

1996 Portland Sea Dogs



Location: Portland, ME

Team Record: 83-58 .589

Result: 1st in Eastern League - Northern Division

Affiliate: Florida Marlins

Manager(s): Carlos Tosca

Stadium: Hadlock Field

Attendance: 408,503

1996: Yet another step forward

Portland Press Herald

Portland again wins its division and reaches the Eastern League final, falling to Binghamton. Carlos Tosca led the Sea Dogs (83-58) to their second consecutive Northern Division title with a solid blend of youth and experience. After a slow start, Portland won 56 of its final 86 games to take the Northern Division by 7½ games over second-place Binghamton.

The pitching staff was the strength of this team. Tony Saunders led Portland with a 13-4 record to go with an ERA of 2.63, and also topped the league in strikeouts with 156. Top prospect Livan Hernandez won nine out of his 11 starts in the second half, while Felix Heredia had eight wins in nine decisions with a 1.50 ERA before getting called up by the Marlins on Aug. 8. Closer Bill Hurst had 30 saves, and Will Cunnane rebounded from a 2-8 start to win 10 games.

Center fielder Todd Dunwoody (.277, 24 homers and 93 RBI) paced the offense along with future Red Sox star and first baseman Kevin Millar (.318 average, 18 homers and 86 RBI). Dave Berg stabilized the defense by moving to shortstop and also hit .302. Luis Castillo was batting .317 and had stolen a team-record and league-leading 51 bases when he was called up to the big leagues on Aug. 8 with Heredia.

1996 Charlotte Knights



Location: Fort Mill, SC

Team Record: 62-79 .440

Result: 4th in International League - West Division

Affiliate: Florida Marlins

Manager(s): Sal Rende

Stadium: Knights Stadium

Attendance: 326,761

Seelbach at home again as Charlotte beats Tides

The Virginian-Pilot (Norfolk, VA) April 23, 1996 | Radford, Rich

NORFOLK -- According to Chris Seelbach, the baseball gods follow his every pitch at Harbor Park. It's becoming increasingly difficult to argue that point. Seelbach, who won his Triple-A debut here two years ago while with the Richmond Braves, scattered five hits over seven innings as the Charlotte Knights topped the Norfolk Tides 5-2 on Monday night.

The Sea Dogs faced Binghamton in the first round of the playoffs to determine who would move on for the chance to play for the Eastern League championship. The five-game series went the distance with Portland advancing. Next came the Harrisburg Senators. The Sea Dogs quickly dropped the first two games – 15-3 and 3-2 – before returning to Portland for an 8-5 victory.

There was no victory for Portland in Game 4, but some still consider it one of the most memorable games in Sea Dogs history. The Sea Dogs were training 6-1 in the ninth and facing elimination. After the third out in top of the ninth inning, the thousands of fans rose to their feet and began to applaud the efforts of the Sea Dogs. The fans remained on their feet and applauding throughout the entire bottom of the ninth and continued until the inning, game and season were over.



Friday, August 30, 1996 -- Sea Dogs' shortstop Alex Gonzalez makes the relay to first base in an unsuccessful double play attempt in the third inning after making the force out on Reading Phillies' Scott Shores as Sea Dogs' second baseman Ralph Milliard watches.

"I think every game I've pitched here I've pitched well," said Seelbach, who also took a no-hitter into the ninth inning at Harbor Park last season before giving up two hits and losing 1-0 to Paul Wilson, who pitched his own one-hitter that evening.

"I had some great defense behind me tonight." For instance, Jason Robertson's sliding catch of Alex Ochoa's sinking line drive with runners at second and third in the third inning. Or Darrell Whitmore's grab of another liner by Ochoa with two on in the seventh.

"We hit a lot of balls hard at people," said Ochoa, who was a hard-luck 0 for 4 with a sacrifice fly. The Knights (8-4) pulled into a first-place tie with the Tides (10-6) atop the International League West Division and actually lead by percentage points. The four-game series continues tonight at 7:15.

The Knights got on the board early when Robertson, who was 0 for 16 and had struck out eight times coming in, hit the scoreboard in rightfield with a 400-foot, two-run shot off losing pitcher Mike Fyhrie. It was Robertson's first Triple-A hit.

Charlotte added a run in the third when Ralph Milliard lined a double off the leftfield wall, took third on Edgar Renteria's groundout to short, then scored on Whitmore's grounder to second.

The Tides cut into the lead in the fifth when Kevin Flora doubled to lead off and Shawn Gilbert followed with a single to left. When leftfielder Tommy Gregg's throw to third baseman Lou Lucca was mishandled, Gilbert moved up a base. Matt Franco followed with a run-scoring groundout to second and Ochoa's flyout to center added the second run.

Seelbach was pulled to start the eighth, giving way to pinch-hitter Jose Olmeda. Olmeda singled, stole second, reached third on a groundout and scored another out later on Whitmore's double down the leftfield line for a 4-2 lead.

The Knights added another run in the ninth when Billy McMillon walked, went to third on Milliard's double to left and scored on a single to right by Renteria.

Charlotte's Dan Chergey came on in relief in the eighth, but got into a jam when Gilbert, who was 4 for 4, singled with two out and Franco walked on a full count. But Miguel Batista came on and picked up the save when Ochoa grounded hard to short and Renteria gloved the shot and flipped to second for the final out.

"We battled 'em all the way," said Tides manager Bobby Valentine. "We kept setting the table but couldn't cash in."

Border patrol assists Marlins

The Cincinnati Post (Cincinnati, OH) May 11, 1996

The Florida Marlins were looking for a second baseman, so they called the border patrol.

The Marlins wanted to recall Ralph Milliard from Class AAA Charlotte after Quilvio Veras went on the 15-day disabled list because of a hamstring strain. But Milliard was on the Charlotte team bus en route from a game in Syracuse, N.Y., to a weekend series in Ottawa. Marlins officials knew that Milliard lost his passport this year,

meaning that if he crossed the Canadian border, it might be next week before he could return to the United States.

With two people working the phones frantically, the Marlins contacted the border patrol.

"We told them to stop the bus and not let it out of the country," general manager Dave Dombrowski said.

That's how Milliard found out he had been called up to the major leagues.

When the border patrol intercepted the bus, Milliard got off and waited at the border while the driver dropped off the rest of the team in Ottawa. Then Milliard caught the bus on its way back to Syracuse, took an 8:15 a.m. flight to Miami and was in uniform for Friday night's game between the Marlins and Colorado Rockies.

Marlins halt bus, fetch border-line replacement.

Seattle Post-Intelligencer May 11, 1996

The Florida Marlins were looking for a second baseman, so they called the border patrol.

The Marlins wanted to recall top prospect Ralph Milliard from Triple-A Charlotte after Quilvio Veras went on the 15-day disabled list with a hamstring strain suffered during Thursday's 6-2 victory over Colorado.

But Milliard was on the Charlotte team bus en route from a game in Syracuse to a weekend series in Ottawa. Marlins officials knew that Milliard lost his passport earlier this year, meaning that if he crossed the Canadian border, it might be next week before he could return to the United States.

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Florida also called up shortstop Edgar Renteria from Charlotte. The Marlins believe Renteria, 20, and Milliard, 22, represent their middle infield of the future.

"Defensively they're ready to play in the big leagues,"

Dombrowski said. "Offensively you wish they had a little more time to develop."

1996 Florida Marlins



Location: Miami, FL

Team Record: 80-82, .494

Result: Finished 3rd in NL East

Manager(s): Rene Lachemann (39-47), Cookie Rojas (1-0) and John Boles (40-35)

Stadium: Joe Robbie Stadium

Attendance: 1,746,767 (10th of 14)

Top 10 Prospects Archive
Florida Marlins 1996
Baseball America
Edgar Renteria, ss
Luis Castillo, 2b
Jay Powell, rhp
Jaime Jones, of

Benitez Makes His Pitch; Orioles' Reliever Impresses in 3-0 Loss

The Washington Post March 13, 1996 | Mark Maske

Armando Benitez is the type of pitcher who can give managers and pitching coaches headaches, and he is the type of pitcher who can get managers and pitching coaches fired if they don't find a way to add polish to his eye-catching skills.

But then there are days like today, when Benitez throws his overpowering fastball and his knee-buckling slider for strikes. Hitters are virtually helpless. And managers and pitching coaches -- such as the Baltimore Orioles' Davey Johnson and Pat Dobson -- can dream about the possibilities.

Benitez pitched the bottom of the eighth inning of the Orioles' 3-0 Grapefruit League loss to the Florida Marlins this afternoon and the three hitters he faced had almost no chance. Benitez struck out infielder Ralph Milliard with a high fastball. He struck out outfielder Jason Robertson on a biting slider for a called strike three. And he struck out infielder Josh Booty, the Marlins' highly regarded but struggling prospect, who flailed away at a slider to end another dominant inning by Benitez.

In his four exhibition appearances, Benitez has pitched four innings and hasn't permitted a run or even a hit. He has faced 14 batters, and has struck out eight. He's issued two walks -- both in the same appearance against the New York Yankees, when he also had three strikeouts.

Veras Out A Week With Shoulder Sprain

March 15, 1996 | DAVID O'BRIEN

FORT LAUDERDALE - — Marlins second baseman Quilvio Veras has a sprained left shoulder and is expected to be out of the lineup for five or six days.

Utility infielder Craig Greback will be the Marlins' starting second baseman until Veras returns, but Ralph Milliard will start in Veras' place Friday and Saturday for the split-squad games against Cleveland in Ponce, Puerto Rico.

Marlins Update

By DAVID O'BRIEN, March 16, 1996

FRIDAY'S HIGHLIGHT: Center fielder Jesus Tavarez went 3 for 4 and scored two runs in the Marlins' 6-5 victory over Montreal in West Palm Beach. Tavarez is among the Grapefruit League leaders with 16 hits and a

Josh Booty, 3b
Will Cunnane, rhp
Bill McMillon, of
Randy Winn, of
Ralph Milliard, 2b
Alex Gonzalez, ss

.432 batting average, tops among Marlins with 14 or more at-bats. ... In the "B" game, second baseman Ralph Milliard had two hits and pitchers Al Leiter and Robb Nen combined for 10 strikeouts in seven innings of a scoreless tie. -- WORTH NOTING: Among Marlins with 14 or more at-bats this spring, the five top hitters are all backups or non-roster invitees: Tavarez, Alex Arias (.312)

Baseball american league

Rocky Mountain News (Denver, CO) March 19, 1996 By
The Associated Press

FLORIDA MARLINS - Optioned Marc Valdes, Miguel Batista and Joel Adamson, pitchers; Edgar Renteria and Ralph Milliard, infielders; and Billy McMillon, outfielder, to Charlotte of the International League. Sent Jason Robertson, outfielder; Lou Lucca, infielder; and John Roskos, Todd Cady, Mike Sims and Hector Kuilan, catchers, to their minor-league camp.

New cast of Cougars set to audition for Jones

Daily Herald (Arlington Heights, IL) March 31, 1996 |
Bush, Joe

If last year's Kane County Cougars seemed like an average bunch, it's because they were.

The 69-69 record in 1995 was capped by a first-round Midwest League playoff exit, and the Cougars ended up seventh overall in the 14-team MWL. A 39-31 first-half was followed by a 30-38 second-half fade.

As is the annual case with Class A baseball, most of the 1996 Cougars will be unfamiliar to fans. Manager Lynn Jones has said he expects this season's squad to be better than 1995's, reflecting the Cougars claim to four of the Florida Marlins' top 10 organizational prospects, according to Baseball America. "This is potentially the best team we've sent (north) as far as prospects are concerned," says Marlins director of player development John Boles. "I expect a better second half."

Heading the Kane County talent chart are the Marlins' top two 1995 picks, outfielder Jaime Jones and first baseman Nate Rolison, a pair who cost the club nearly \$2 million in signing bonuses. Returning to Geneva is 20-year-old Josh Booty, who is getting a second start to a much-hyped career. After signing for a record \$1.6 million in 1994, Booty came down with mono, had knee surgery and was suspended for using a grooved bat last summer. Center fielder Randy Winn will be fun to watch at the leadoff spot. A scholarship basketball player at Santa Clara, the speedy 6-2, 175-pound Winn was the Marlins'

third-round pick last year. He's a switch-hitter with relatively little baseball experience. Nineteen-year-old shortstop Alex Gonzales is a Venezuelan free agent signed in 1994. He hit .294 in 187 rookie-ball at-bats last summer, then batted .203 in 59 at-bats at Class A Brevard County. After serving a utility role last summer, Amaury Garcia returns to Elfstrom Stadium as the Cougars' second baseman. No pressure, but the last two Cougars at that position were the Marlins' No. 2 prospect Luis Castillo and likely Triple A starter Ralph Milliard. "He doesn't have the natural athletic ability that Castillo does, but I haven't seen many who do," Boles says. "He's a base-stealer and can drive the ball." Behind the plate will be defensive whiz Hector Kuilan. Joining Jones and Winn in the outfield will be lefty Renee Rascon and Earl Agnoly. The 12-man pitching staff has yet to be determined, but Boles guessed that Dan Vardijan, Rodney Getz and lefty Scott DeWitt - who was up with the Cougars at the end of last season - will be part of it. Replacing Rod Allen as the team's hitting instructor is Matt Winters. Winters was the 1988 Southern League MVP, saw 42 games of major-league action with the Kansas City Royals, played five seasons in Japan and signed as a Marlins replacement player during the strike. This is his first coaching job. The Cougars' new trainer is Harold Williams.

Abbott, Veras On Disabled List

By DAVID O'BRIEN, May 10, 1996
The Marlins' fourth consecutive victory Thursday night was tarnished by the postgame announcement that second baseman Quilvio Veras (hamstring) and shortstop Kurt Abbott (dizziness) are going on the disabled list. Shortstop Edgar Renteria will be called up from Triple-A Charlotte to replace Abbott, and second baseman Ralph Milliard is likely to be called from Charlotte to replace Veras. Abbott has missed four consecutive starts with unexplained dizziness that's bothered him off and on for about a year.

Lack of control putting hurt on Leskanic baylor considers going back to ruffin as Rockies closer

Rocky Mountain News (Denver, CO) May 13, 1996 | Etkin, Jack
MIAMI -- A cruel trip for the Colorado Rockies has become a particularly harsh trek for Curtis Leskanic. He gave up a two-run homer to Charles Johnson with two out in the ninth Sunday, a no-doubt-about-it shot to left-center that had Leskanic leaving the mound before the ball finished its 402-foot flight. The Florida Marlins mobbed Johnson at home plate, celebrating their 7-5 victory. The Rockies stumbled to their seventh straight loss. And Leskanic, who blew a save Tuesday and suffered a loss in Atlanta, has gone 0-2 on the trip after Johnson walloped a 1-0 cut fastball.

Leskanic entered a 5-5 game in the eighth, and the first batter he faced was infielder Ralph Milliard, who was batting for the first time in the majors after joining the Marlins on Friday. Leskanic walked him on seven pitches right after Milliard took a feeble swing and fouled off a ball on his hands. "He walks a player having his first big league at-bat, goes 3-2 on him," Baylor said. "That's not how you close games. He's better than that." Leskanic started the ninth by striking out Gary Sheffield, pounding him inside with fastballs to set up a slider away. But he walked Jeff Conine on six pitches, and after Terry Pendleton flied out, Johnson ended the game by launching Leskanic's cutter. "His location has been very poor," Funk said. "He needs to stay inside more. Everybody's looking for his pitches out over the plate now because they know he has a cutter and a good slider. He needs to get them back looking inside again." "He needs to be able to throw that fastball in for a strike and in off the plate. And he needs to be able to throw that cutter in a good spot, not leave it out over the middle. . . . He has to re-establish that he can throw his fastball anywhere that he wants it."

In Rookies Sparkle Debut

By DAVID O'BRIEN Staff Writer, May 19, 1996
Whatever happens in their promising futures, shortstop Edgar Renteria and second baseman Ralph Milliard aren't likely to soon forget Saturday at Wrigley Field. Both players made their first major league starts in a 3-2 victory over the Cubs before a near-capacity crowd at one of the sport's venerable venues. If they had jitters, Renteria and Milliard didn't show it, both getting their first big-league hits and turning in flawless defensive performances. "It feels great," said Milliard, 22, who batted eighth and went 1 for 4, laying down a perfect bunt to lead off the seventh inning.

Barberie glad he's back in major leagues

Daily Herald (Arlington Heights, IL) May 19, 1996 | Miles, Bruce
Everybody's "happy to be here" when they arrive in the major leagues, but Bret Barberie said it with conviction Saturday. "I'm pleasantly surprised," said the 28-year-old infielder, called up Friday when Robin Jennings was sent down. "When you go down there (Class AAA Iowa), it makes you appreciate all the amenities and how nice it is up here." - The Marlins' Edgar Renteria and Ralph Milliard, both former Kane County Cougars, each picked up their first major-league hits Saturday. Renteria reached on a first-inning single. Milliard bunted for a basehit in the seventh.

Supply Of Runs Runs Out For Cubs

Chicago Sun-Times May 19, 1996 | TONI GINETTI
Marlins 3 Cubs 2

Juiced baseballs? Florida Marlins pitcher John Burkett believes it. "I've seen some pitchers hit balls in batting practice that go way out," Burkett said, "and I've never seen that. It's obvious."

So where was the juice at Wrigley Field on Saturday? A strong wind was blowing out, batting-practice balls were flying out, yet the Cubs managed only three hits in a 3-2 loss.

"I saw the way the flags were flying - it's a little scary," Burkett admitted.

"But in this park with the (tall) grass, if you keep the ball down and pitch your game, that's the way you have to approach it."

Burkett (3-5) did just that for five innings of no-hit ball and seven innings of one-hit ball, battling Cubs starter Steve Trachsel (3-3), who gave his own gutsy performance before 38,003 - the largest crowd since Opening Day.

The starters were locked in a scoreless duel through five innings, though Trachsel had the tougher workout, with the Marlins putting runners on base in the first four innings. Not until Gary Sheffield cranked his 13th home run of the year in the sixth did a man cross the plate.

The Marlins figured to score more in the seventh when they loaded the bases with none out.

"I wanted to leave Steve in there because you like to go with your starting pitcher as long as you can, and especially with the way he was battling," manager Jim Riggleman said. "The odds were that someone would score anyway, but if it was just one or two, he could come in and still have a chance to win if we came back."

The odds worked against the Cubs in a strange way. No runs scored in the Marlins' seventh after a defen sive display that brought the huge crowd to its feet.

It started when Edgar Renteria flied out to short right field and Sammy Sosa gunned a throw home to hold Ralph Milliard at third.

It continued when Mark Grace caught a line drive by Greg Colbrunn, holding the runners.

And it ended when Leo Gomez repeated Grace's feat, catching Sheffield's liner near third.

Trachsel went to the dugout still trailing 1-0 despite allowing 10 hits.

"That's a sign of a good pitcher, too," Riggleman said.

"Some days you don't have your exceptional stuff, but you battle to keep the other club down."

As Riggleman had hoped, the odds brought the Cubs two runs when Scott Servais singled leading off the eighth and Gomez followed with his seventh home run.

"(Burkett) had been pitching outside all day, so I looked for an outside pitch," Gomez said. "I think maybe he was a little tired by the eighth."

"I thought when we got out of that (seventh) inning, we had a chance to come back and win."

But the odds changed in Florida's favor in the top of the eighth when Mike Perez entered for Trachsel.

Brian McRae failed in a diving attempt to catch Terry Pendleton's one-out fly that fell for a double.

Catcher Charles Johnson followed by hitting Perez's next pitch into the left-field seats for his eighth homer.

The odds stayed with the Marlins and their relief ace, Robb Nen, who shut down the Cubs in the eighth and ninth to earn his ninth save.

"He's been nothing short of spectacular," Burkett said of Nen, who has converted nine of 10 save opportunities.

"I throw about 87 or 88 m.p.h. and use control, and he comes in and throws more than 90 m.p.h. It takes more than a couple innings for them to get used to him."

Strong pitching has been something to get used to the last three days at hitter-friendly Wrigley after rookie Amaury Telemaco's one-hit debut Thursday, Jim Bullinger's four-hit performance Friday and Burkett's game Saturday.

"The secret is to keep the ball down and approach each game and each pitch the same way," Burkett said.

"It speaks for itself," Riggleman said of the pitching. "It's been outstanding both ways."

Milliard Gets His Chance

By ROBES PATTON Staff Writer, June 2, 1996

The second half of what might be the Marlins' middle infield of the future moved into place Saturday night when Ralph Milliard started at second base. Milliard replaced utilityman Craig Grebeck, who started 20 games at second, who had replaced injured Quilvio Veras. "I'm going to take a look at Ralphie," manager Rene Lachemann said, "to see if he's ready to play up here." Milliard will remain in the lineup and bat eighth at least through Wednesday, when the homestand ends. "We'll see after that," Lachemann said.

Servais Caps Cubs Revival // Homer in 10th Keys Victory Over Marlins

Chicago Sun-Times June 2, 1996 | DARYL VAN SCHOUWEN

Cubs 5 Marlins 4 MIAMI Scott Servais was the hero, but he didn't forget who made his ninth home run trot possible. Servais hit a no-doubt-about-it homer to left field off Marlins reliever Terry Mathews with one out in the top of the 10th inning to give the Cubs a 5-4 victory over the Florida Marlins on Saturday night, but he couldn't help but credit Luis Gonzalez.

And to think they had been flattened through seven innings on two singles by left-hander Al Leiter. But the Cubs overcame a 3-0 deficit with a four-run eighth inning rally started by a Ryne Sandberg leadoff homer off Leiter and capped by Gonzalez' two-run pinch-double against Robb Nen. The Marlins rallied to tie against Turk Wendell, but Servais broke it and Wendell saved his own victory, though he couldn't get credit for it.

The key inning was the Cubs eighth. After Sandberg's homer, Leiter walked Mark Grace and was lifted for Nen, who had converted his last 11 save opportunities after blowing his first chance of the season. Grace moved to

second on a wild pitch and scored on pinch-hitter Dave Magadan's single to make it 3-2 Marlins.

After Ozzie Timmons popped out, Servais singled and Gonzalez doubled to put the Cubs ahead 4-3. Gonzalez reached down for a fastball below the knees and drove it into the left-center field gap, just beyond the reach of left fielder Jeff Conine.

But the Marlins tied the game in the bottom of the eighth against Wendell on pinch-hitter Alex Arias' single that drove home Greg Colbrunn from third. Colbrunn reached on a one-out single, advanced to second on a passed ball by Servais and to third on a ground out to second by Charles Johnson. Wendell (4-1) got stronger as he went along, though, pitching a scoreless ninth and striking out Colbrunn, Johnson and Craig Grebeck in order to end the game in the 10th.

Leiter, honored in pregame ceremonies for the no-hitter he pitched against the Colorado Rockies three weeks earlier, allowed just a single by Timmons and an infield single by Brian McRae before Sandberg's homer. Leiter had walked Leo Gomez, Timmons and pinch-hitter Brian Dorsett to fill the bases in the seventh, but he got away with it. Gomez and Timmons were on with nobody out, but Servais chased a 2-1 pitch that was high out of the strike zone and popped out. Jose Hernandez flied to right and after Dorsett walked, McRae flied to center to end the inning.

Cubs starter Frank Castillo pitched five innings, allowing three runs on six hits and one walk while striking out four. Castillo gave up a bases-empty home run to Johnson in the second, a sacrifice fly by Ralph Milliard in the fourth and a solo homer to Conine in the fifth.

The Cubs trailed 3-0 after five innings, so manager Jim Riggleman - who ended up using 19 players - lifted Castillo for pinch-hitter Todd Haney leading off the sixth. With a left-hander starting against the Cubs, Riggleman went away from his revamped lineup that had the left-handed hitting Gonzalez and Magadan batting second and fifth, respectively. Sandberg was back in his customary second spot, Grace was third and Sosa fourth.

Sosa, in a 3-for-37 slump, went 0-for-5 with one strikeout. He flied out with McRae on second and Grace, who was intentionally walked, on first with one out in the ninth. Magadan ended the inning by grounding to short.

Win or lose, Cubs stay put when it comes to Central race

Daily Herald (Arlington Heights, IL) June 3, 1996 | Rozner, Barry

MIAMI - Once again, the Cubs' arms have worn out by June. Except this year it's from treading water.

The Cubs haven't gone up, down or otherwise, they've simply kept their heads above water, and despite a 3-2 loss to the Marlins Sunday at Joe Robbie Stadium, they find themselves right in the thick of the Central Division race. After winning two of three this weekend, the Cubs (23-32) trail frontrunning St. Louis and Houston by only 3 games with 107 left to play.

"We have to start doing things better before we can worry about winning the division," said Cubs manager Jim Riggleman. "Everybody's bunched together right now, and I think everyone in the division thinks they can win it.

"But we just have to play better baseball and worry about ourselves and not these other teams."

A positive sign is that the Cubs finished one of the toughest stretches of the year without falling from the race. They played 18 straight games over three weeks against Atlanta, Houston and Florida, which can claim three of the top six pitching staffs in the league.

Though they went 6-12 in that time, they dropped from a half-game out of first to just 3 games back of the leaders.

"We faced a lot of good pitching in this stretch,"

Riggleman said. "We have to meet the challenge. That's the way it is in the big leagues. There's really no easy days in the big leagues anymore."

It sure wasn't easy against Marlins starter Kevin Brown (4-4, 2.09 ERA) Sunday, as he allowed just a run on 6 hits with no walks and 8 strikeouts, and the Marlins led 3-1 going into the ninth. Ryne Sandberg's RBI double closed the gap to 3-2 against Robb Nen, who had blown a save the night before, and the Cubs eventually put runners on second and third with one out, before pinch hitter Leo Gomez struck out on three pitches. Brian McRae was the last hope, and he looked like the hero when he ripped a shot up the middle that appeared to be 2-run single and a 4-3 Cubs lead. Nen, however, got a piece of it, knocking it toward second baseman Ralph Milliard, who scooped it up and threw out McRae to end the game.

"I thought we had the game right there," McRae said. "But that's the way things have gone for us all year." Actually, in this series everything had gone the Cubs' way until that moment. "My heart skipped a beat," said Florida manager Rene Lachemann. "Robbie's been watching (Panthers goalie John) Vanbiesbrouck a lot, and he made a great glove save on that one." It gave Nen his 12th save and made a loser of Amaury Telemaco, who has dropped two straight since winning his first 2 starts. After allowing just a run on 7 hits in 15 innings of his first two appearances, Telemaco has given up 11 runs (6 earned) on 13 hits and 7 walks in 9 2/3 innings. "The only problem was my control, and it's a mechanical thing," Telemaco said. "The ball was up and that was the problem."

Even so, the Cubs came within an eyelash of winning the contest and sweeping the series.

"It's a game of inches," Riggleman said. "Brian had a great stroke and hit it good, but it wasn't meant to be."

Milliard Saves Marlins - With Assist From Nen

By CRAIG BARNES Staff Writer, June 3, 1996

Sometimes, you get the breaks, and sometimes the breaks get you. After two one-run losses to the Cubs, it was the Marlins' turn to get a few breaks Sunday as they won 3-2 on a game-saving play by rookie second baseman Ralph Milliard. With two outs in the ninth and the tying and lead runs in scoring position, Milliard threw out Brian McRae to end the game. McRae's line drive on a 1-2 pitch was

slowed and deflected by closer Robb Nen's glove. If it didn't hit Nen's glove, it was into center field with Ryne Sandberg scoring from third base and Scott Servais having a chance to score from second base.

Pitchers have their day wild kile one of few not in control

The Buffalo News (Buffalo, NY) June 3, 1996 | Associated Press

In a year in which pitchers have been battered more than house speaker Newt Gingrich, they finally got their day in the sun on Sunday. Some of it was good, some of it was great, and some of it was wild.

Todd Stottlemire (5-3) pitched a seven-hit shutout as St. Louis beat the Astros for the sixth time in 15 days, 2-0, tying them for the NL Central lead.

Around the horn

Marlin reliever Robb Nen deflected Brian McRae's line drive with two outs and runners on second and third in the ninth and rookie second baseman Ralph Milliard threw out the speedy Cub in a close play, preserving Florida's 3-2 victory over Chicago. Kevin Brown (4-4), who lowered his major league-leading ERA to 2.09, left after eight innings with a 3-1 lead.

Wild Kile Plunks 4 Cardinals in Loss

The Washington Post June 3, 1996

The Houston Astros' wild guy outdid himself this time.

Darryl Kile tied a major league record by hitting four batters, leading to the game's only runs as the St. Louis Cardinals and Todd Stottlemire (5-3) completed a three-game sweep with a 2-0 victory yesterday in St. Louis.

MARLINS 3, CUBS 2: With runners on second and third, reliever Robb Nen knocked down Brian McRae's line drive and second baseman Ralph Milliard threw him out to end the game in Miami.

Two Saves From Nen Sink Cubs

Chicago Sun-Times June 3, 1996 | DARYL VAN SCHOUWEN

Marlins 3 Cubs 2

MIAMI Brian McRae slammed his helmet to the ground in the direction of the visitors dugout at Joe Robbie Stadium, where his teammates were clearing out after another tough defeat Sunday. Though the Cubs left Miami with two wins in three games vs. the Marlins - their first winning series on the road this season - they put themselves in position for a sweep with pinch-hitter Leo Gomez and McRae both having a crack with the tying run on third and go-ahead run on second in the ninth.

But Robb Nen struck out Gomez on three pitches and stuck his glove out to deflect a line shot by McRae headed to center that would have scored Ryne Sandberg from third and perhaps Scott Servais from second. Second baseman

Ralph Milliard charged in, scooped and threw out McRae to preserve a 3-2 Marlins victory.

Changes appear imminent

The Record (Bergen County, NJ) June 8, 1996 | VINNY DiTRANI

BREAKOUT NIGHT: Florida entered Friday night's 12-2 rout of the Mets having scored the fewest runs in the majors. But the Marlins set a season-high with their 19 hits, and had their most productive inning with seven runs in the seventh inning. . . . Terry Pendleton had four hits, including two doubles, for the ninth four-hit game of his career. Gregg Colbrunn went 3-for-5, his team-leading 22nd multiple-hit game. . . . Al Leiter's nine strikeouts tied his high for the year, also set against the Mets May 6. . . . Rookie shortstop Edgar Renteria had his first major league RBI and second baseman Ralph Milliard his first major league extra-base hit (double) during the rout. . . . David Weathers (2-0) starts for Florida tonight (7 p.m., Channel 9) against Mark Clark (4-6).

Mets survive less-than-super finish

The Record (Bergen County, NJ) June 9, 1996 | VINNY DiTRANI, Staff Writer

NEW YORK -- The Mets, who haven't been playing like Supermen recently, needed a strong Clark Kent effort to hold off the Florida Marlins, 7-6, Saturday night despite another shaky effort from their bullpen.

Right-hander Mark Clark, the team's most consistent starter all season, turned in another outstanding effort, fanning a career-high seven in 7 1/3 innings. Third baseman Jeff Kent had three hits and drove in three runs, two with a bases-loaded single in the three-run fifth that broke a 1-1 tie. Kent, booed and badgered by the Shea Stadium fans, also made several fine fielding plays as the Mets beat the Marlins despite allowing five runs in the final two innings.

John Franco came in with the bases loaded in the ninth and, after yielding a two-run single to Jeff Conine and a run-scoring hit to Gary

Sheffield, retired Greg Colbrunn on a fine running catch by center fielder Lance Johnson for his 12th save. Todd Hundley chipped in with his 14th homer, a mammoth shot estimated at 429 feet to dead center, off reliever Kurt Miller with Bernard Gilkey on in the seventh.

Clark (5-6) retired 13 straight Marlins between Devon White's leadoff homer in the third and Terry Pendleton's one-out infield single

in the seventh. He tired in the eighth, however, yielding back-to-back singles to White and Edgar Renteria before Conine ripped a double to left.

White scored easily on Conine's hit, but Renteria was gunned out at the plate on the latest of shortstop Rey Ordenez's strong relay throws. Doug Henry relieved Clark and retired the dangerous Sheffield on a pop to catcher Hundley. But Colbrunn ripped a double to center to make it 7-3 before Pendleton lined out to end the inning.

Clark entered the game not having allowed an earned run in his previous 21 innings covering three starts, during which he allowed just nine hits. He stretched this string to 23 innings before White led off the top of the third. White crushed a 1-0 Clark pitch, hitting the back wall of the Mets' bullpen with his fourth home run of the season. Meanwhile, the Mets got a runner to third base with fewer than two outs four times in the first four innings, yet scored one run.

Johnson led off the game against Weathers with a single to right, stole second, and advanced to third when rookie Ralph Milliard made a great diving stab of Jose Vizcaino's grounder and threw out the second baseman.

However, the usually reliable Bernard Gilkey struck out and Hundley grounded to Milliard to end the inning.

Kent led off the second with a double to left and went to third on Roberto Petagine's grounder to second. Weathers, however, struck out Butch Huskey on a pitch out of the strike zone and retired Ordonez on a grounder to Colbrunn at first base to escape unscathed.

The Mets got a break that helped tie the score in the fourth. Gilkey, leading off, hit a pop fly right up the shoot.

Catcher Bob Natal drifted out from home plate to corral it, only to be called off by Pendleton ranging in from third base. But Pendleton dropped the ball in foul ground for an error, prolonging the at-bat.

Gilkey took advantage by lashing a single to center and went to third when Hundley ripped a blast off the right field wall, which

Sheffield played perfectly to hold the Mets catcher to a single. This time the Mets didn't waste the opportunity as Kent reached out and poked a single to right to drive home Gilkey.

Pirates Stop Giants With Big 6th Inning

The Washington Post June 12, 1996

EXPOS 3, MARLINS 2: Montreal capitalized on second baseman Ralph Milliard's throwing error in the seventh inning to rally at home. With the Expos trailing 2-1, Darrin Fletcher and Cliff Floyd hit one-out singles off Kevin Brown (4-5).

Pinch hitter Sherman Obando hit a potential double-play ball to short, but Milliard couldn't complete the play, throwing the ball past first and into the Expos' dugout. Dave Silvestri followed with a single for a 3-2 lead.

Abbott Gets Second Chance At Second

By DAVID O'BRIEN Staff Writer, June 14, 1996

When he was demoted to Triple-A on May 21, Kurt Abbott was an emotional wreck, equal parts stunned, hurt and angry. "That was probably the most devastating thing that's ever happened to me," said Abbott, who lost his shortstop position to rookie phenom Edgar Renteria. But instead of stewing over the move or asking to be traded, Abbott, 27, reported to Charlotte and worked as if he were

a rookie again. He was switched from shortstop to third base, then to second when it became apparent that Quilvio Veras was not going to be healthy for some time and rookie Ralph Milliard wasn't ready to hit major league pitching.

Barons Fall, 12-7, On Homers In 5th

THE INQUIRER STAFF POSTED: June 20, 1996 FORT MILL, S.C.

Chris Sheff, Ralph Milliard and Joe Siddall homered in the fifth inning, and Charlotte went on to a 12-7 victory over Scranton/Wilkes-Barre last night.

It was the first time the Knights had homered three times in an inning since July 30, 1993, when Manny Ramirez, Jim Thome and Sandy Alomar Jr. did it.

Honkbol's Loss (milliard) Gains Marlins A Prospect

By GORDON EDES, July 14, 1996

The benching of Quilvio Veras on Saturday reinforces the notion that the Marlins will have a new second baseman next season. The only question now would seem: Will Luis Castillo, pride of the Portland Sea Dogs, be ready to make the jump from Double-A, or do the Marlins go with the only player they signed out of Honkbol. That's what they call baseball in The Netherlands, where Ralph Milliard was playing until Marlins scout Tim Schmidt signed him in the Klaus Party Haus. That's the bowling alley across the street from the national stadium where Schmidt first saw Milliard play.

Prospect Shapes Up For Debut

By DAVID O'BRIEN Staff Writer, September 13, 1996

He still couldn't be described as svelte, but Livan Hernandez is certainly in better shape these days than the last time he wore a Marlins uniform during spring training. The Cuban right-hander, who has shed more than 15 pounds, arrived Thursday from Double-A Portland along with second baseman Ralph Milliard and right-handers Bill Hurst and Andy Larkin, the final call-ups the Marlins will make. It's the second major league stint for Milliard, who started at second base and batted leadoff Thursday night in place of the injured Luis Castillo.

Greenwell cut loose as Red Sox shuffle roster

The Buffalo News (Buffalo, NY) October 16, 1996 | From News Wire Services

MIAMI -- The Florida Marlins' pursuit of three-time MVP outfielder Barry Bonds is not likely to intensify until the World Series, when club officials will have the chance to meet with their counterparts with the San Francisco Giants. The Marlins, who as expected targeted Bonds as their No. 1 priority at their organizational meetings last week, have let it be known to the Giants that in exchange for the 32-

year-old Bonds, they would be willing to deal first baseman Greg Colbrunn, second baseman Ralph Milliard, top outfield prospect Billy McMillon and two other minor-league prospects. The Giants, meanwhile, are asking for much more. They want rookie shortstop Edgar Renteria, left fielder-first baseman Jeff Conine and a starting pitcher out of the big-league rotation. Indians return Candaele

Coals already firing up on the hot stove

The Buffalo News (Buffalo, NY) October 20, 1996 | GORDON EDES - Tribune Media Services

The World Series ends one season and begins another. It's the official start of the hot stove league, when talk of free agents, trades, arbitration cases and managerial hirings and firings dominates the Baseball Nation. A spin around the circuit as the Yankees and Braves wait to do battle:

Around the American League

The Marlins want to reunite Bonds with manager Jim Leyland, a combination that won three division titles in Pittsburgh, and have prepared a package of players that includes first baseman Greg Colbrunn, second baseman Ralph Milliard, outfield prospect Billy McMillon plus a couple of minor leaguers that could include top shortstop prospect Alex Gonzalez.

Even Braves couldn't predict, logically, heroics of prodigy

Daily News (Los Angeles, CA) October 21, 1996 By Gordon Edes Fort Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel

You can measure how fast a kid runs, watch how he swings a bat, decide how he reacts to a fly ball.

But there comes a time, especially when the kid is only 15 years old and the baby fat has not yet hardened into a young man's muscle, that a scout has to search his own heart to decide if the kid will ever be a big-leaguer.

"You've got to dream him a little bit," said Paul Snyder, the Atlanta Braves' director of scouting and player development. "And once in a while, dreams get answered."

But no one with the Braves, Snyder admits, ever entertained this vision: 19-year-old Andruw Jones, the first teen-ager to start a World Series game since a 19-year-old Mickey Mantle started alongside Joe DiMaggio in the 1951 World Series, becoming the youngest player in Series history to hit a home run - and on his first at-bat. With his two-run, second-inning home run off Yankees left-hander Andy Pettitte, Jones instantly became the most famous citizen of the island of Curacao, which is 2-1/2

hours by plane from Miami and where the Series was being beamed live on Supersport Benelux, the Dutch version of Joe Buck and Tim McCarver. When he homered on his second at-bat, too, Jones achieved instant legend status not only in the Netherland Antilles, but in Georgia, too, where Braves fans should already start thinking about placing a statue of Jones alongside the one of Henry Aaron. It wouldn't be the first time Jones' name has been linked with baseball's home run king. That came when John Schuerholz, the Braves' general manager, asked Snyder if he thought Jones, who began the season in Single-A Durham, was ready to be promoted to the big leagues.

"It's scary," Snyder said. "I said, 'John, that's the first time a Braves general manager has asked the farm director if a player was ready since John Mullen asked if Hank Aaron was ready to come up.' That's the kind of guy we're talking about. Andruw goes at his own pace, and in temperament he reminds me of Aaron, too. Watch him do anything, and he does it so easily."

The Braves signed Jones for \$46,000 on his 16th birthday. The Marlins had scouted him, but never made an offer. Angel Vazquez, then the Marlins' director of international scouting, didn't want to get in a bidding war with Atlanta, and Levy Ochoa, the scout who had been tracking him, suffered a stroke and was out of commission for several months. Jones' signing bonus pales compared to the multi-million bonuses given American college stars, but in 1993, that was 10 times the going rate for an island player.

The Braves had been alerted to Jones by Givanni Viceisza, a businessman in Curacao whose sideline was keeping an eye out for promising ballplayers. It was not a taxing vocation. There have been three big-leaguers from Curacao: Hensley Meulens, who played briefly for the Yankees, and Ralph Milliard, the Marlins rookie, who like Jones was born in Willemstad.

Snyder flew down to see Jones, who at the time was a pitcher. "He ran the 60-yard-dash in about 6.73," Snyder said. "His dad ran something like a 6.71. He was 45 years old at the time."

Henry Jones, Andruw's dad, was a ballplayer of some renown, but unlike his son, he'd never had Hall of Famer Willie Stargell liken him to the incomparable Roberto Clemente. Last season, his first full year in pro ball, Jones batted .277, hit 25 home runs, drove in 100 runs, stole 56 bases and played a sensational center field. He was voted Baseball America's Minor League Player of the Year, a distinction he earned this season, too, when he hit over .300 all the way up the ladder to the big leagues.

MOST RBI IN A WORLD SERIES GAME Six

Andruw Jones, Atlanta, Oct. 20, 1996, at New York-AL