

Injured Dodgers top A's, win Series

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) — Orel Hershiser and the hurtin' Los Angeles Dodgers did everything they weren't supposed to do, stopping the Bash Bunch and stunning the Oakland Athletics 5-2 Thursday night to win the World Series in five games.

Hershiser's four-hitter closed out one of the most dramatic turnarounds and biggest upsets in baseball history. He held Jose Canseco and Mark McGwire to a combined 2-for-36 and allowed just five earned runs in his final 101 innings and was voted the Series' Most Valuable Player.

The Dodgers, crippled by injuries to Kirk Gibson, Mike Marshall, Mike Scioscia and John Tudor, weren't expected to stay in the same ballpark as the Athletics. Instead, Los Angeles blew the winningest team in the majors off the field.

Mickey Hatcher and Mike Davis each hit two-run homers that made it 4-1 in the fourth inning. That was plenty for Hershiser, who pitched Los Angeles into the Series with a shutout in Game 7 of the National League playoffs against the heavily favored New York Mets and then shut out Oakland on three hits in Game 2.

It was the sixth World Series championship for the Dodgers, who became the first team to win two

championships in the 1980s, their last one coming in 1981. It also ended a streak in which 10 different clubs had won the last 10 Series.

Los Angeles, the most active team in the off-season, made the moves work. They rebounded from a 73-89 mark the last two years, the greatest improvement of any National League team to win the World Series.

Hershiser struck out nine and walked four. He was toughest when it mattered most, twice getting Canseco with two runners on base.

Canseco grounded out to end the third with Oakland trailing 2-1. In the eighth, after Stan Javier's RBI single pulled the Athletics within 5-2, Hershiser walked Dave Henderson and brought Canseco to the plate as the potential tying run.

But Hershiser got Canseco, who led the majors in homers and RBI, on a popup and struck out Parker to escape.

Canseco finished 1-for-19 — hitless after his grand slam in Game 1. McGwire, Oakland's other big basher, went 1-for-17, his only hit a winning home run in Game 3.

The Athletics lost for the first time in four World Series appearances since moving to Oakland. They won three straight championships, begin

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Tradition and towels

The Fightin' Texas Aggie 12th Man on the field

By Cray Pixley
Assistant Sports Editor

Imagine leaving the safety of the stands at Kyle Field to don a maroon and white uniform to be a part of the A&M kickoff team. There are 70,000 fevered fans shouting approval and waiting to see if you will succeed in bringing down a possible Heisman Trophy winner — or fail when he blows by you in a blast of exhaust headed for a TD return.

You've been practicing since making the 12th Man Kick-off Team, and now its time to step onto the field and prove it doesn't take a scholarship to contribute something to the Aggie football team.

As you take the field, there are feelings of excitement, determination and nervousness that must be tempered by level, clear thinking.

The ball is set — the kick is up. Your eyes are keyed on the opposing jerseys as you burn down the turf in a burst of energy....

In the 1982 football season, the Aggie team went 5-6, and A&M Head Football Coach Jackie Sherrill was a fairly recent addition to a floundering team with a powerhouse crowd of fans. A Southwest

Conference title and Cotton Bowl appearance seemed distant years from ever being realized by an Aggie team.

While Aggie fans were looking toward the new coach for some respite for the ailing home team, Sherrill was planning a way to harness student enthusiasm and pump it back into the Aggie team.

Seven years ago this fall, he issued an invitation for male students to tryout for a position on the starting kickoff team for home games. About 250 male students showed up the following February, along with two aspiring female 12th Man candidates who were turned away.

To be a part of the Aggie football team seemed a dream for a good number of men on campus — and a few women too.

The 12th Man Kick-off Team was

At the time, Sherrill said the 12th Man squad was a way for students to identify with someone on the field who wasn't a scholarship player. He stated that it would really make a student feel good to know that his roommate went out on Saturday afternoons and returned kickoffs.

Sherrill's idea of non-scholarship players covering kickoffs was unheard of, and it horrified many critics who thought the coach should concentrate his efforts on strengthening his "real" football players instead of pulling players from the untried ranks.

Some critics thought it was a suicide move.

But Sherrill was concrete in his plans and the 12th Man played the 1983 season.

The idea was a resounding success with students on the home campus and similar 12th Man teams were

spawned at universities around the nation.

The sight of 12th Man towel-waving athletes is now, . . . well, a tradition at Kyle Field — and fast becoming one at the Cotton Bowl. For six years the 12th Man Kick-off Team has hurled itself down the football field with a killer instinct and a drive to make the fellow students in the stands proud.

Throughout the early years of the 12th Man, the team compiled an impressive list of stats and had better return coverage than the varsity team. Then in 1987 the team hit a patch of bad luck and fell below par.

Houston's James Dixon returned one for 53 yards breaking through the yardage that the 12th Man had jealously guarded for four years. Until that play, the team hadn't allowed more than 39 yards or movement past the 50-yard line.

The slip was noticed.

In that one run, the reputation and prestige of the 12th Man received a blow and seemed headed for a tumble from the pedestal of honor. The problems of the team reached a peak when Sherrill replaced the team with varsity athletes

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"There had been a number of injuries, but it was not until I arrived on the field that I learned that Coach Bible wanted me to put on a football uniform and be ready to play if he needed me. I was ready to play but never was sent into the game. . . ."

E. King Gill

Maybe "best team" doesn't necessarily mean "most talent"

All I could think about Thursday was the 1954 Cleveland Indians. The team that cruised to the American League pennant, winning 111 of 154 games in the regular season — still a record, and then in a 162-game world. They were the greatest assemblage of baseball studliness since 1927 Yankees, everyone said.

Then came the Series. And Willie Mays. The New York Giants were lucky to even be in the World Series. It took a dramatic, ninth-inning home run by Bobby Thompson in a playoff game to get there.

And then came The Catch. . . .

He shouldn't have ever gotten there. Runners are in full motion after Vic Wertz' crushing drive to the deepest part of the Polo Grounds — wouldn't be? It was a sure triple. Maybe an inside-the-parker. If it stayed in the park in the place.

But Willie Mays was on his way to becoming



Hal L. Hammons
Sports Editor

the greatest defensive center fielder — maybe the greatest player — in baseball history.

And he got there.

Not only that, he doubled up a runner to get the Giants out of the inning.

The Indians never recovered. The Giants swept the Series in four.

Maybe the Giants were better than people

gave them credit for. Maybe the Indians weren't ready for a challenge.

Maybe they thought too much about the '27 Yanks. The legendary "Murderer's Row" of Ruth, Gehrig, and cast of home run machines sauntered into batting practice and literally took the Pittsburgh Pirates out of the Series before the first pitch was thrown. The hapless Pirates sat in amazement as the Yankees powered pitch after pitch after pitch over the fences. They might as well have surrendered then and there.

The Indians themselves are the only ones who will ever know for sure.

Except maybe for the '88 Oakland Athletics.

A World Series hasn't looked so lopsided in years. The A's looked — still look — at least equal to the Los Angeles Dodgers at every position, in every category. Better in most.

And it wasn't just me who thought so. When I told people, "A's in five," I meant it. Most

people agreed with me. For that matter, a fairly loud voice in the back of my brain is still saying they'll win in five. Certainly in six.

Needless to say, they won't.

But perhaps the sports world needs a story like the '88 Dodgers. The American public, long awed by outward signs of strength, gets rocked to sleep by a continuous parade of "best-in-the-businesses" walking away with blowout Super Bowl wins and national championships.

Sure, an occasional Brigham Young football team or a Villanova basketball program might take a title with weak scheduling or one good game against an obviously better team. But we always can justify the upset away. We always can convince ourselves that the winners weren't really the best team.

But it takes a World Series — a triumph in a best-of-seven format — to make even the most skeptical of critics rethink his position.

The New York Mets did it in 1969. It was done to them this year.

Maybe it doesn't take more talent. After all, could anyone think of anything short of Orel Hershiser with an amputation that would have hurt the Dodgers' chances than what actually happened to them? If something bad could have, it did.

Maybe a team outmatched at practically every position, with half of its home run output injured and half its starting pitchers out, isn't automatically out of it. Maybe pitching Orel Hershiser every day and giving Kirk Gibson a leg transplant isn't necessary.

Maybe being a team just means playing the best. Maybe it's making the most of your opportunities, knowing your limitations, and performing to the best of your ability.

And maybe, just maybe, the Los Angeles Dodgers are the best team in baseball.

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