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Stern looks into Motta's charges against Fitch

missioner is investigating Dallas Mavericks Coach Dick Motta's charges that the Houston Rockets tried to manipulate their playoff position by benching their best players.

'We will have obviously some response because people have asked about it," Commissioner David Stern told *The Dallas Morning News* on Sunday. "We are going to deal with it."

The newspaper said Stern declined further comment on Motta's allegations against Houston Rockets coach Bill Fitch, but is expected to announce a decision by today. No announcement had been issued by

Stern could take disciplinary action, including assessing a fine, if he decides the integrity of the league has been shaken by Motta's accusations or by Fitch, if the charges

The controversy began when told Motta had said he would Motta said the Rockets were deliber-longer comment on the matter. ately trying to get out of the same playoff bracket as the Los Angeles Lakers. If the Rockets finished fourth or fifth in the Western Conference, they would have to meet the ference, they would have to meet the ference at the fe Lakers as early as the second round.

they would not have to play the

In a story published by the news-paper Friday, Motta said he had complained the day before to Rod Thorn, NBA vice president of oper-

ations.

"Obviously, that's a pretty serious accusation," Thorn said. "I would think it would be a very tough thing to prove, and I would think that the commissioner might be very upset about it. I think he might be upset with Coach Motta for making an accusation, but maybe Motta can (prove it).

On Sunday, a taped interview with Fitch was played at halftime of the Philadelphia-Boston game on CBS. Fitch called Motta's charges

deemed true.

Motta has already said he expected the league would be upset by his charges and would fine him.

thinking with those statements."

CBS officials called the Mavericks' offices and asked if Motta would submit to an interview, but they were told Motta had said he would no

were within two points, 96-94, but If they finished sixth or seventh, their best players were on the bench. The Dallas coach said he thought Lakers until the conference finals, assuming they were able to win the first two rounds.

Houston looked like it was trying to manipulate the outcome of the game.

Umpires go to work, come to agreement

league umpires went to work on opening day Monday after their union reached a last-minute labor agreement with the American and National Leagues.

The four-year contract was finalized about 9 a.m. CDT, less than three hours before the opening pitch of the 1987 baseball season was thrown at Toronto.

The agreement was reached after a 22-hour bargaining session. Participating in the talks were Giamatti, Phillips, American League President Bobby Brown and Robert Kheel, negotiator for both leagues.

Under the old contract, which expired at the end of last season, umpires earned from \$30,000 in their first year to \$80,000 in their 25th

Over the next three years, according to a source close to the negotia-\$40,000 in their first year to \$100,000 in their 20th year. The final year of the contract calls for salaries ranging from \$41,000 to \$105,000.

receive an increase in annual pension benefits (from \$1,100 to \$2,000); life insurance (from \$250,000 to \$450,000), and pe diem payments (from \$103 to \$148)

The new contract also provides umpires with severance pay of from \$30,000 to \$100,000, depending on their experience. The previous contract did not include severance pay, the source said.

Paul Runge, head of the umpires' union, said the negotiations went smoothly.

"There's nothing but harmony to begin the season," he said. "There are no battle scars like in the past, which is really terrific for both sides."

Richard Levin, a spokesman for baseball Commissioner Peter Ueberroth, said the commissioner was glad the agreement was reached before the opening games.

Major league umpires have gone on strike three times in the past nine years. Substitute umpires worked a total of seven playoff games in 1984 during the last strike.

Astros slip past Dodgers

HOUSTON (AP) — Jose Cruz hit - game in the Dodgers' seventh scored solo home run in the seventh in- Steve Sax from second base and tied a solo home run in the seventh inning that gave Cy Young Award the game 3-3 against Scott, 18-10 last winner Mike Scott and the Houston season with a major league-leading geles Dodgers Monday night.

Cruz, 39, who had to battle for a starting position this spring, hit a 2-0, two-out pitch off Orel Hershiser, 0-1, over the right-field fence to

snap a 3-3 tie. Scott, 1-0, retired 11 batters in a row early in the game, but was re-placed at the start of the eighth inning by Dave Smith, who recorded three strikeouts in two innings of work. Scott gave up eight hits, struck out eight and walked three in seven

innings.

Garner and
Franklin Stubb's third hit of the Hershiser.

Alan Ashby's two-run single in the sixth had given the Astros a 3-2 lead. Ashby's hit came after Glenn Davis singled and Kevin Bass doubled.

Rookie Mike Ramsey got his first major league hit in the fifth inning and gave the Dodgers a 2-1 lead in the sixth with a single that scored Stubbs from second base.

The Astros took a 1-0 lead in the second inning when Ashby reached base on an error, took third on grounders by Craig Reynolds and Garner and scored on a wild pitch by

Baltimore edges Texas 2-1

BALTIMORE (AP) Sheets' ninth-inning sacrifice fly scored pinch-runner Rene Gonzales to give the Baltimore Orioles a 2-1 victory over the Texas Rangers Monday in the major league baseball opener for both teams.

With one out in the bottom of the ninth, Ray Knight singled off reliever Greg Harris, 0-1, and Gonzales ran for him. Gonzales then went to third when Harris' pickoff throw to first base went wild.

Harris then walked Terry Kennedy and Jim Dwyer intentionally.

Texas took a 1-0 lead on the third pitch of the game when Oddibe Mc-Dowell hit a towering home run over the center field fence off Mike Bod-

The Orioles tied it 1-1 in the second inning when Fred Lynn doubled with one out, then stole third base, and scored when catcher Don Slaught was charged with a passed ball as Knight struck out.



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