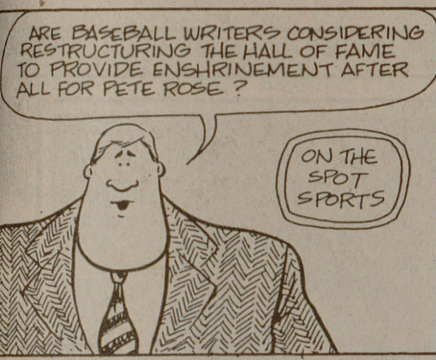




TANK McNAMARA® by Jeff Millar & Bill Hinds



# Blake wins Shearson Lehman

SAN DIEGO (AP) — A fit of anger last Monday may have paved the way for Jay Don Blake's first PGA Tour victory Sunday in the Shearson Lehman Brothers Open.

The 32-year-old Blake threw his old putter — one he'd used since his high school days — into a pond at Palm Springs, Calif. while playing with some friends.

"I don't know what came over me," Blake said. "That's very much out of character for me. I'd just got tired of missing all those short birdie putts, reaching the par-5's in two then 3-putting."

"I was playing with some friends, and we had a few dollars going, and I wasn't making anything. Finally, I missed a short putt on the 17th hole. I just turned around and threw the putter about 30 yards into the middle of a pond."

With that blade putter gone, he went to a back-up Blue Goose putter he'd been carrying around when he crossed the mountains to the California coast for this event.

He made two critical birdie putts down the stretch

and pulled away to a two-shot victory Sunday, the first in five seasons on the PGA Tour for the 1980 National Collegiate champion.

"I always thought I had the game to win out here. I just hadn't done it," he said. And he gave full credit to the new putter.

"If I'd still had that old putter, I might have kept on missing putts and messing up and not won today," he said Sunday.

Blake won this one — and gained entry to such exclusive events as the Masters, Tournament of Champions and World Series of Golf — with a 5-under-par 67 in the final round at Torrey Pines and a 268 total, 20 under par.

He separated himself from a tightly bunched field with a downhill, 18-foot birdie putt off the back of the 15th green, and another from about the same length on the 17th.

Dan Forsman and Ben Crenshaw, both very much in the title hunt until Blake rolled in the decisive putts on 15 and 17, finished third and fourth, respectively.

# Irvan takes flag at Daytona 500

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. (AP) — Ernie Irvan proved he could run with the big boys and win last year. On Sunday, he proved he could win the big race — the Daytona 500.

Irvan's victory was aided considerably by Dale Earnhardt's continuing ill fortune in NASCAR's premier stock car race, with a spin three laps from the end curtailing his chance of winning it for the first time and sending Irvan on to the win under a caution flag.

Earnhardt, the heavy favorite to win after his dominating effort last year ended with a shredded tire about a mile from the end, tried hard to be philosophical.

The defending Winston Cup champion said, "They're gonna run

another one of these things in '92 and I'll be back."

For Irvan, who tried all week to convince people he was a real contender, there was pure joy in his second Winston Cup victory and a trip to Daytona's Victory Lane — especially since he nearly ran out of gas after the biggest triumph of his 32 years seemed assured.

Irvan was second to Earnhardt and pole-starter Davey Allison was seventh when the field was given the green flag with seven laps remaining following the eighth caution period of the race.

By the end of lap 194 around Daytona International Speedway's 2½-mile track, Allison was up to third and he and Irvan were hooked

# Sierra inks for big cash

DALLAS (AP) — Texas Rangers right fielder Ruben Sierra on Saturday agreed to a one-year, \$2,625,000 contract for 1991, a \$1 million raise over last year.

The agreement avoids a salary arbitration hearing set for Monday. Sierra had asked for \$3.1 million and the Rangers had countered with a \$2 million offer.

Nolan Ryan, with a \$3.3 million contract for 1991, is the only Ranger to make more than Sierra, an All-Star right fielder and American League Most Valuable Player runner-up to Robin Yount in 1989.

Sierra's agents and team officials had feared that listening to criticisms of his performance during a hearing would have hurt Sierra's pride and performance.

"He's a very prideful guy," said Rangers assistant general manager Wayne Krivsky, who negotiated on the club's behalf. "But that goes both ways. How Ruben might have responded certainly was a consideration in getting this settled. It had some weight."

"But the main thing about the settlement was that it's fair, based on his statistics and contributions to the Rangers over the past year."

Sierra, 25, had an off-year in 1990 after hitting .306 with 29 homers and a league-leading 119 RBIs in 1989.

He led the AL in total bases (344), slugging percentage (.543), triples (14) and extra-base hits and was named AL player of the year by The Sporting News in 1989.

But he slumped to .280 with 16 home runs and 97 RBIs in 1990. He also had a league-high 10 errors in right field. Manager Bobby Valentine recently indicated Sierra will see time at designated hitter and center field in 1991.

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# Union: Astros can't leave

NEW YORK (AP) — Donald Fehr, the head of the Major League Baseball Players Association, said Friday that the union was not likely to allow the Houston Astros to leave the Astrodome for a month during the 1992 season.

Astros chairman John McMullen said earlier this week that he had rented the Astrodome for the Republican Convention from July 27-Aug. 23. McMullen said the team either would take a month-long road trip or play home games at another site, possibly the Louisiana Superdome in New Orleans.

"The Basic Agreement does not permit 30-day road trip," Fehr said, referring to the collective bargaining agreement between players and the 26 clubs. "That's a change in working conditions. I can't imagine how anybody thought that could be done without prior consultation and agreement with the players and the other clubs."

Fehr said that the union would not allow Houston to play home games in another city.

Fehr said he did not know what the solution would be, and said he would wait for the National League to contact the union.

Asked whether the association could be convinced to allow either an extended road trip or games in other cities, Fehr said, "It's very difficult for me to see the Astros being away from home for a month."

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