

Rockies win 9-4 behind pitcher's two-homer game

DENVER (AP)—A former pitcher with 139 major league wins, Houston Astros manager Larry Dierker has been credited with developing left-hander Mike Hampton.

Dierker can't take credit for Hampton's hitting, however.

Hampton became the first Colorado pitcher to homer twice in a game, leading the Rockies to a 9-4 win over Dierker's Astros on Tuesday night.

Hampton, who pitched for Houston from 1994 through 1999 before spending the 2000 season with the New York Mets, had his breakthrough in 1997, when he had seven straight

wins over the second half of the season en route to a 15-10 record.

"He had established himself as a capable major league pitcher, but he wasn't one of the top pitchers around," Dierker recalled. "We felt he could be. We talked about using the outside corner to right-handed hitters instead of trying to power-pitch everybody."

"He was 2-6 or 2-7 at the end of May with a high ERA. He said he didn't have any confidence, didn't know where the ball was going. To me, the turning point was when he agreed to give up on sliders inside and the high fastballs."

Tuesday night, Hampton was just average on the mound, going 7 2-3 innings and allowing nine hits and four runs.

But with the bat, he was superb.

Hampton's second homer, a two-run shot, highlighted a six-run sixth inning that gave the Rockies an 8-4 lead off Wade Miller.

Hampton (8-2) also had a 412-foot solo homer in the fifth. He has four homers this season. In 372 at-bats heading into this season, Hampton had no homers, although he sported a respectable .231 batting average.

He is the first pitcher to homer twice in a game since Los Angeles' Darren Dreifort did

it last Aug. 8 against the Chicago Cubs.

"It was luck," Hampton insisted. "Wade has great stuff. On my first homer, I was just able to put it on the good part of the bat. The second at-bat, I was just trying to make contact and he left the breaking ball up."

Hampton gave up two-run homers to Craig Biggio and Moises Alou and trailed 4-2 before the Rockies' sixth-inning outburst.

Rockies manager Buddy Bell called Hampton the most competitive player he has ever seen.

"He just continues to do everything," Bell said. "He approaches every second he's on the

field like I've never seen anybody else do it. He's a very driven player. He's exceptional."

Neifi Perez led off the sixth against Miller (7-3) with his fourth homer. Todd Helton walked and, with two outs, Todd Walker singled. Jacob Cruz beat out an infield single to score Helton, and Brent Mayne hit a two-run double to right-center. Hampton then homered to left.

Miller allowed eight runs — seven earned — and nine hits in six innings.

Dierker was ejected by third-base umpire Pat Spieler for arguing a checked swing by Cruz in the sixth.



Keith Vasquez, Kyle Whisler, Michael Pickett and Jason Showalter held a conference on the mound during last night's American Legion game

against Garden City. The team plays a doubleheader tonight against Wray at Memorial Field. Photo by Lester Bolen/The Goodland Daily News

Goodland loses two games to Garden City

By Lester Bolen

The Goodland Daily News

Goodland's American Legion baseball team lost two more home games last night to Garden City, but showed some much improved hitting.

After failing to score in the first two games of the season, the team managed four runs in the first game of the double header and eight in the second. Garden City scored more, though, winning 13-4 and 20-8. That left Goodland's record to 0-4.

In the first game, Goodland wasn't able to get on the scoreboard early and trailed 5-0 after two innings. In the third, Kyle Schulte reached first on a fielder's choice and latter scored after a stolen base and a error. Landon West also scored on the error after reaching first with a walk. In the fourth, Goodland allowed only one run while scoring two. Keith Vasquez led off the inning with a solo home run over the left field fence and Kyle Whisler scored on an error after reaching on a walk.

Goodland failed to score the rest of the game, but allowed only two more Garden City runs for the final score of 13-4. Schultz led the team with his three singles and one run.

Michael Pickett reached base three times, twice on an error, and once on a double in the fifth. Pickett was the losing pitcher, allowing 13 runs, 11 earned, and 14 hits.

In the second game, Goodland actually out hit Garden city 11-8, but was plagued by eight errors, including six

in the last two innings. Goodland trailed by only two runs going into the seventh and final inning. Garden City scored 10 runs in the top half of the seventh and Goodland failed to score to make the final 20-8.

West led the team with a single and a double and also reached on an error. He scored two runs. Pickett hit two singles and scored two runs.

The team plays at 6 and 8 p.m. tonight against Wray at Memorial Field and at 6 and 8 p.m. Friday at Scott City.

Lakers confident they can sweep going into NBA finals

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Kobe Bryant went to a movie the other day, opting to see "Pearl Harbor" rather than watch Game 7 of the Eastern Conference finals.

Shaquille O'Neal, who promised to have his game face on by early in the week, pitched his best-selling book at a news conference Tuesday, and responded to a reporter's ringing cell phone by saying, "Tell them to call back later," drawing laughter from the assembled media.

And a few of the Los Angeles Lakers have talked openly about securing a spot in the record books by winning four straight over the Philadelphia 76ers to complete an unprecedented sweep of the playoffs.

Are these guys confident, or what? More importantly, are they focused

after having last played on May 27?

The answers appear to be yes, and yes.

"They are very much prepared," Lakers coach Phil Jackson said of his players.

"Being here is not a surprise, but how we have done it is a surprise. Their aptitude, attitude and appetite for this series and for playoff basketball is quite apparent."

After an up-and-down season lowlighted by the simmering feud of O'Neal and Bryant going public in January and injuries to both after that, the Lakers are healthy and on an incredible roll.

First came eight straight wins to finish the season, and now 11 to begin the playoffs — an accomplishment matched only by the 1989 Lakers, who

were swept by Detroit's Bad Boys in the NBA Finals after starters Byron Scott and Magic Johnson sustained hamstring injuries.

But while the Lakers have breezed to 11 wins in the playoffs by an average of 15.4 points, the 76ers have gone 11-7, and reached the finals for the first time since 1983 by winning their last two series in seven games.

However, the starting forward also said if the 76ers contained O'Neal to some degree, "then we're going to have a chance."

While O'Neal is averaging 29.3 points in the postseason, Bryant is averaging 31.6, and Derek Fisher, who is averaging 15.1, was 15-of-20 from 3-point range while the Lakers were manhandling San Antonio in the Western Conference finals.

"He's elevated his game to tops in the league," Philadelphia's Aaron McKie said of Bryant.

McKie, the NBA's sixth man of the year, said his team has to contain O'Neal and Bryant individually due to the shooting abilities of the Lakers' role players.

Listed as a 6-footer, Iverson became the shortest player ever to win MVP honors when he did so this season.

He showed his mettle by scoring 44

points as the 76ers beat Milwaukee 108-91 on Sunday night to earn their berth in the finals.

Iverson is averaging 32.1 points in the playoffs.

"I'm a big fan of his," Fox said. "I'm quite impressed with his progress; his leadership has been there, his heart is incredible. It's a joy to watch him play, compete against him."

"You don't become an MVP candidate in this league by doing it in a few games. He's been doing it all year."

The 76ers received all the major individual awards — Iverson, McKie, Dikembe Mutombo as defensive player of the year and Larry Brown was coach of the year.

Mutombo said he looks forward to his matchup with O'Neal, who said much the same thing.

"It's a personal challenge to me," Mutombo said. "I'm not going to make the call if I'm going to play him one-on-one or if we double-team him."

O'Neal said either way his fine with him.

"I'm sure they will come up a little scrappy," he said. "You know, we've faced all types of defenses at all times. If they double and triple, I'll just do what I've been doing, getting my teammates involved."

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Royals drop fourth straight

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — Ray Durham and Magglio Ordonez each homered Tuesday night, leading the Chicago White Sox to their fifth straight victory, 6-2 over the Kansas City Royals.

Kip Wells pitched 6 1-3 innings, allowing four hits, for the White Sox, who have won 10 of 11. The Royals lost their fourth straight and dropped to 20-37, matching their worst record ever after 57 games. The Royals, who have scored a total of seven runs in their last four games, have lost nine of 11.

Wells (2-2) held the reeling Royals

to one run on four hits, with two walks and four strikeouts.

The Royals loaded the bases with one out in the seventh, but reliever Sean Lowe struck out Luis Alicea, and reliever Bobby Howry retired pinch-hitter Dave McCarty on a shallow fly. Howry went on to get his second save, allowing one run in 2 1-3 innings.

Royals shortstop Rey Sanchez was 0-for-4 as his hitting streak stopped at 21 games, the longest current streak in the majors and the sixth-longest in team history.

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