

Mariners' rookie shuts down Tribe

Seattle now leads the best-of-seven AL Championship series 1-0.

SEATTLE (AP) — Bob Wolcott, a 22-year-old rookie, pitched with the poise of a veteran Tuesday night, and the Seattle Mariners led the Cleveland Indians 2-1 after six innings of the AL championship series opener.

After Kenny Lofton's two-out triple in the sixth inning, Wolcott speared Omar Vizquel's one-hopper and threw to first baseman Tino Martinez, giving the Indians 10 left on base.

Cleveland won 100 games this season, hitting .291 and leading the AL with 840 runs scored.

Mike Blowers gave Wolcott a 2-0 lead in the second with a two-run homer.

Blowers, 3-for-18 in the Mariners' first-round series against the New York Yankees, connected on a 1-1 Dennis Martinez pitch for a 417-foot homer over the center-field wall. Jay Buhner had walked ahead of him.

Blowers hit 23 homers and 96 RBIs this season, but struggled at the plate in the five-game Yankees' series, collecting only three singles.

Picked Monday as a surprise starter for Game 1 of the best-of-7 series by manager Lou Piniella, Wolcott gave up seven hits, walked five and struck out one in the first six innings.

Wolcott walked Lofton, Vizquel and Carlos Baerga on a total of 13 pitches — 12 balls and a strike — opening the game. Lofton, Vizquel and

Baerga didn't even swing their bats.

But, after a visit from Piniella and with Bob Wells warming up in the bullpen, Wolcott struck out Albert Belle, got Eddie Murray to foul out to Blowers at third and got Jim Thome to end the inning on an excellent play by second baseman Joey Cora.

Cora had to dive to keep Thome's hard-hit grounder from going through and then threw out the batter.

In the second, with Paul Sorrento and Lofton walked. With two outs, Wolcott retired Vizquel on a grounder to first.

Cleveland finally scored a run off Wolcott in the third, but the Indians could have had more.

After a Baerga single and a walk to Belle, Thome had a one-out single to center that scored Baerga from second. Manny Ramirez followed with a single to load the bases, but Sorrento grounded into a double play. Ramirez's single ended an 0-for-13 slump in post-season play.

Belle, the leading AL MVP candidate and Cleveland's cleanup hitter, was 0-for-2 in the first six innings and Murray, the Indians' No. 5 hitter, went 0-for-3.

In the first six innings, the 40-year-old Martinez surrendered four hits, walked two and struck out three.

In the sixth, Cora singled and Ken Griffey Jr. singled him to third with one out, but Edgar Martinez grounded into a double play.

Wolcott was not on the Mariners' roster for the Yankees' series.



Griffey

Braves edge Reds, take 1-0 lead

Cincinnati did not sell out the city's first playoff game since the 1990 World Series.

CINCINNATI (AP) — On a night of empty seats and empty bases, Mike Devereaux kept the Atlanta Braves from coming up empty.

Devereaux singled home the go-ahead run in the 11th inning Tuesday night for a 2-1 victory over the Cincinnati Reds in the first game of the NL championship series.

John Smoltz, who has beaten the Reds three times this season, will oppose John Smiley, who has never won a playoff game, in Game 2 Wednesday night at Riverfront Stadium.

There were more than 10,000 empty seats when the first pitch was thrown Tuesday on a clear, 69-degree evening, a sign that baseball still has a long way to go to win back fans. The Reds sold only 40,382 tickets and had 3,620 no-shows.

And the Braves left them filing out silently by pulling off their third comeback of the playoffs.

David Justice tied it in the ninth with an RBI forceout, and Fred McGriff drew a leadoff walk in the 11th off Mike Jackson. Luis Polonia sacrificed, and Devereaux — a late-inning defensive replacement — lined a single up the middle.

Brad Clontz gave up a leadoff double to Thomas Howard in the bottom of the 11th, and Steve Avery — demoted to the bullpen for the playoffs — came in and walked pinch-hitter Mariano Duncan. Greg McMichael then got Reggie Sanders to ground to shortstop, starting a game-ending double play.



AP Photo.

Atlanta's Dave Justice bowls over former Houston Astro Scott Servais during a game earlier this season. Justice's Braves took a 1-0 lead in the National League Championship Series Tuesday.

The two starting pitchers gave the stunningly small crowd little to cheer. Tom Glavine allowed just one run on Ron Gant's infield single in the fourth, and Pete Schourek took a four-hit shutout into the ninth before Atlanta pulled off its third late-inning comeback of the playoffs.

Reds manager Davey Johnson let Schourek try for only his second career shutout, but it quickly backfired. Chipper Jones opened with a single — only the fifth hit off the left-hander — and took third on McGriff's single.

David Justice then hit a grounder to second baseman Bret Boone, who was able only to get the force at second. Johnson pulled Schourek after he bounced a breaking ball for a wild pitch on his 102nd pitch, putting the go-ahead run in scoring position.

Cincinnati's defense, which helped Schourek all night, then saved reliever Jeff Brantley. Darren Lewis, a defensive replacement in center field in the ninth, went to his knees to steal a hit away on Javy Lopez's sinking liner.

Sanders rumors still point to Oct. 29 debut

The new Cowboys defensive back has practiced lightly this week.

IRVING, Texas (AP) — The Dallas Cowboys have the 16th worst pass defense in the NFL, but they still may have to wait until Oct. 29 before getting Deion Sanders in the lineup.

Sanders is recovering from surgery to remove bone chips in his left ankle. He still limps

through the locker room at Valley Ranch with the latest in electronic healing gadgets attached to his leg.

"It still looks like Atlanta is the time frame," Sanders said.

However, he is practicing and has never been one to shirk duty because of injury.

Coach Barry Switzer tried to lighten expectations of Sanders playing against San Diego on Sunday.

"I don't think Deion will be in our game plan," Switzer said.



Sanders

will meet the Falcons in the Georgia Dome where Sanders

used to play for Atlanta before he left for San Francisco. "We have listed Deion as doubtful and he's truly doubtful," Switzer said. "Of course, if he got in a good solid week of practice and was ready we would start him."

Sanders will replace Clayton Holmes once he enters the lineup. Holmes has been peppered by every quarterback the Cowboys have faced since the season opener when regular cornerback Kevin Smith was injured.

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