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Bass, Astros awaken from lumber slumber

HOUSTON (AP) — Batting third in the lineup has been first rate for Houston Astros' outfielder Kevin Bass.

In two games against St. Louis, Bass scored four runs and batted in four more including a first inning two-run homer that paced the Astros to a 4-3 victory over the Cardinals Sunday.

Bass socked his 13th home run of the season into the left field seats with one out.

"Kevin's been swinging a good bat the last couple of games," Houston manager Hal Lanier said. "He's been really stinging the ball."

Coming into the game, Bass was only hitting .143 against St. Louis this season and .182 versus the Cardinals lifetime, but he has batted .350 over the past two weeks.

"A lot of people probably wondered why I moved him to the third spot, noting how he hit against St. Louis," Lanier said. "But moving him there may get his spirits up and he may get some better pitches to hit."

Bass also mentioned hitting behind Glenn Davis is a luxury.

"They fear him," Bass said. "He's second in the league in home runs and RBIs. I feel more aggressive. I have to be because they come after me harder than when I'm down in the order."

Bass also scored Houston's fourth run in the third inning following Billy Hatcher's sacrifice fly to center to help left-hander Bob Knepper, 13-4, win his first start since being injured August 14 with a pulled groin.

Knepper has won five of his last six decisions. Dave Smith posted his 24th save of 28 opportunities in 1988 by closing the game.

Knepper did not have a great outing, giving up eight hits and three runs in five-plus innings, but St. Louis left-hander Greg Mathews, 3-5, had a tougher time with a pitching line of five hits and four runs in only three innings.

"He was high-balling," St. Louis manager Whitey Herzog said. "He threw a high change-up to Bass and he's not a power pitcher. He's got to get the ball down."

Mathews was philosophical about the loss.

"This is not a disaster," Mathews said. "I can't let one bad game destroy me."

Herzog, however, didn't like Mathews casual approach.

"He feels good?" Herzog responded. "With three wins? I'd like a sore-armed guy with 20 wins. He's got to remember the only purpose is to win."

Tiger injuries worsen with loss of Whitaker

DETROIT (AP) — The cracks in the Detroit Tigers' already-thin armor began to show in August. Now those cracks have become gaps that even a managerial magician like Sparky Anderson may be unable to repair.

The Tigers, who clung to the American League East lead while losing 11 of their last 13 games, finally were caught Sunday by the Boston Red Sox. The two entered play Monday tied for the division lead.

"We just have too many injuries right now," Anderson said. "I'd like to go with a set lineup the rest of the way, but I can't. But there's no use crying about it. I'm sure they're ain't gonna worry about it in New York or Boston."

Second baseman Lou Whitaker was the latest to go down — literally. Whitaker tore cartilage in his right knee while dancing and doing the splits at an anniversary party he attended with his wife after the Tigers' loss Saturday night to the Milwaukee Brewers. He's out 10 days to two weeks.

The Tigers as a team are hitting .255, third to last in the 14-team American League.

"I still think we've got a good team on the field, but nobody's hitting, and the pitchers are just kind of suffocating. They know if they fall behind, it's going to be a long game," third baseman Tom Brookens said.

The pitching staff, which was most responsible for getting the Tigers to first place and keeping them there, has fallen on hard times.

Second-year starter Jeff Robinson, 13-6 with a 2.98 ERA hasn't started since being bothered by two inflamed fingers on his pitching hand; Frank Tanana, 14-9 with a 4.25 ERA; and Eric King, 3-1, 3.65 ERA since being called up from Toledo, each missed a turn with a stiff shoulder.

General Manager Bill Lajoie finally landed some help in an 11th-hour trade last week with Baltimore that brought Fred Lynn, 18 home runs, 38 RBI, to Detroit.

Major League Baseball

Forsch stars in opener as Astro, beats Reds

HOUSTON (AP) — Bob Forsch allowed five hits in eight innings and hit a three-run double in his debut with Houston as the Astros defeated Cincinnati 3-0 Monday night, snapping the Reds' five-game winning streak.

The 38-year-old Forsch, 10-4, was acquired from St. Louis on Aug. 31 for utilityman Denny Walling. Forsch struck out five and walked one.

Dave Smith got the last three outs for his 25th save in 29 opportunities.

Reds rookie starter Norm

Charlton, 1-3, hit Glenn Davis with a pitch leading off the fifth and Buddy Bell singled. After a sacrifice by Billy Hatcher advanced the runners, Rafael Ramirez was intentionally walked to load the bases.

Alex Trevino flied to shallow center for the second out, but Forsch followed with a double to center field that cleared the bases.

Forsch is 8-for-27 (.296) this season with five runs batted in. He's 186-for-864 (.215) in his career with 80 RBI.

Hershiser leads Dodgers past Braves 3-0

ATLANTA (AP) — Orel Hershiser pitched a four-hitter and won his 19th game as the Los Angeles Dodgers beat the Atlanta Braves 3-0 Monday night to snap a three-game losing streak.

Hershiser, 19-8, struck out eight and walked one en route to his fourth shutout and fourth straight complete game.

Hershiser walked Dion James with two outs in the third inning

and then retired 16 straight before Jeff Blauser singled leading off the ninth.

Alfredo Griffin singled with one out in the first inning and Rick Mahler, 9-13, hit Kirk Gibson with a pitch. Mickey Hatcher then singled to score Griffin and send Gibson to third. When the ball got by James in left field, Gibson scored.

Mets edge Bucs 7-5, up NL East lead to 10

PITTSBURGH (AP) — Mookie Wilson hit a three-run homer in the eighth inning to lead the New York Mets past the Pittsburgh Pirates 7-5 Monday, stretching their National League East lead to a season-high 10 games.

David Cone, 15-3, got his sixth victory in seven decisions as the Mets won for the ninth time in 11 games.

With the score tied at 3 in the eighth, Kevin McReynolds and Gary Carter singled to greet Jeff Robinson, 9-3. Pinch-hitter Dave Magadan walked with one out to load the bases.

After Mazzilli lofted his sacrifice fly to deep center, Wilson hit a 1-0 pitch over the right-field wall for his sixth homer of the season.

Brewers win 7th straight, beat Chisox 5-2

MILWAUKEE (AP) — Paul Molitor homered to lead of the bottom of the first inning and the Milwaukee Brewers went on to win their seventh straight game, beating the Chicago White Sox 5-2.

Rookie Don August, 9-6, gave up six hits. He left the game after Carlton Fisk hit his 15th home run on the first pitch of the ninth

inning and Juan Nieves relieved for his first professional save.

Molitor lined his 12th homer just over the fence in left-center against Shawn Hillegas, who was making his American League debut. Hillegas, acquired three days ago from Los Angeles to complete a trade that sent Ricky Horton to the Dodgers, gave up nine hits and five runs in 5 1-3 innings.

Guerrero powers Cards over Montreal 6-2

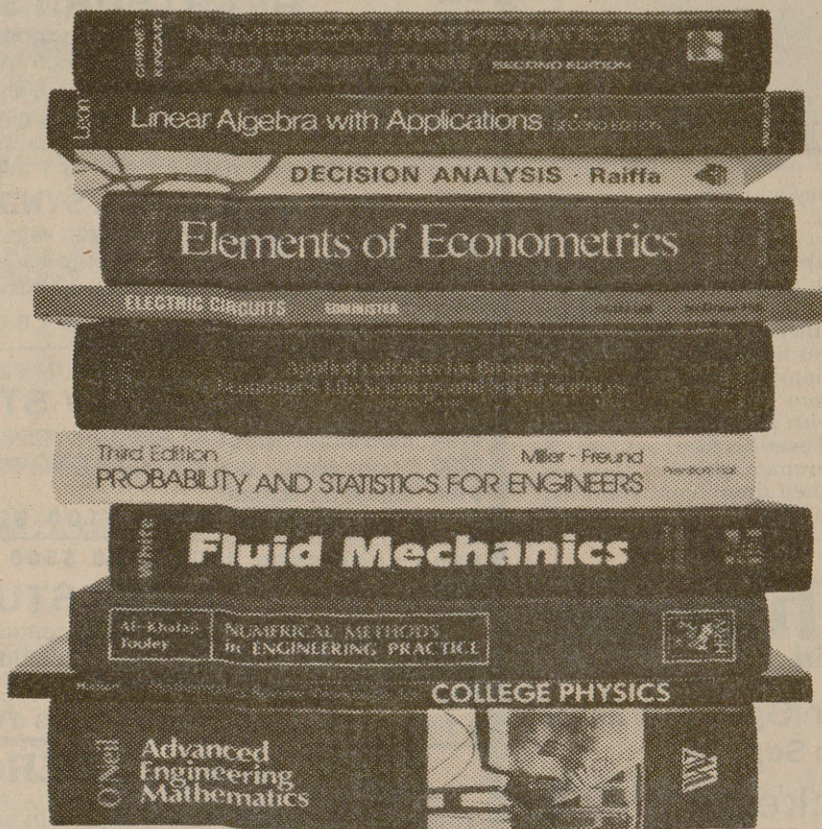
ST. LOUIS (AP) — Pedro Guerrero drove in three runs and Scott Terry won his fifth straight game as the St. Louis Cardinals defeated Montreal 6-2 Monday night, snapping the Expos' four-game winning streak.

Terry, 7-3, benefited from a four-run fifth inning keyed by three consecutive infield errors, including two by shortstop Rex Hudler.

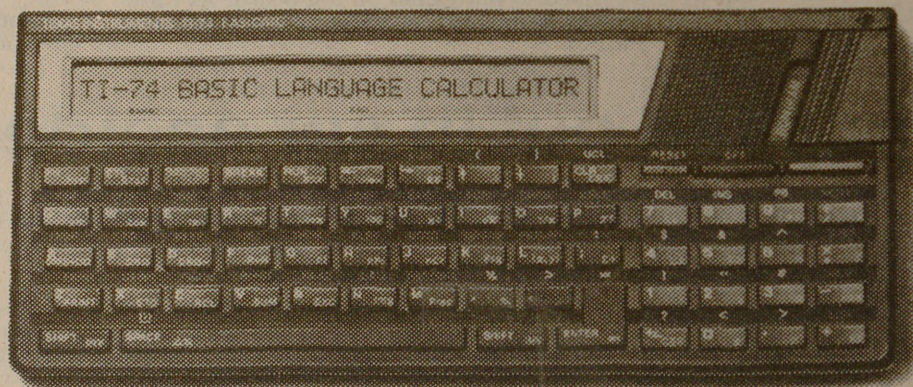
Tom Brunansky drew a lead-off walk from starter John Doherty, 3-9, in the fifth and with one out, Jose Oquendo, Tony Pena and Terry reached on errors by Hudler, third baseman Tim Lincecum and Hudler, to produce a run and a 1-1 tie. Ozzie Smith

drew a two-out bases-loaded walk to give St. Louis a 2-1 lead and Guerrero followed with a single.

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