

Thursday, July 20, 1989

'Infamous pitch' in 1986 tarnishes Moore's career

LUBBOCK, Texas (AP) — Former All-Star reliever Donnie Moore was among the best ballplayers that Texas ever produced.

The Lubbock native dominated on his home soil at every level from Little League to the majors.

Moore died Tuesday. Police in Anaheim, Calif., said Moore, despondent over his failing career and marital problems, shot his wife several times before turning the gun on himself, firing once into his head. He was 35.

He carried his high school team to the Texas state title and his college team to a national championship.

He signed with the Chicago Cubs in 1973 and flourished in the minors, too, earning a spot on the Texas League All-Star team while pitching for Midland two years later.

Moore's winning ways continued into the major leagues, where he emerged as the American League's premier stopper in 1985, saving 31 games with a career-best 1.92 earned run average. He was named the California Angels' most valuable player.

But nothing in his upbringing on the ballfields of Texas taught him how to deal with the tormenting memory of one infamous pitch.

"He was just a strike from getting the Angels in the series," lamented Walt McAlexander, who covered much of Moore's amateur career as a reporter for the Lubbock Avalanche-Journal in the early 1970s.

"I hate that that's how he'd be remembered."

Moore threw his final pitch last month for the Omaha Royals, Kansas City's Triple-A affiliate. He was released June 18 after compiling a 1-2 record with a 6.49 ERA.

Plagued by arm injuries, Moore told Omaha manager Sal Rende that he was relieved that the team was letting him go.

While his baseball talents were dissolving, so was his marriage. He and his wife, Tonya, whom he married in 1973, had separated last year.

Moore was released from the Angels in 1988, two years after he carried California to within one strike of the 1986 World Series.

"Everything revolved around one pitch," California veteran Brian Downing said.

With the Angels ahead three games to one in the best-of-seven American League playoffs, Moore had a 5-4 lead, with two outs and two strikes on Boston's Dave Henderson in the top of the ninth inning of Game 5.

But Henderson then hit a Moore fastball for a two-run homer that gave the Red Sox a 6-5 lead.

The Angels sent the game into extra innings, and once again Henderson victimized Moore, with a sacrifice fly in the top of the 11th that lifted the Red Sox to a 7-6 victory. Boston went on to win the pennant.

"I never ever saw the guy be cred-

ited for getting us to the playoffs because all you ever heard about, all you ever read about, was one pitch," Downing said.

The heartache was foreign to Moore.

He led Lubbock Monterey High School to the Class 4-A state championship in 1972, pitching in all nine of the team's playoff games.

The following year he went 18-1 taking Ranger Junior College to the National Junior College tournament championship, after which he signed with the Cubs.

In 1975, he went 14-8 for Midland and was selected by managers to play in the Texas League All-Star game.

He would pitch parts of 13 seasons in the major leagues, his peak coming in 1985 when he tossed two perfect innings in the All-Star game. He was 43-40, with 89 saves and a lifetime ERA of 3.66.

Tonya Moore, 35, was listed in serious condition in the intensive care ward Wednesday at Kaiser Permanente Hospital in Los Angeles. She suffered at least three gunshot wounds in the upper chest and stomach.

Doctors said her condition was improving.

Rozelle resolves owners' dispute

SCHAUMBURG, Ill. (AP) — The NFL resolved Wednesday — at least temporarily — what Commissioner Pete Rozelle called the worst split in his 30 years in office by starting over in its search for Rozelle's successor.

Nonetheless, Jim Finks, the New Orleans Saints president and the original choice for the old committee, Kansas City's Lamar Hunt and Wellington Mara of the New York Giants, plus Al Davis of the Los Angeles Raiders and John Kent Cooke of Washington.

Rozelle resolved the dispute by appointing a new six-member committee to replace the one that recommended Finks and only Finks for the job. Eleven teams then blocked Finks from getting the 19 votes he needed for the job.

At the same time Wednesday, the owners approved the forma-

tion of a new international league, to start play either in the spring of 1990 or a year later. The later date seems more likely.

The new selection committee contains two of the 11 who blocked Finks — Minnesota's Mike Lynn and Seattle's Ken Behring; the co-chairmen of the old committee, Kansas City's Lamar Hunt and Wellington Mara of the New York Giants, plus Al Davis of the Los Angeles Raiders and John Kent Cooke of Washington.

It is the first major committee assignment in 12 years for Davis, who was a minority of one while he was suing the NFL over his team's move from Oakland.

That seemed to bode well for Finks — Mara, Hunt, Cooke and

Davis all voted for him the first time and Lynn also supported him right up to 20 minutes before the ballot. Nonetheless, Rozelle said the new committee will recommend more than one candidate.

"Oh, yes," Lynn replied when asked if Finks remained a viable candidate and the echo was similar from almost everyone else.

"Everyone on the new committee is an announced Finks supporter," said Ed McCaskey of the Chicago Bears.

"I think Finks is very strong right now," said Victor Kiam of New England, one of the 11 votes that blocked Finks' election. "I think a lot of the owners that voted against him liked him as a candidate, they just didn't like the process."

Cone tosses 4-hitter; Astros fall, 8-2

NEW YORK (AP) — David Cone pitched a four-hitter for his fourth straight victory and Darryl Strawberry's 20th home run sent the New York Mets over the Houston Astros 8-2 Wednesday night.

Glenn Davis hit two solo home runs, making him the first player in Houston history to get at least 20 homers in five consecutive seasons.

Cone, 7-5, struck out eight and walked none. He pitched his fourth complete game in 19 starts.

Jim Clancy, 5-7, has lost three consecutive decisions. He began the game with a 7.17 earned run aver-

age in his last five starts, and gave up five runs in 4 2/3 innings.

Clancy retired the first 10 batters

before Dave Magadan singled. With two outs, Clancy narrowly missed on a 2-2 pitch to Strawberry, and Strawberry hit the next delivery far over the right-field fence for a 2-2 tie.

The Mets lead the major leagues with 86 home runs, including 12 in the last 10 games.

Gregg Jefferies opened the fifth with a single and took third on Mackey Sasser's single. Kevin Elster, batting just .203, followed with a high bouncer that deflected off the glove of leaping third baseman Craig Reynolds for an RBI single and a 3-2 lead.

Cone then bunted, and Reynolds threw the ball past third base for an error that allowed another run to score. After Juan Samuel sacrificed, Magadan hit a sacrifice fly.

Jetteries hit a run-scoring single in the eighth off Dave Smith after shortstop Rafael Ramirez dropped a pop-up for a two-base error. Sasser added an RBI double, his third hit, and Cone singled him home.

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