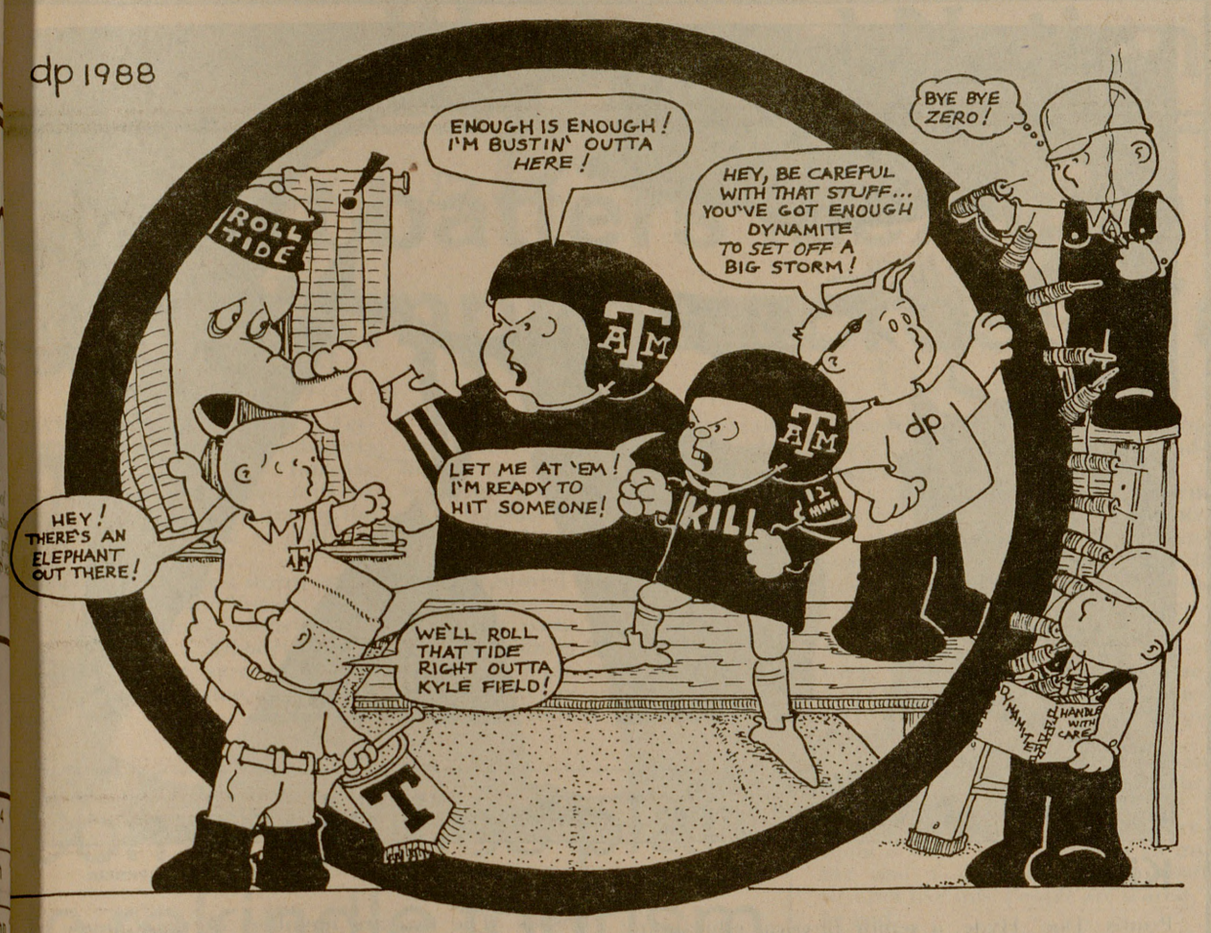

4-hitter over Reds shows age isn't weakening Ryan

CINCINNATI (AP) — Nolan Ryan's star hasn't burned out at age 41.

His latest shining moment was a step back in time, to the days when he could overpower hitters with his fastball. Ryan pitched a four-hitter Wednesday night to lead Houston to a 7-1 victory over the admiring Cincinnati Reds.

"He pitched a masterpiece," Astros manager Hal Lanier said.

It was artistic, with Ryan's usual broad strokes. He threw a fastball clocked at 96 mph in the first inning. He allowed just four hits and fanned a season-high 13. He didn't walk a batter for his second consecutive start.

"It was a pleasure playing against him, and it's a pleasure watching him," Reds manager Pete Rose said.

The pleasure's been Ryan's since the All-Star break.

Ryan went into a deep slump in June, going 0-5 in seven starts with a 6.20 earned run average. He beat New York on July 9 to end the skid, and wound up 6-7 with a 4.26 ERA at the All-Star break.

The Ryan Express has rolled again in the second half. He's 6-4 in 13 starts for the weak-hitting Astros with a 2.60 ERA.

"He's pitched well since the All-Star break," Lanier said. "We've started scoring some runs for him. He's pitched some big ballgames for us."

His most recent starts have been his best. Ryan has allowed just four earned runs and 22 hits in his last five starts, covering 39 innings. Ryan, who has led his league in walks eight times during his career, hasn't allowed a walk in his last 20 innings.

While the walks get fewer, the strikeouts remain plentiful. He leads the National League with 224 strikeouts, and has fanned 10 or more batters seven times this season to push his total in that category to 181.

His career numbers are 4,771 strikeouts and 273 wins against 253 losses, ranking him 25th on the all-time victory list with Red Ruffing.

Rose thinks the right-hander hasn't just gotten older, he's gotten better.

"The amazing thing about him is his control," Rose said. "I think he's a better pitcher in the last four or five years, since he came up with his changeup. If he had that changeup 10 years ago, he would have had 6,000 strikeouts."

Rose, who retired from playing at the age of 45, is amazed at Ryan's staying power.

Astros make ready before hurricane

CINCINNATI (AP) — The Houston Astros had more than baseball on their minds Thursday night when they prepared to play the Cincinnati Reds.

Some of the Astros were making long-distance preparations for Hurricane Gilbert, which is heading for northeastern Mexico and the Southeastern coast of Texas.

Pitcher Nolan Ryan, who beat the Reds Wednesday night, took an early flight home Thursday morning to help prepare his ranch near Galveston for the arrival of the hurricane.

"In 1983 it took me six months to recover from the storm we had," Ryan said. "You get a tremendous amount of wind damage with something like this."

Other Astros listened for reports of the hurricane's advance.

"We're all concerned, jut like everybody else in Texas," Manager Hal Lanier said.

"I'm a little concerned about my house," he said. "I've got 20-foot ceilings and eight big windows in the living room. I've got to find some way to tape them up or cover them up."

The Astros had a chartered flight home after their game Thursday night against Cincinnati.

A club spokesman said no problems were anticipated returning to Houston.

The Astros are scheduled to play a weekend series against San Francisco in the Astrodome.

NBC, which was scheduled to broadcast the Saturday game as the nationwide backup feed, cancelled its telecast for safety reasons, a network spokesman said.

NBC did not want to send any crews into areas that may be affected by the storm.

Major League Baseball

Davis, Larkin power Reds past Astros 7-5

CINCINNATI (AP) — Eric Davis and Barry Larkin drove in two runs apiece to lead the Cincinnati Reds to a 7-5 victory over the Houston Astros Thursday night.

The Astros rallied from a 6-2 deficit on sixth-inning homers by Billy Hatcher and reliever Danny Darwin off starter Norm Charlton, but were shut down by the Reds' bullpen over the last three innings.

John Franco pitched the ninth to gain his league-leading 34th save in 36 opportunities.

The loss dropped the second-place Astros to seven games behind Los Angeles in the National League West.

Charlton, 2-4, got his second victory in seven major league starts despite allowing five runs and nine hits in 5 2-3 innings.

The Reds handed Bob Forsch, 10-5, one of his worst drubbings of the season. Forsch had allowed more than three runs just once in his previous 14 starts for St. Louis and Houston.

The right-hander suffered his first loss since being traded to Houston. He's 1-1 in three starts for the Astros.

Cincinnati got to Forsch early Thursday. Chris Sabo singled in the first, Kal Daniels walked, and the runners executed a double steal.

Davis then hit a soft single to right for his National League-leading 21st game-winning RBI.

Larkin led off the third with his 11th homer and his first since July 1. Davis reached on a fielder's choice later in the inning and scored on Paul O'Neill's double off the wall in right. Nick Esasky's RBI single capped the rally.

The Reds knocked Forsch out of the game in the fourth with a run on doubles by Ron Oester and Larkin.

Hot-hitting Rafael Ramirez drove in Houston's first two runs with a double in the second and a single in the fourth, giving him a seven-game hitting streak and 12 hits in his last 26 at-bats.

The Astros cut the lead to one in the sixth on Hatcher's two-run homer, his sixth, and Darwin's first major-league homer in 136 at-bats. Darwin relieved Forsch in the fourth.

A's beat Rangers, close in on AL West title

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) — Dave Parker drove in three runs with a pair of singles as the Oakland Athletics beat the Texas Rangers 6-2 Thursday, moving another step closer to the American League West title.

The A's magic number for clinching the division race was cut to five.

They began the day with an 11½-game lead over second-place Minnesota, which played Chicago at night.

Rookie Todd Burns, 7-2, pitched his second complete game, allowing seven hits, striking out six and walking one to best the Rangers' Bobby Witt, 6-10.

Storm Davis was scheduled to start for Oakland but was scratched after complaining of a stiff neck while warming up.

Dave Henderson and Parker had RBI singles in the first inning. The Rangers made it 2-1 in the second on a single by Ruben Sierra, who had three hits, and a triple by Chad Kreuter.

Parker had a two-run single in the fifth, when the A's got three consecutive singles after Henderson walked with one out.

Oakland's fifth run came on Tony Phillips' first homer of the season, a leadoff drive in the sixth.

Terry Steinbach led off the bottom of the eighth with his seventh homer of the season to make it 6-1.

Geno Petralli hit his seventh home run with one out in the top of the ninth for Texas to complete the scoring.

Cards snap losing streak, beat Phillies 3-1

PHILADELPHIA (AP) —Scott Terry won his seventh straight decision and the St. Louis Cardinals beat the Philadelphia Phillies 3-1 Thursday, snapping a three-game losing streak.

Terry, 9-3, struck out six and walked none in eight innings. He made his first start on Aug. 11 and he has allowed 11 runs in 57 innings over eight starts, a 1.74 earned run average.

Todd Worrell finished for his 30th save.

Shane Rawley, 7-15, gave up nine hits and three runs in 6 1-3 innings.

Vince Coleman, who went 3-for-3, put St. Louis ahead with an RBI double in the fifth, scoring Tony Pena, who also doubled.

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