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Mary Macmanus/The Battalion

Texas A&M's junior catcher **Billy Carroll** (left), of Plano, autographs a little leaguer's baseball jersey after a little league clinic between games in Saturday's double header with Dallas Baptist.

Maverick's coach might be bucked

The Associated Press

DALLAS — Quinn Buckner's first year as coach of the Dallas Mavericks has been miserable. It also may be his last.

Although Buckner has four years left on his contract, team owner Don Carter appears to be making plans for the team to continue without the rookie coach.

Team employees have been advised not to include Buckner in next season's advertising campaign, a Mavericks source told The Dallas Morning News.

Several team sources told The News in its Sunday editions that Carter was ready to let Buckner go during a Jan. 23 meeting that also included Mavericks vice president of operations Rick Sund in Washington, D.C.

Carter relented. Since then, Dallas is 7-29 —

a bad record, but decent considering the team is 9-65 overall.

"The book's not closed," Carter said. "When I get to the last page of the last chapter, I'm going to be on my knees in prayer. Then I'm going to sleep on it."

"We know where we started out and we know where we want to go. I'd say we're like a truck driver on the road, and when we get to the weigh station, we're going to check our load and our permits and see how we stand."

Buckner does not seem overly concerned about his future. He and his coaching staff took the team to a baseball double-header at Candlestick Park in San Francisco on Saturday. Dallas swept Golden State in Oakland on Monday.

"I don't have a choice, do I?" Buckner said. "I'm better than when I got here. I'm better than I was yesterday. And these guys (the play-

ers) are better for it. That's what it's all about. ... "I'm still on track to do what it is I believe we should do here. If he (Carter) makes that decision, that's the owner's prerogative."

Buckner had a horrible beginning in Dallas, making enemies with his players because of his gruff style and insistence on using the triangle offense.

He later softened and even allowed former Mavericks coach Dick Motta to serve as a volunteer consultant.

Still, Buckner has been widely criticized for again challenging the NBA futility record despite having a team much more talented than last year's 11-71 squad.

With eight games left, Dallas must win one to avoid tying the 1972-73 Philadelphia 76ers for the worst-ever record of 9-73. The Mavericks are 9-65.

Astros take Mets, Rangers beat Orioles

The Associated Press

Astros 6, Mets 1

HOUSTON — Torrid Andujar Cedeno homered for the second consecutive game, and had two doubles and three RBIs to lead Doug Drabek and the Houston Astros to a 6-1 victory Sunday over the New York Mets.

Chris Donnels, who also homered for the second straight game, had two hits and scored two runs. His single off Pete Smith started a two-run second inning, capped by Cedeno's two-run double.

Drabek (1-1) went seven innings, allowing a run on five hits while striking out four and walking three. Smith (1-1) gave up six runs

on 10 hits in five innings, striking out two and walking two.

New York third baseman Bobby Bonilla dislocated his left shoulder while trying to field Cedeno's decisive double. The Mets said the injury was not as serious as a ruptured ligament in the same shoulder that cut short Bonilla's 1993 season, and would not require surgery.

Rangers 8, Orioles 7

BALTIMORE — Jose Canseco ended a 1-for-14 slump with three hits, including a homer, and Ivan Rodriguez homered and had three RBIs Sunday as the Texas Rangers beat the Baltimore Orioles 8-7.

Canseco had a perfect day at the

plate, reaching five times and scoring three runs.

Baltimore's Rafael Palmeiro had a homer and three RBIs against his former teammates. Rookie Jeffrey Hammonds also homered for the Orioles.

James Hurst (1-0) pitched two innings after starter Rick Helling, making his major league debut, gave up four runs in four innings. Tom Henke, the fifth Texas pitcher, pitched a perfect ninth for his second save.

Texas broke a 3-3 tie with three in the third. Canseco hit a two-out single, stole second and scored on a single by Dean Palmer. Rodriguez followed with his second homer of the season.

Supersonics clinch division

SEATTLE (AP) — The Seattle SuperSonics — getting a season-high 29 points from Kendall Gill — clinched the Pacific Division title with a franchise-record 57th victory by rallying to beat the Phoenix Suns 111-108 Sunday.

The SuperSonics overcame a 17-point deficit in the final period to win for the 11th time in 12 games. Clinching the division for only the second time in history, the Sonics came back after trailing 92-75 with 44 seconds gone in the final period.

Beating the Suns for the third time in four games this season, the Sonics (57-18) broke their club record for wins set in 1979-80.

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