

## Mariners in Peoria

*Sunday, March 5, 2000 By Bob Finnigan Seattle Times staff reporter*

PEORIA, Ariz. - Kazu Sasaki survived his first Mariner appearance - barely.

The Seattle reliever had one out and one on in the last inning of Seattle's 16-8 Cactus League win over the Padres yesterday when infielder Ralph Milliard rocketed a liner at Sasaki's midsection. The pitcher threw his glove up and the ball smacked into it. He then turned and threw to second, where runner John Roskos was doubled off to end the game. "I caught it and said, 'Ouch!'" Sasaki said through interpreter Allan Turner. "Then I said, 'Let's get the guy at second.'" After preaching small ball, the Mariners practiced big ball for their first Cactus League win. With the wind blowing out, they hit four home runs: Edgar Martinez's three-run shot, two-runners from John Olerud and Rich Butler, and a solo by Mark McLemore. The production largely limited Sasaki's role to mopup, but the right-hander appeared nervous in his first North American game.

## SONIC DEFENSE SHOWS UP, RULES DAY IN ATLANTA

*The Columbian (Vancouver, WA) March 5, 2000 | AP*

PEORIA, Ariz. (AP) - Edgar Martinez had three hits, including a three-run homer, as the Seattle Mariners pounded out 17 hits in a 16-8 victory over the San Diego Padres on Saturday. Martinez also had five RBIs for the Mariners, who jumped in front with a five-run third inning and a four-run fourth. "We played really well," Martinez said. "It felt good to make some hard contact and help the team."

Mike Cameron, acquired in the Ken Griffey Jr. trade, had two doubles, Mark McLemore homered and singled, and John Olerud had a two-run homer in the fourth off Padres closer Trevor Hoffman. Hoffman struggled through the fourth inning, allowing four earned runs on four hits. But he said he felt fine on the mound and was able to work on all four of his pitches. "I felt pretty comfortable on the hill," Hoffman said. "It doesn't count, but nobody wants to get hit like that."

Kazuhiro Sasaki, Japan's all-time saves leader, made his spring debut for the Mariners in the ninth. He allowed a double to John Roskos, but caught a line drive back to the mound from Ralph Milliard and doubled up Roskos off of second to end the game.

"He threw a couple of good split fingers," Seattle manager Lou Piniella said. "He's working up his arm strength more than anything else."

Carlos Hernandez had three hits and Tony Gwynn had two for San Diego. Al Martin, acquired by the Padres from Pittsburgh two weeks ago, led off the game with a home run.

## Padres Send Four to Vegas

*AP Online March 27, 2000*

PEORIA, Ariz. (AP) -- Right-hander Stan Spencer's outside shot at starting the season with the San Diego Padres ended Monday when he was sent down to Triple-A Las Vegas. Spencer, right-hander Matt Whiteside and infielder Ralph Milliard were reassigned to Las Vegas while right-hander Buddy Carlyle had his contract optioned to the Stars.

Spencer went 0-7 with a 9.16 ERA in eight starts and one relief appearance with the Padres last year, was released and then re-signed as a minor league free agent. At one point during spring training, it looked like he'd have a shot at making the big league club when starter Brian Boehringer was experiencing some discomfort in his surgically repaired right shoulder and Carlyle had elbow pain.

## Monday's Sports Transactions

*AP Online March 28, 2000 | The Associated Press, BASEBALL, American League*

SAN DIEGO PADRES--Optioned RHP Buddy Carlyle to Las Vegas of the Pacific Coast League. Reassigned RHP Stan Spencer, RHP Matt Whiteside and INF Ralph Milliard to Las Vegas. Placed RHP Steve Montgomery on the 15-day disabled list, retroactive to March 25.

## STARS BEAT RAINIERS

*Seattle Post-Intelligencer May 16, 2000*

Dusty Allen hit a homer and Ralph Milliard walked three times as the Las Vegas Stars defeated the Tacoma Rainiers, 7-3, yesterday in Pacific Coast League play. Junior Herndon (5-2) went six innings, allowing two runs on seven hits to record the win. Milliard went 2-for-2 and David Newhan went 2-for-3 with 2 RBIs. Tom Davey (3-4) logged the defeat. Chad Alexander and Mike Murphy each went 3-for-4 with an RBI for the Rainiers. Las Vegas was down 2-0 through the third inning, but scored four runs in the fourth.

## Stars collect 14 hits, top Rainiers 7-3

Wednesday, May 17, 2000 The Associated Press  
LAS VEGAS - Dusty Allen hit his eighth home run of the season and Ralph Milliard walked three times as the Las Vegas Stars defeated the Tacoma Rainiers 7-3 Monday night in Pacific Coast League play. Junior Herndon (5-2) pitched six innings, allowing two runs on seven hits to record the win. Milliard batted 2 for 2 and teammate David Newhan went 2 for 3 and drove in two runs. Chad Alexander had three hits, including two doubles, and Mike Murphy also had three hits for the Rainiers. Tom Davey (3-4) was the losing pitcher.

Las Vegas trailed 2-0 entering the bottom of the fourth inning but then scored four runs to take the lead for good.

Las Vegas accumulated a total of 14 hits, while Tacoma finished with 11.

## **Sky Sox report**

*The Gazette (Colorado Springs, CO) June 16, 2000*

### **NOTES**

TWO+TWO+ Dusty Allen, John Roskos, Mike Darr and Ralph Milliard had 2 RBI each in the Stars' 11-6 win Wednesday.

Allen hit a two-run homer in the first inning and Roskos added his eighth homer of the season in the fourth.

## **Playing out string in 2000 forgettable year coming to an end**

*The Cincinnati Post (Cincinnati, OH) September 8, 2000 | Jackson, Tony*

Six months ago, the Reds had their sights set on October. Now, with October three weeks away, they have their sights set on 2001. Come spring training, they no doubt will be looking toward October again.

It sounds like a vicious cycle. It sounds like that annoying song from the Broadway musical "Annie," the one about tomorrow always being a day away.

But for now, it's the Reds' reality. No matter what Yogi Berra once said, no matter how much their manager and his players still insist they are in the race for a playoff spot, the fact is the Reds are officially playing out the string.

There are 23 games left in a season that will undoubtedly go down as one of the most disappointing in recent memory.

The time has come, then, to examine what went wrong with the 2000 Reds, the club that was supposed to escort championship baseball back into a city that was once synonymous with it.

With that, The Post gives you five reasons why the Reds' season went sour:

**INJURIES** - "What went wrong this year?" Reds manager Jack McKeon asked rhetorically. "Well, what went right last year? One thing was that we didn't have any key injuries. This year, we've had a lot of them."

The Reds actually have used the disabled list one fewer time (10) this season than last season. But last year's injury list was dotted with names like Ralph Milliard, Scott Winchester and Mark Wohlers, none of whom appeared in a single game for the big-league club.

This year, the Reds have seen first baseman Sean Casey, shortstop Barry Larkin, pitchers Pete Harnisch and Scott Williamson, outfielder Alex Ochoa and catcher Eddie Taubensee all serve time on the DL.

Third baseman Aaron Boone was lost for the season at the All-Star break. Every one of those is a key player.

## **Dutch Surprise Cuba in Baseball**

*The Washington Post September 20, 2000*

The streak ended when Ralph Milliard cradled the ball in his glove at second base for a forceout, lingering over the historic moment.

After 21 Olympic games, the mighty Cubans had struck out. The team that ranked as an international baseball dynasty for more than a decade took its first Olympic loss Wednesday (Tuesday night EDT) and it did it with little emotion. Hensley Meulens' bases-loaded double led the Netherlands to a stunning 4-2 victory.

Cuba's loss left the United States as the only unbeaten team in the tournament. The United States (3-0) was scheduled to play South Korea later Wednesday. "This is one of the biggest accomplishments in all of Dutch sports," shortstop Robert Eenhoorn said. "This is big. It should be." Big? It was a watershed in Olympic baseball history. Cuba (3-1) had breezed through the first two official tournaments, winning the gold in Barcelona and Atlanta while going unbeaten and rarely even being challenged. Defections took their toll in the last few years, and the decision to allow professionals for this tournament narrowed the gap between Cuba and the rest of the world. Finally, the rest of the world caught up.

"You can't win 'em all," said Ken Brauckmiller, a former major league pitcher who handled the Olympics' best-hitting lineup for eight innings. "You win 20 in a row and sooner or later maybe things catch up to you." Meulens, who got the nickname "Bam Bam" as a minor league prospect in the 1980s, doubled to left off reliever Maels Rodriguez for a 4-1 lead in the fourth, stunning the Cubans. Milliard, a former Met, also had an RBI single in the inning. "It was probably the biggest hit of my career," Meulens said. "Getting to the major leagues is one of the greatest things anyone can have. Being part of the Yankees and getting to play my first game at Yankee Stadium was great. This ranks right up there."

## **Now, Cuba Finds Itself at a Loss; After 21 Olympic Wins and No Defeats, a Startling Setback to the Netherlands**

*The Washington Post September 21, 2000 | Rajiv Chandrasekaran*

Since baseball was introduced as an official medal sport at the 1992 Olympics, one thing had been certain: The Cubans always won.

Despite a stream of defections, the baseball-loving island nation successfully replenished its ranks with fresh talent, assembling an amazing 21-0 record and collecting golds in Barcelona and Atlanta. Then they met the Dutch today. In a stunning victory powered by strong pitching and a bases-loaded double in the third inning, the underdog Netherlands upset Cuba, 4-2. The loss makes the U.S. squad--which beat South Korea, 4-0, Wednesday night after first baseman Doug Mientkiewicz belted a grand slam in the eighth inning--the only undefeated team in the competition.

Cuban players, who still have a shot at the gold, said they were surprised, but not embarrassed, at their loss. "Teams

win and lose," outfielder Luis Ulacia said. "Why would we have eight teams in the Olympics if it weren't competitive? We'd just invite Cuba."

The Dutch team, which had only one victory and two losses coming into the game, was aided by several former major leaguers, including former New York Yankees outfielder Hensley "Bam Bam" Meulens, who hit the bases-loaded double, and former San Francisco Giants pitcher Ken Brauckmiller, who held the Cubans to seven hits in eight innings. "You can't win them all," Brauckmiller said. "You win 20 in a row, sooner or later maybe things catch up to you." After clinching a win that has eluded such baseball powerhouses as the United States and Japan, Dutch Manager Pat Murphy could barely contain his excitement. "This is great for our country," he gushed. "For a long time we had no respect in baseball. We showed a lot of guts today."

The Netherlands team didn't even qualify for the Barcelona Games. In Atlanta, they finished fifth.

After former New York Mets and Florida Marlins infielder Ralph Milliard recorded the final out, players exchanged high-fives and hugs on the pitcher's mound. Meulens, who first played with the Yankees in 1989, said the victory was "for all the Dutch people around the world!"

The game initially appeared to go as so many have for Cuba: Third baseman Omar Linares smashed a solo home run in the first inning. But then, Brauckmiller shut the Cubans down. The Dutch planted themselves in the lead after Meulens knocked a double into deep left field off pitcher Maels Rodriguez, driving in three runs. "It was probably the biggest hit of my career," Meulens told the Associated Press. "Getting to the major leagues is one of the greatest things anyone can have. Being part of the Yankees and getting to play my first game at Yankee Stadium was great. This ranks right up there."

Cuba had been seen as vulnerable at the Sydney Games because of recent decisions by the International Baseball Federation to allow professionals to compete (although most of the U.S. players are minor leaguers), and to switch from bats made of aluminum to ones made of wood. But Cuban captain Antonio Pacheco warned that, despite the loss, his team should not be counted out. "We don't mind if we lose one game," he said. "We came here to win the gold medal."

## **Netherlands' victory is Dutch treat for ex-Twin Blyleven**

*Star Tribune (Minneapolis, MN) September 21, 2000 | Reusse, Patrick*

Cuba's first loss ever in an official Olympic baseball tournament came Wednesday, and it came from what would seem an unusual source. Final score: The Netherlands 4, Cuba 2.

"Good for them," said Bert Blyleven, who could be the Babe Ruth of Dutch baseball, except that he left Zeist, Holland, at a very young age, and he remained a pitcher. Blyleven was back in the Twin Cities for his duties as the Twins' television analyst. But he had noticed the Dutch were playing competitive games in this Olympic tournament.

Wednesday, the Dutch performance went from competitive to shocking. The Cubans had gone 9-0 in both previous Olympic baseball tournaments - '92 in Barcelona and '96 in Atlanta. They had won three more in the early round-robin portion of this tournament, and took a 21-game winning streak into Wednesday's game.

Holland has been dominant in European baseball (which might not be saying much) for three decades. Its major baseball extravaganza during the summer is an international tournament called "Haarlem Honkball Week."

The Dutch have put together a roster that includes players who have appeared briefly in the major leagues - outfielders Hensley Meulens and Rikkert Fanyete, and infielder Robert Eenhoorn. On Wednesday, Fanyete came in from the outfield to pitch in the ninth inning, retired the Cubans, and recorded a save.

Meulens drove in three runs. Holland was able to get him on the roster because he was born in the Dutch Antilles. That's also how they were able to get infielder Ralph Milliard, another fringe big-leaguer. If the Dutch come up short in this tournament, it would figure to be because of a lack of pitching depth. "Tell them to give me a call," Blyleven said. "My arm feels pretty good. I could be there next week."