

Sports

Darwin's game evolves nicely

HOUSTON (AP) — Houston's Danny Darwin had been looking forward to Monday night's start against the New York Mets.

Last Wednesday, the Mets beat him 8-0 in New York and he wanted to show he was a better pitcher.

He did. Darwin pitched a seven-hitter and Kevin Bass had three hits and drove in a run as the Astros beat New York 6-2 to snap the Mets' five-game winning streak.

Darwin, 2-2, struck out seven en route to his first complete game, retiring 14 of the last 15 batters.

"I was really happy it was against the Mets," Darwin said. "There is a redeeming factor that makes you want to get back at a team that knocks you out."

"When I was in New York I couldn't seem to get the third strike. Tonight I was more cautious when I got two strikes and I made the pitches when I had to."

"Danny didn't tire," Astros manager Hal Lanier said. "He had a good fastball and a good breaking ball until the end."

New York third baseman Howard Johnson credited Darwin's improved control for the winning effort.

"Tonight Darwin had a lot bet-

ter stuff," Johnson said. "He had great location and a lot of pop. Last time he was unable to get it over."

Houston moved ahead 2-1 in the second against Sid Fernandez, 1-2. Bass led off with a double and Jim Pankovits then grounded a single up the middle that got by center fielder Len Dykstra for a three-base error and rolled all the way to the warning track, allowing both runners to score.

"After the third inning I got stronger," Darwin said. "I got in a groove and a rhythm where I felt real comfortable. I felt in command."

The Astros took a 3-2 lead in the fourth when Glenn Davis reached on a fielding error by shortstop Kevin Elster, moved to second on Bass' single, and scored on a single by Rafael Ramirez.

Bill Doran and Bass added RBI singles in the fifth.

The Astros added a run in the seventh when Gerald Young led off with a single, stole second, went to third on a throwing error by catcher Gary Carter, and scored on a fielding error by second baseman Tim Teufel.

The Mets made four errors in the game and the Astros stole five bases.

Mets beat Astros 5-2

HOUSTON (AP) — Gary Carter's run-scoring single snapped an eighth-inning tie and the New York Mets went on to beat the Houston Astros 5-2 Tuesday night.

With the score tied 1-1, Darryl Strawberry led off the eighth with a walk off reliever Ernie Camacho, 0-3. After Camacho balked Strawberry to second, Kevin McReynolds reached on an infield single to third. Carter then sin-

gled to center, scoring Strawberry from second.

After a sacrifice bunt and an intentional walk to Kevin Elster to load the bases, pinch-hitter Lee Mazzilli hit a sacrifice fly. Mookie Wilson then singled in Carter to give the Mets a 4-1 lead.

The Mets jumped on the board first when Keith Hernandez led off the sixth with a double. Two outs later, Carter lined a double into the gap in left center,

Rangers show signs of life

Bad luck plaguing Texas hitters in '88

ARLINGTON (AP) — How do you explain all the bad things that seem to happen to the Texas Rangers, the American League team the baseball gods seem to hate?

Their namesakes never had such bad luck 100 years ago — and they had to fight Indians, outlaws, flash floods, dust storms and rattlers. Being an old Texas Ranger in the wild West was a picnic compared to the bad luck that keeps turning up at Arlington Stadium.

The team that has never won a pennant apparently isn't going to break that long-standing tradition in 1988.

That streak of ice crystals in the stratosphere you see is the Oakland A's, who have blended a combination of speed, power, defense and pitching into a club record game-winning streak.

Even Rangers general manager Tom Grieve admitted the other day that "Oakland will be very difficult to catch. Even though it's May, you can see it will be very tough."

The Rangers, who were last in the AL West in 1987, had high hopes in '88 based on the ability to score a lot of runs. Last season's Rangers had ample firepower, setting a club record in homers.

So what happened this year was that the Rangers' hitters cratered coming out of spring training. And not even adequate pitching, which the Rangers were getting, can make up the difference. A power outage in April put Texas in a deep, almost unrecoverable deficit.

The Rangers had an awful April in 1987, losing 10 of 11 games in one stretch.

At one point, the Rangers' run production was under that of the Baltimore Orioles, who lost 21 consecutive games.

The Rangers' hitters finally broke out against the New York Yankees as

they swept a weekend series, but the damage may have already been done.

Texas appears at least another year away from a title. The Rangers admirably are trying to develop their own talent, and it appears owner Eddie Chiles isn't ready to jump into the free-agent market where big bucks prevail.

The morale of the team got a big boost when manager Bobby Valentine's contract was extended through 1991. What Chiles was saying to the club was that the ownership is committed to the youth movement.

"I don't blame Bobby for the slow start because he doesn't have all the talent in the world," Chiles admitted. "We compete on limited resources in this franchise. We can't spend the big bucks and buy the high-priced players like some other teams can."

The Rangers have the lowest payroll in the major leagues.

So what do the Rangers need to shake off 16 seasons of sadsack baseball?

— They need to become more fundamentally sound on the basepaths.

— They need a catcher who can throw out baserunners.

— They need at least one more power hitter (remember Jack Clark was a free agent and the Yankees got him).

— They need another dependable starter.

That shopping list would carry at least a \$2 million tag or more on the free-agent market.

For now, Rangers' fans must be content with watching the youngsters from the farm team grow into their big league jobs. They showed in the series against the Yankees they can have their moments.

But a pennant probably isn't in the cards for them until the early 1990s.

Can Valentine last that long?

Incaviglia powers Rangers past O's

ARLINGTON, Tx. (AP) — Pete Incaviglia hit a two-run homer and two doubles, and Steve Buechele had four hits, leading the Texas Rangers to a 13-5 victory Tuesday night over the Baltimore Orioles.

Larry Parrish, hitting .137 entering the game, also had three hits, including a two-run homer, as Texas won its fourth straight, its longest string of successes this season. The Rangers set season highs for runs and hits with 13.

Charlie Hough, 4-4, overcame early wildness for the victory, allowing eight hits in eight innings. Baltimore starter Mark Thurmond, 0-6, lasted only 1 2-3 innings, allowing five runs.

The Orioles were 4-5 in their previous nine games after opening the season with 21 straight losses.

The Rangers took a 2-0 first-inning lead when Incaviglia hit a 1-0 pitch down the right-field line for his sixth homer of the season after Ruben Sierra doubled.

The Orioles got a run back in the second on Eddie Murray's leadoff homer, his third.

Texas padded its lead to 5-1 in the

second, chasing Thurmond. Thurmond, winless since August 1986, saw his ERA swell to 8.26.

Parrish led off the second with an infield single and moved to third on Buechele's double. Geno Petralli's infield out drove in Parrish and advanced Buechele to third. Buechele scored on Jerry Browne's sacrifice fly, and Scott Fletcher doubled, scoring Oddibe McDowell, who had walked and stolen second.

The Orioles scored three in the third to cut the Rangers lead to 5-4 with the help of Hough's wildness. A single, error and walk loaded the bases, then a wild pitch let one run in. Murray knocked in two runs with a single.

Parrish hit a 420-foot two-run homer in the third, driving in Incaviglia, who had doubled. Parrish hit it off reliever John Habyan, who hadn't allowed a run in 10 1-3 previous innings against the Rangers.

Texas added runs in the fifth and sixth. Buechele had an RBI single in the fifth, and Habyan balked in a run in the sixth, giving the Rangers a 9-4 lead.

Nuggets down Mavs

DENVER (AP) — Guard Lafayette Lever scored 30 points and added 11 rebounds and eight assists Tuesday night, sparking the hot-shooting Denver Nuggets to a 126-115 NBA playoff victory over the Dallas Mavericks.

The Nuggets, who edged the Mavericks for the Midwest Division title in the final week of the regular season, neutralized Dallas' height advantage with their passing game and fast tempo.

Denver moved to a 12-point half-time lead, thanks to a solid off-the-

bench performance by Mike Evans in the second period.

Denver then outscored the Mavericks 10-1 early in the third quarter to open a 21-point margin.

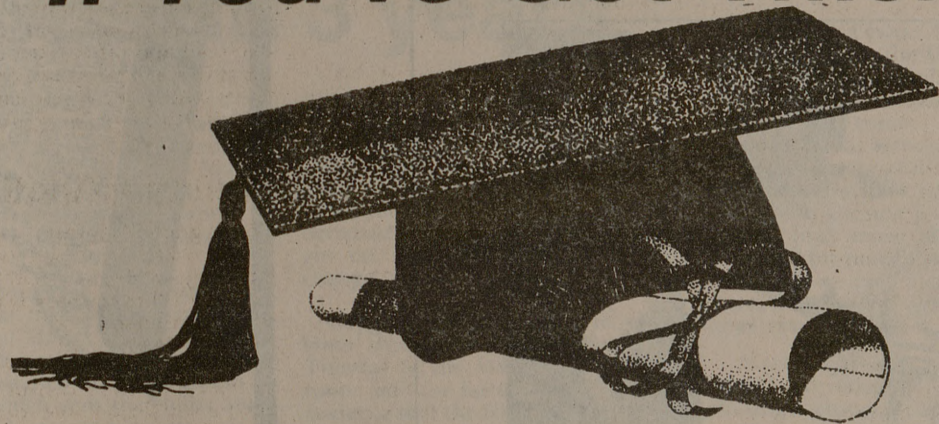
Mark Aguirre and Derek Harper brought the Mavericks within eight points in the final period, but Denver withstood the rally.

Alex English added 22 points and Jay Vincent 17 for Denver.

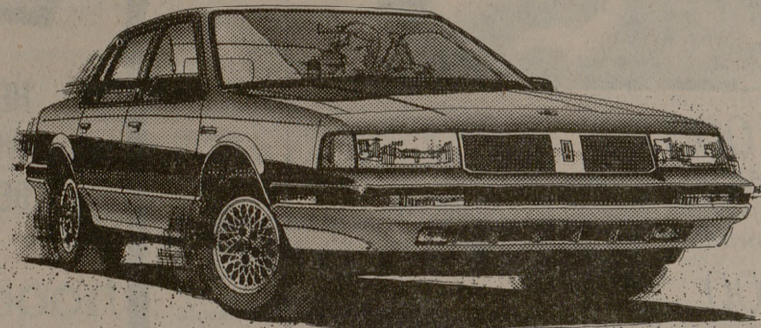
Aguirre had 26 and Rolando Blackman 20 for the Mavericks.

Denver outshot the visitors 58 percent to 45 percent.

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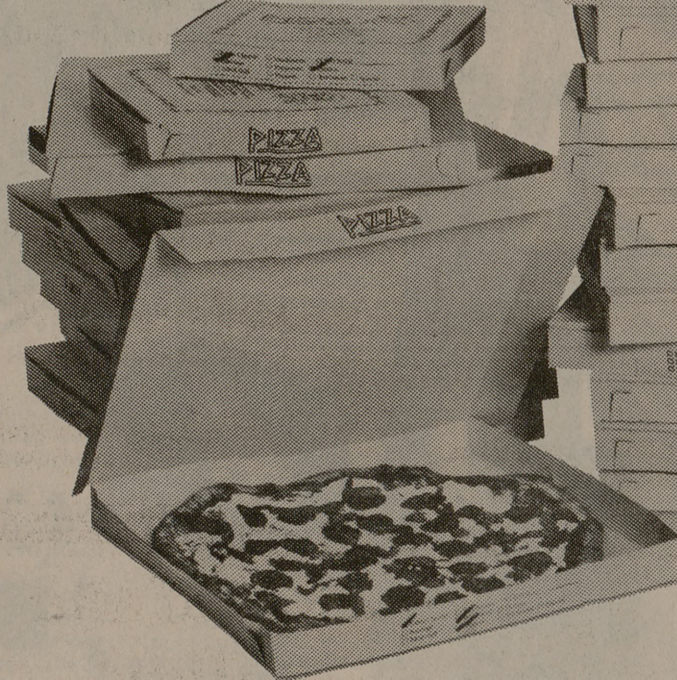
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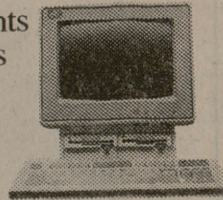
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