

SPORTS

THE BATTALION

Page 3 • Monday, July 19, 2004

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Astros beat Padres

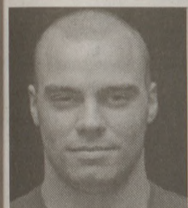
HOUSTON (AP) - Roger Clemens won his first game in three weeks and the Houston Astros tied a season high with three homers in a 5-3 victory over the San Diego Padres on Sunday, stopping a four-game losing streak and giving Phil Garner his first win as the Astros' manager.

Clemens, rocked for six runs in the first inning during Tuesday's All-Star game in Houston, had been 0-1 in three starts since beating Pittsburgh on June 24.

He retired 16 consecutive batters starting with the final out of the first and got his 321st win. Clemens allowed two runs and four hits in seven innings, striking out five.

The Astros remained a season-high 12 games behind NL Central-leading St. Louis and faces its largest deficit in the division race since 2000.

Calos Beltran, Kent and Craig Biggio hit solo homers, and Adam Everett went 3-for-4 as Houston avoided getting swept in the three-game series.



SHAWN MILLENDER

Now that some of the dust has settled, it's time for the obligatory look at who the big winners and losers are of the young NBA off-season.

Locally, all three Texas teams seem to have made steps forward.

The Houston Rockets are a better team with Tracy McGrady than they were with Steve Francis. The question remains though, will McGrady be willing to share the ball with center Yao Ming like Francis was never willing to? Who will provide rebounding and physical inside defense now that Kelvin Cato is gone? Will anyone really notice that Cuttino Mobley is gone as well?

The Rockets may be forced to start Tyrone Lue at point guard and rely on a broken, shell-of-his-former-self Juwan Howard to bolster a razor-thin front line. T-Mac will put the Rockets

Hamilton wins British Open

By Doug Ferguson
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Unflappable to the very end, Todd Hamilton tapped in a par putt to win the British Open in a playoff, bending over to get the ball out of the hole as if it was just another round of golf.

Then he stopped. And only then did the enormity of the moment—and how he got there—start to sink in.

Twelve years toiling in the most obscure outposts in golf. Eight tries at PGA Tour school before reaching the big leagues as a 38-year-old father of three.

Now, British Open champion. Turning his back on the hole, he let out a whoop, raised both arms in the air and hugged his caddie.

"I hoped that something like this would happen," Hamilton said.

Tough times only hardened his resolve on the back nine of Royal Troon, where Hamilton overcame Phil Mickelson and outlasted Ernie Els in a four-hole playoff Sunday to capture the silver claret jug.

Hamilton made four pars in the playoff, the last one the toughest of them all. From 40 yards short of the hole, he used a utility club to bump the ball along the crusty grass until it stopped 2 feet from the cup.

Els had a 12-foot birdie putt in regulation to win. His last chance was a 15-foot birdie putt from the same line



REBECCA NADEN • THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Todd Hamilton meets his caddie Ron Levin after winning the British Open at Royal Troon golf course in Troon, Scotland. Hamilton beat Ernie Els to win the trophy.

to keep the playoff going, but it turned away to the left. "I had my chances," Els said after his third close call in the majors this year.

For the second year in a row, the jug went to a player no one could have imagined at the start of the week. But unlike Ben Curtis, who was ranked 396th when he won at Royal St. George's in his first major, no one will ever

call Hamilton a fluke.

"I've won tournaments around the world before, but nothing on a stage like this," Hamilton said.

An 11-time winner on the Japanese tour, Hamilton thought he had hit the big time when he birdied the final two holes for a one-shot victory over Davis Love III at the Honda Classic in March.

His name is now on the oldest trophy in golf alongside Bobby Jones, Ben Hogan, Arnold Palmer, Jack Nicklaus and Tiger Woods.

"I knew I was a decent golfer. I knew I tried hard, I knew I worked hard," Hamilton said. "Sometimes I think what kept me back ... I put a lot of pressure on myself to do well, and a lot of times I felt that in tournaments like this, if I happened to get into them, I didn't really feel that I belonged."

Els had to make 10-footers for birdie on the 16th and 17th holes to keep his hopes alive at Royal Troon. And when Hamilton bogeyed the 18th hole in regulation, the Big Easy had a 12-foot putt for the win.

But he left it short, and his putter let him down in the playoff. He missed a 12-foot birdie putt on No. 1, and fell behind when he overshot the third extra hole, the par-3 17th, and missed a 10-footer for par.

Some NBA teams slam-dunk while others miss

in the playoffs again, but they won't make it past round one.

The Dallas Mavericks, after failing to win the Shaq sweepstakes, may have actually upgraded by losing an overpaid Steve Nash. The Mavs will never so much as sniff the NBA finals until they get a first-tier center and some players who can actually guard someone. Losing Nash's contract may be the first step to getting there.

It's hard to believe Shaquille O'Neal wasn't worth Dirk Nowitzki and Michael Finley. To the Mavericks, Shaq was worth Nowitzki, Finley, Nash, four Shawn Bradleys, Eduardo Najera and naming rights to American Airlines Center. I remain unconvinced that Nowitzki is the caliber of player free-spending owner Mark Cuban can build the team around.

San Antonio seems to be the real winner in Texas so far. After taking care of their first priority by locking up Manu Ginobili, the Spurs convinced Bruce Bowen to re-sign for

less money. They took care of a glaring need by signing Brent Barry, a guard who can shoot from the perimeter as well as make free throws.

Barry is an upgrade from the departed Hedo Turkoglu, because Barry shouldn't fold in April much like Turkoglu did.

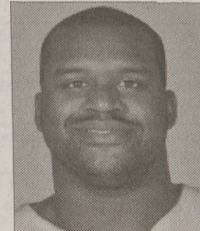
The only thing that makes Spurs fans nervous is the lack of depth on the front line. The only backup currently on the roster is 6-foot-7-inch Malik Rose. Free agent options include aging, but almost universally maligned, Karl Malone; aging but immortal Kevin Willis, and just plain aging Robert Horry.

One thing fans of all three Texas teams have in common though is the glee they feel from seeing the once-mighty Los Angeles Lakers superstar-fueled juggernaut collapse in on itself like a neutron star.

After trading O'Neal to Miami for overpaid, undersized Brian Grant, underachieving Lamar Odom, Caron Butler, a case of Gatorade and a bag of basketballs, Lakers General Manager Mitch Kupchak watched haplessly as Kobe Bryant made the entire city of Los Angeles squirm before he decided to return to the Lakers.

The Lakers may well become the only team in recent memory to go from the NBA finals to the draft lottery in the space of a season. Rudy Tomjanovich was a good hire as coach, but he hasn't been tested by an ego as big as Bryant's. He has also never done well without a marquee center, one of whom he managed to just miss on his way into town.

It's been a busy off-season already, four days into the free agent signing period. Rasheed Wallace is still on the board, and look for big moves still from Dallas, Sacramento and the L.A. Clippers. However it unfolds, next season is going to be very interesting.

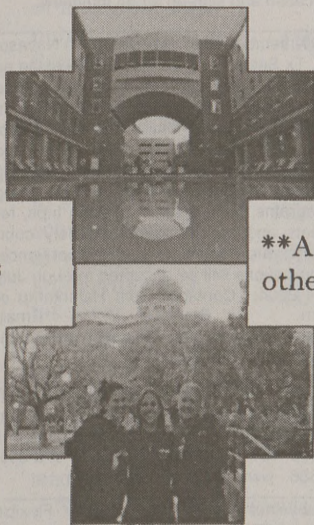
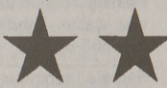


O'NEAL

ATTN: HONORS STUDENTS!!

The Tradition at Northgate announces the

HONORS STUDENT HOUSING PROGRAM



**EASY walking distance to many classroom buildings and a shuttle bus stop less than 200 yards away!

**Members of Blinn and A&M Honors Programs are eligible!

As a HONORS student, YOU are among the best and brightest at Texas A&M University. The Tradition believes you deserve the best and most supportive living environment. THAT'S WHY WE ARE SETTING ASIDE A BLOCK OF ROOMS EXCLUSIVELY FOR YOU AND OTHER AGGIE HONORS STUDENTS! Rates start as low as \$525 per monthly installment, which includes 5 meals at The Edge Cafe!

Call 979-268-9000 today for more information and to reserve your space on The Tradition at Northgate HONORS BLOCK!

The Tradition at Northgate
301 Church Avenue
College Station, TX 77840

www.traditionaggieland.net

Comfort, Convenience, and Value All in one Place One Month FREE - Ask Us How!

Open till 7pm Monday-Friday • Saturday till 6pm & Sunday till 5pm

- On-Site Management
- 2 Sparkling Pools with Sand Volleyball Court
- All New Fitness Center
- 3 Well Maintained Laundry Facilities
- All Units Cable-Ready
- Shuttle Bus Route (Elephant Walk)
- Plenty of Well-Lighted Parking
- Huge Closets & Pantries
- Only a Few Blocks from Shopping Centers
- 1 Mile from Campus

WILLOWICK

apartments

(979) 693-1325

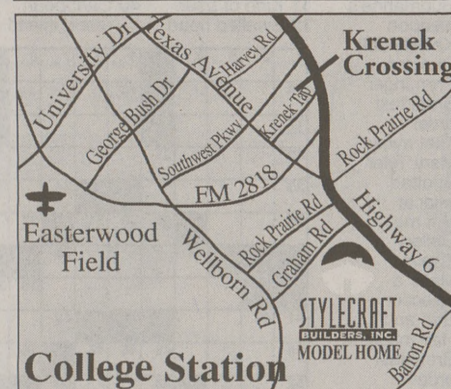
Check us out at: www.willowickapartments.com or E-Mail us: WWLeasing@shortmgmt.com
502 Southwest Parkway • College Station, TX 77840

*Limited Offer - Limited Availability

Does Your Aggie Student Need A Home In College Station?



Introducing Krenek Crossing in College Station. Homes starting at \$115,000! These homes are designed exclusively for college students and feature choices of great 3 and 4 bedroom floorplans. Located on the corner of Dartmouth and Krenek Tap Roads, Krenek Crossing is 2.5 miles from Texas A&M University on the Texas A&M Shuttle bus route. Call Eric, Dan or Jane today!



STYLECRAFT

BUILDERS, INC.

James Hardie Siding Products
Charming exteriors featuring durable, low maintenance James Hardie Siding.

MODEL HOME OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK! 979-764-9900