would be only about an 8-5 favorite.

"They're a counterfeit, or bogus, favorite simply because we have so much money on the Mets," Culver said. "We've got so much on the Mets that we have to make it (the spread) artificially high."

By making it a 12-5 spread, Culver said enough money will be bet on the Red Sox so that sports books can come close to balancing the action on both sides. Books make their money by pocketing the difference between paying \$24 for a \$10 bet and paying \$20 for the same bet if the other team wins, assuming the money is divided equally.

Bookmakers were hoping for the Mets to make it to the World Series because of the interest the team generates among bettors. And, although the pennant was just clinched Wednesday, the action so far has been heavy.

"With the Mets in the Series and the playoff games having been so exciting, it's really going to carry over into the betting," Reizner said. "We should have one of our best series ever."

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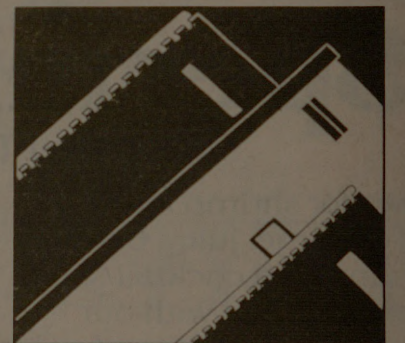
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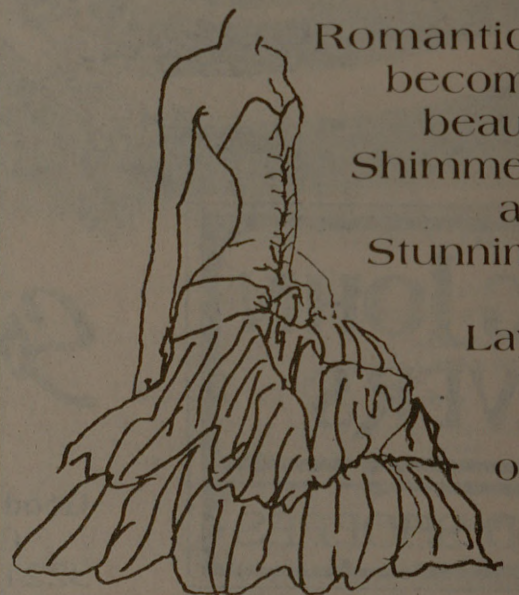
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