

Sports

Stars & Stripes grabs 3-0 lead in Cup

One more victory over Aussies brings America's Cup home

FREMANTLE, Australia (AP) — Stars & Stripes moved to within once of bringing the America's Cup home, pulling away to a 3-0 lead over Kookaburra III Monday by beating the Australian boat easily in the moderate winds the Aussies had wanted.

The end of the best-of-seven series could come Wednesday. U.S. skipper Dennis Conner, expecting stronger winds than today, called a day day, which also gave Aussie skipper Iain Murray a chance to fine-tune his golden-hulled boat and his crew's gray spirits.

It was a move that only seemed to delay the inevitable — a return of the silver trophy to its homeland of Australia.

Stars & Stripes' one-minute, 46-second victory was so easy that the

American boat's crew members, acted as if they were on a pleasure cruise rather than on a chapter in yachting history. They joked and took snapshots of each other and at one point, Conner gave tactician Tom Whidden a chance to steer the boat.

But nothing they did kept them from controlling the race for the third straight day. Not even moderate winds of 12 to 18 knots — the speed Murray sought — stood in their way.

"We do seem to be peaking now," Whidden said.

Few obstacles remained in Conner's path toward vindication for his 1983 loss to Australia II, the only time America didn't win the America's Cup.

On the last leg, the beaten Aussies got another jolt. A Kookaburra

chase boat sped alongside the 12-meter yacht to tell the crew a bomb threat had been received by Sydney police.

Syndicate chief Kevin Parry said the crew was given the option of evacuating the boat, even though he was told the call almost certainly was a hoax. The members decided to continue and Murray kept his sense of humor.

He said he decided to continue the race, "since we were well behind and we didn't think if a bomb went up it was going to affect the result."

The boats hit the starting line at the same time Monday and, in a rare development, Kookaburra III went in front. It was ahead when they crossed four minutes into the race and when they crossed again 11 minutes later.

The next meeting was an unplea-

sant one for the seemingly defenseless defenders of the Cup.

It came about six minutes later as the boats sailed toward each other, Stars & Stripes coming from the right and Kookaburra III from the left. The Americans were in front by about two boat lengths and the Aussies tacked to the left rather than trying to pass under Stars & Stripes' stern.

They had a good view of that stern the rest of the day as they never led again.

As it had in each of the first two races, Stars & Stripes led at every mark Monday. In the series, it has won 10 of the 12 upwind legs, four of the six downwind legs and four of the six reaches.

Kookaburra III has sailed a total of nine hours, 45 minutes and 49 seconds.

SFA finds 3-point rule blessing in disguise

NACOGDOCHES (AP) — When the 3-point basket became a reality for college basketball last March, Stephen F. Austin Coach Harry Miller didn't care for the idea. Then he discovered Eric Rhodes and Scott Dimak.

"My reaction was that we've got a good game the way it is but we keep trying to fix something that's not broken," Miller said.

But Rhodes, a 6-foot-3 guard, warmed to the idea quickly. He leads the nation, hitting 61 percent of his tries and has had six perfect games from outside the 19-foot-9-inch 3-point line this season.

Dimak is hitting 56 percent and as a team, the Lumberjacks are second in the nation to Indiana in 3-point baskets. Despite having no starter taller than 6-6, they are 13-7 after Saturday's 70-55 victory over Southeast Louisiana.

Students call Rhodes "the bomber." Crowds at SFA Coliseum rise to their feet when Rhodes gets the ball in the 3-point zone, and Miller is a little easier on the 3-point goal.

"A guy's got a right to change his mind doesn't he?" he said laughing. "I hope they leave it where it is now for a few years so we can play with it some."

Rhodes and Dimak liked the idea from the beginning.

"I thought it would be good for me personally and for the game in general," Rhodes said. "I thought it would add excitement to the game."

But Rhodes never thought about being thrust into the national spotlight.

"It's really a mystery to me all the success I've had with the 3-pointer," said Rhodes, a junior who has made 42 of his 69 3-point tries and averages 13.8 points per game.

"I couldn't have dreamed that it would get so much attention. At the start of the season, I didn't even think about the 3-point circle. Then Coach (assistant Tim)

Harris told me if I'm going to be shooting from out there, take another step back and get three points out of it."

Dimak, a sophomore, came off the bench against Louisiana Tech in the fourth game of the season and hit four of four 3-pointers to earn a starting position. He has made 27 of 48 and would rank among the top five in the nation, but he has not taken enough shots to qualify.

The pair has presented a potential problem for opposing defenses but has been a boon for a guard-oriented team whose tallest starter is 6-6 sophomore forward Clarence King.

"It's really not a very long shot," Dimak said. "It's just a normal shot. We didn't know we'd be shooting this well, but since we're not a very big team, it has helped take pressure off our inside people."

"I didn't do anything to take advantage of the 3-point shot," Miller said. "We were taking the same shots last year but only getting two points for them."

Miller's original objection was that it could cause a coaching problem.

"I thought it would cause a lot of kids to be taking bad shots outside their range," Miller said. "We had a little of that at the beginning of the year but we worked it out."

But his team has resisted the urge to force 3-pointers.

"We really don't even emphasize it," Miller said. "We tell them to work for the good shot. If it's a 3-pointer, then all the better."

A strategic 3-pointer can be an intimidating factor.

"Eric made one from way out, probably 2½ feet behind the line against Sam Houston State," Miller said. "It put us up by 15 and I think it might have taken a little out of them."

"We teased Eric about it. We told him to be sure he's in bounds before he takes the shot."

Miller proves he can still compete with PGA Tour's younger players

PEBBLE BEACH, Calif. (AP) — Johnny Miller proved himself wrong.

"I thought the Johnny Miller years were over," said the 39-year-old veteran who once was known as golf's Golden Boy.

Despite what he calls "a terminal putting stroke," Miller rolled back the years last weekend and scored the 23rd victory of his PGA Tour career in the Pebble Beach National Pro-Am.

And it was the success of some of golf's older players in recent major championships — Jack Nicklaus in the Masters, Raymond Floyd in the U.S. Open and Lee Trevino in the 1984 PGA — that kept alive his hopes that "the Johnny Miller years" had not ended.

Miller, a former U.S. and British Open winner and the best player in the world in the mid-'70s, was Player of the Year in 1974 when he won six straight American tournaments and set

a single-season money-winning record.

But he'd gone through four seasons without a victory before he came from six shots off the pace with a last-round 66 at Pebble Beach, 1 stroke better than runner-up Payne Stewart.

"My career was kind of mellowing out. That's okay. I was kind of enjoying smelling the roses along the way, checking out the scenery," Miller said.

"You know, I've been playing competitive golf since I was 8 years old. I'm 39 but my nerves are like 46 or 47."

"The last few years, I've played as good tee to green as I ever have. But my putting stroke is terminal."

"The kids out here now are so good, and there are so many of them, and they do nothing but eat, drink and sleep golf. It's hard to compete with them, just to make the cut."

"I kind of thought maybe the Johnny Miller years were over," he said. But there was another thought, too.

"I look at Jack winning the Masters and Floyd winning the (U.S.) Open, and Trevino (in the 1984 PGA).

"Trevino winning was great, very special. And there's only one Jack. And there aren't many Ray Floyds around."

"And I look at Hubert Green winning the PP (in 1985) and I say, 'good going, Hubert.' Then I think, 'Hey, I can play better than Hubert and he just won a major.'"

Johnny didn't win a major. But it was the next best thing.

"It'll do a lot for me," he said, and ticked off things like exemptions to the Masters and Tournament of Champions.

"But the most important thing is that the other players out here won't look at me like I'm a dead horse," he said.

Hoyas fall to Redmen

NEW YORK (AP) — Guard Mark Jackson scored a career-high 34 points Monday night, including four in overtime, to lead No. 19 St. John's to a 67-65 Big East Conference basketball victory over 10th-ranked Georgetown.

In avenging a 60-46 loss to the Hoyas at the Capital Centre in Landover, Md., on Jan. 7, the Redmen outscored Georgetown 4-2 in the extra period with Jackson, a 6-foot-3 senior, hitting two baskets, including the winner with 52 seconds left.

Jackson also knocked the ball out of Reggie Williams' hands and out of bounds with two seconds to go in overtime.

Williams, who paced Georgetown with 26 points, had tied it with 1:22 left. Williams had missed seven straight shots over the last five minutes of regulation play.

The victory moved St. John's to 6-4 in Big East play, 15-4 overall. Georgetown is 15-4, 5-4.

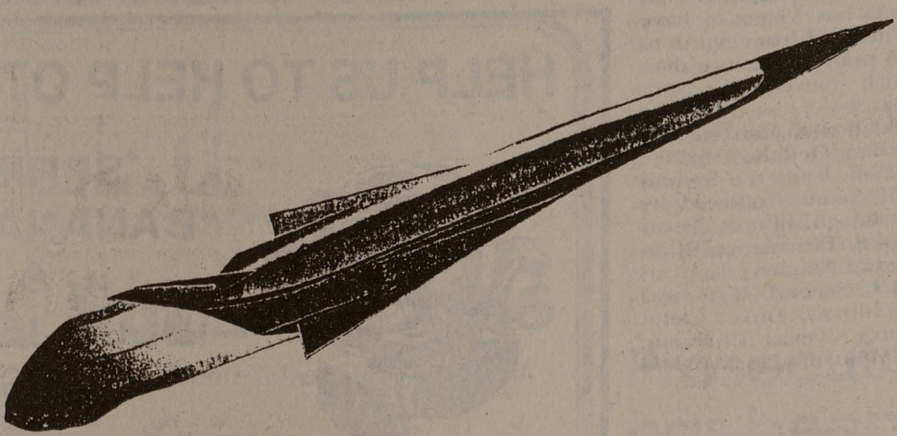
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