

SPORTS

THE BATTALION

Page 1B • Wednesday, September 1, 2004
Page Design: Jordan Meserole

Houston shuts down Reds in 8-0 win



TOM UHMAN • THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Astros' starting pitcher **Brandon Backe** delivers a pitch in the first inning against the Cincinnati Reds. **Backe** got the shutout win.

CINCINNATI (AP) — One inning, four pitches, three home runs, that was more than enough for the streaking Houston Astros.

Jeff Kent homered twice and Houston hit three straight shots in the fifth inning Tuesday night to help the Astros beat the Cincinnati Reds 8-0 for their fifth straight win and eighth in nine games.

Carlos Beltran, Jeff Bagwell and Lance Berkman hit consecutive home runs for the Astros, who pulled within three games of the NL wild-card lead after the Chicago Cubs' 8-0 loss at Montreal.

Brandon Backe (2-2) scattered three hits over six shutout innings to win for the first time in three career starts. He threw seven shutout innings in a no-decision against Chicago in his first career start on Aug. 21.

The Reds got just one runner past second base against Backe. Barry Larkin went to third on Sean Casey's two-out double in the sixth, but Backe struck out Adam Dunn looking to end the threat.

"I had already gotten him out twice," Backe said. "On 3-2, I threw him a backdoor slider. First base was open, so I wasn't going to leave it in the middle of the plate. He was either going to take it for a ball, take it for a strike or swing through it."

"Backe was in some jams, but he made pitches when he had to," manager Phil Garner said.

Relievers Chad Qualls, Mike Gallo and Dan Wheeler allowed a combined three hits over the final three innings for Houston's 11th shutout of the season.

Kent led off the second with his 18th homer of the season to give Houston a 1-0 lead, then hit a

two-run shot in the ninth.

Aaron Harang (8-7) allowed four home runs in five innings and lost for the fourth time in five starts.

With one out in the fifth, Beltran and Bagwell each hit their 21st, on consecutive pitches, and Berkman followed with his 24th, his third in two nights.

"You can't be perfect all the time," said Harang, who threw a three-hit shutout in his last start, a 1-0 win against St. Louis last Thursday. "They're a good team, and they're hot right now. I didn't execute my pitches the way I wanted to, but I went back and looked, and they weren't that bad. Their lineup's tough. Any of them can hurt you."

"We didn't muster any offense," Reds manager Dave Miley said. "You look at Aaron, he gave up the home runs, but they were all solo shots. Technically, we're still in the ballgame, but we couldn't get anything going."

Bagwell added an RBI single in the ninth, and Berkman had an RBI groundout before Kent's second homer, which gave Houston a combined eight in the first two games of the series.

"Good weather," Kent said about the power surge. "It's better hitting on the road. Our home park is not a power park. A lot of our hitters like to drive the ball to left-center and center, and those just get chased down for outs in our park. This is a hitter's park. I like this place. It allows you to be a complete hitter, not just a pull hitter."

The Reds, who have been shut out eight times, fell a season-worst seven games under .500 for the second time this season.

SIDE NOTES

ON 3B

A continuation of quick previews of Texas A&M's football opponents. Today features Clemson and Kansas State.

ON 4B

Kyle Davoust opens the Big 12 notebook and takes a look at the upcoming Colorado, Nebraska and Texas games.

COMING THURSDAY

A complete preview of A&M's first football game against the University of Utah. Game time is scheduled for 6:45 p.m. on ESPN.

An in-depth look at the beginning of the volleyball team's regular season, which starts Thursday with the McDonald's Invitational Tournament.

BRIEFLY

A&M senior forward Cristina Echavarry was named the Big 12 Offensive Soccer Player of the Week after scoring all three of A&M's goals in its first two games.

Texas Tech head basketball coach Bob Knight could have a sitcom on CBS soon. Network executives are in the initial stages of writing the comedy that would have a character modeled after the hot-tempered coach.

The New York Yankees were shutout by the Cleveland Indians 22-0 Tuesday night. The Yankees were behind by as much as 15-0 by the fifth inning.

After 16 seasons on the sidelines, Bevo XIII is being put out to pasture. A new 2-year-old steer will be introduced at the Longhorn's first home game on Sept. 4.

A limited amount of tickets for the A&M-Texas football game being held in Austin are on sale now at the Zone in Kyle Field.

U.S.-Canada fireworks in World Cup opener

MONTREAL (AP) — The hockey rivalry between the United States and Canada is very much alive.

Martin St. Louis had a goal and an assist to lead Canada to a 2-1 victory Tuesday night over the United States in the World Cup of Hockey opener for both teams.

"I think the crowd pumped everybody up," said Canada coach Pat Quinn of the roaring, chanting, capacity crowd of 21,273, which included Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin.

The game was so physical and contentious that Canada's 38-year-old captain Mario Lemieux went after American Steve Konowalchuk, who took a run at goaltender Martin Brodeur.

American counterpart Robert Esche held his team in it with stellar saves during a first period in which the United States was outshot 19-6.

St. Louis, the NHL scoring champion and MVP last season, scored the only goal of the opening period during a power play and earned an assist on Joe Sakic's goal early in the second.

But the momentum turned toward the Americans when Bill Guerin scored midway through that period.

"It was like it was two games — we

controlled the play in the first half and they took over in the second," Sakic said. "When we went up 2-0, we changed our game a bit. We tried to make too cute plays. Then they got a goal and got a lot of life from that. We came back in the third, but we have to do a better job of that, to keep pressing when we have the momentum."

It took little time for the teams to show signs of the heated rivalry that has peaked since Canada beat the United States in the gold-medal game of the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympics. The Americans won the inaugural World Cup by beating Canada in Montreal.

"It's an emotional tournament," Guerin said. "It's Canada-U.S., it's for lots of pride. It always tends to be physical."

Both teams also lost players to injuries, as defenseman Ed Jovanovski was knocked out of Canada's lineup, and the United States was without forward Mike Modano for most of the game. As is typical with NHL playoff games, neither team would give specifics about the ailments. Both were said to have lower body injuries and were to be re-evaluated on Wednesday.

Canada will play its second game of the round robin portion of the eight-team

tournament Wednesday against Slovakia in Montreal. The United States will play Russia on Thursday in St. Paul.

"You have to give Canada credit, they came out hungrier than we were and were a lot more intense," U.S. coach Ron Wilson said. "They got physically involved. They pushed us and we didn't push back."

Fortunately, Robert Esche was on top of things. In the second period, we started to turn things around."

Canada was leading 2-1 at 16:03 of the second period frame when Konowalchuk came



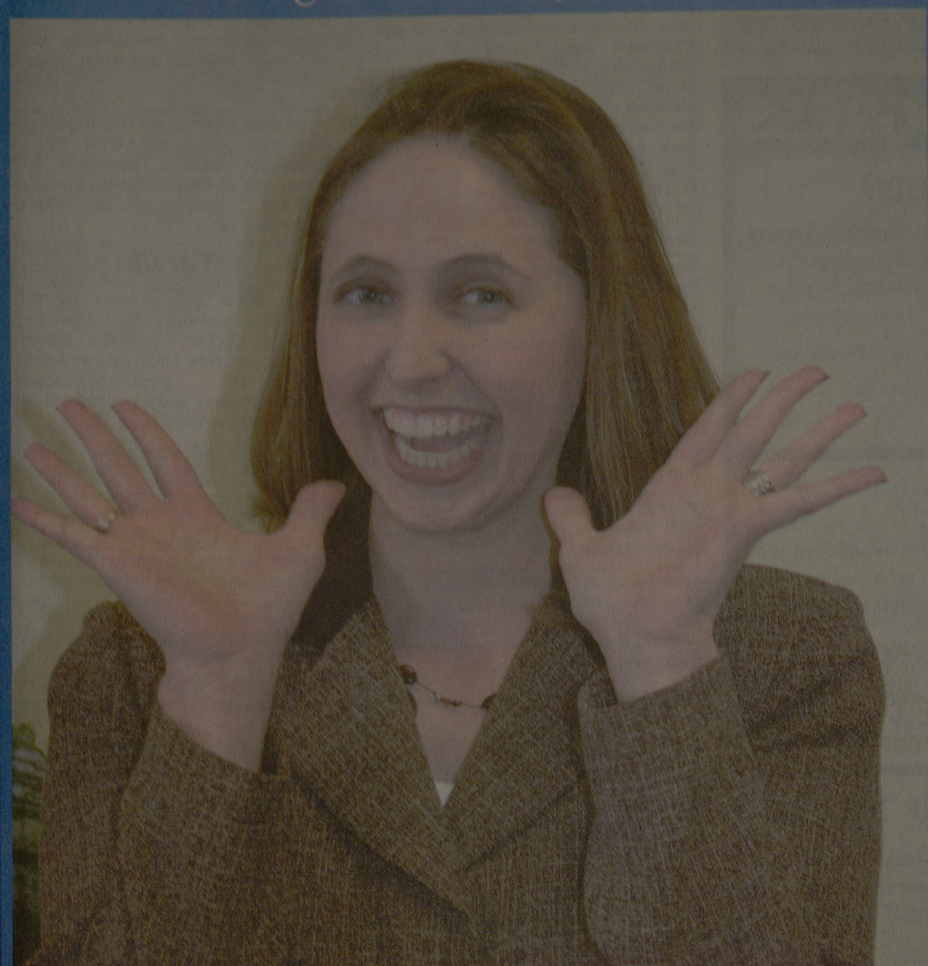
JACQUES BOISSINOT • THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

U.S.A.'s **Jeff Halpern**, right, and Canada's **Scott Niedermayer** square off during second period World Cup of Hockey Tuesday.

in hard and bumped Brodeur in the crease.

"They tried to run Brodeur four or five times," Quinn said. "Mario had to try to do something to restore common sense out there."

First in meeting the needs of our community...



FIRST NATIONAL BANK

...One Relationship At A Time

She just heard about
First National Bank's

**New and Improved
FREE
CHECKING!**

- Free checks*
- Free Visa® Check Card
- Free Internet Banking-FNB Online
- Free FNB On-line WebPay
- Overdraft Privilege*
- No Minimum Balance Requirement
- Unlimited Check Writing
- No Monthly Maintenance Fees
- No Per Item Charges

**HAVE YOU
COMPARED
YOUR BANK
TO US?**

2807 S. Texas Ave. • 1862 Rock Prairie Rd.
Texas at Harvey Rd. • Post Oak Mall
Earl Rudder Frwy. at Hwy. 21
Contact us at 979.779.1111
www.fnb-bcs.com
Member FDIC/Equal Opportunity Lender

*Some fees and restrictions may apply. Please contact one of our personal banking representatives for further details.

**STUDY HARD, PLAY HARD,
TRAVEL EASY**

Welcome Back!...Now GO AWAY:

- Student Class/Discount Airfare Worldwide
- Expert Travel Advice
- Eurail, Britrail, Japan Rail passes
- Budget, Camping, Adventure & Contiki 18-35 Tours
- International Student/Youth Identity Cards
- Spring Break Packages...and more!

TRAVEL CUTS
See the world your way

Toll Free
1-800-592-CUTS (2887)
usareservations@travelcuts.com
www.travelcuts.com

**QUANTUM COW
260-COWS**

NEW PACKETS!

Lab solutions manuals have been re-written and revised for Fall '04: Help is free w/purchase!

New packets for:
A&M and BLINN CHEMISTRY
Hint: Cows are friendly, OWLs are not!

NEW PLACES!

Now you can pick up your packets at
NOTES-n-QUOTES

Also available at several locations around the country!
Check out our website for more details!

quantumcow.com