

Avs force deciding Game 7 with 4-0 win

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. (AP) — Ray Bourque stood in the cramped locker room surrounded by dreary brick walls and anxious Colorado Avalanche teammates.

In a matter of minutes, Bourque would take the ice for the biggest game of his 22-year career. The stage was his and no one dared interrupt.

"No. 77 had a little keynote," rookie forward Ville Nieminen said. "He's been around so long, so he knows how it's going to be and he just lifted our confidence level a little bit."

Whatever Bourque said before Game 6 of the Stanley Cup finals Thursday night worked. The Avalanche defeated the New Jersey Devils 4-0, setting up Game 7 in Denver on Saturday night.

"I just tried to keep everybody loose and keep things positive," Bourque said. "I let everybody know we should feel good and we should feel

confident. Just have fun with this and make sure we go out and play our best and give ourselves an opportunity. No secret speech or anything like that."

Bourque, whose pursuit of the Stanley Cup is one of hockey's most intriguing stories, may want to prepare some material for Saturday. He is 60 minutes from finally getting the 16th victory that would complete the "Mission 16W" embroidered on his favorite black baseball cap.

"Today was my biggest game of my career," he said. "The next one is Saturday, and that's the biggest one. I said before that I'm enjoying every second of this and I'm having a blast. I am really looking forward to that game."

Two of Bourque's best pals prevented his latest cup quest from sinking in the nearby New Jersey swamps.

Adam Foote, Bourque's defensive partner, had a goal and two assists, and Patrick Roy,

Bourque's car-pool buddy, made 24 saves for his 19th career playoff shutout.

Three of Roy's saves came while Bourque sat in the penalty box with Colorado leading 2-0 in the second period. Foote helped set up a goal by Chris Drury less than four minutes after the penalty kill, and the Devils were left for dead.

"I think we should get a lot of confidence from that game," Roy said. "We understand it was important to come out for the biggest game of the season. We might have been nervous at the beginning of the game, but I thought the second and the third we played outstanding."

Bourque, playing in front of his wife and three children, was a picture of poise before, during and after the game, and he is becoming quite prophetic.

After making good on his locker-room prediction that he would score the deciding goal

in Game 3, Bourque said he was confident the Avalanche would play one of their best games after two straight losses put them one defeat from elimination.

"Ray's one of the many leaders on this team and when the leaders speak, everybody listens," forward Dave Reid said. "Ray spoke and everybody listened. I think that's the best way to put it."

Roy, who has an NHL-record 136 playoff victories, didn't need much added motivation after a costly puck-handling gaffe in Game 4 and a pedestrian follow-up performance in Game 5.

Looking like the goalie who carried the Avalanche through the first three playoffs rounds, Roy put himself back in the MVP mix while being selective in playing the puck behind the net.

"You never like to make a mistake," he said.

"Everybody makes mistakes. You just try to live with it and regroup and keep playing the way I was playing."

By staying at home in the crease, Roy made sure the Avalanche would go home for their second Game 7 in four weeks and their eighth in franchise history.

Colorado, which earned home-ice advantage with the NHL's top regular-season record, defeated the Los Angeles Kings in Game 7 in the Western Conference semifinals. The Avs were eliminated by the Dallas Stars in Game 7 of the conference finals each of the previous two seasons.

"Anytime that you perform in a Game 7, it's always one of the best learning experiences," coach Bob Hartley said. "It doesn't get more important than this. That's where you see the real warriors. They all stand up."

Bourque already has.

Rockies lose pitching dual

DENVER (AP) — Shawn Chacon was excellent. Shane Reynolds was better.

In a rare pitchers' duel at Coors Field, Reynolds no-hit Colorado through five innings, and the Houston Astros held on for a 2-1 win on Thursday night.

"An old-style baseball game broke out here in Coors Field," Rockies catcher Brent Mayne said. "Who would have thought that either of these two teams would have played this type of game?"

Jeff Bagwell's two-run homer in the first held up as the Astros snapped a three-game losing streak and ended Colorado's four-game winning streak.

Reynolds' scheduled start was pushed back from Wednesday because he encountered weather delays getting to Denver from Louisiana, where he attended a family funeral. That sort of change in routine usually is fatal to Reynolds.

"I'm a guy that likes to pitch on a regular schedule," Reynolds said. "An off day usually throws me out of whack. I like to pitch every fifth day."

Instead, Reynolds had the Rockies' hitters out of whack.

"Stuff-wise, the splitter was working good, the curve was good and I was able to locate with the fastball," he said. "This is my best game of the year."

Astros manager Larry Dierker said

Reynolds was "really sharp. He kept the ball on the ground. I'll take one run allowed into the eighth inning any time."

Reynolds (6-4) prevailed over Chacon (3-3), a rookie who had a career-high 13 strikeouts, including four in a row twice in the game.

Reynolds pitched 7 2-3 innings, yielding seven hits and one run, a pinch-hit homer by Brooks Kieschnick in the eighth.

Chacon allowed five hits and two runs in eight innings.

"Reynolds was really good," Rockies manager Buddy Bell said. "He changed speeds very well. Our guy matched him pitch for pitch for the most part. It's a shame we couldn't score more runs."

Chacon said he made one mistake, "a fastball down the middle to Bagwell. When it comes back to haunt you and it decides the game, it's real disappointing."

Mayne broke up the no-hit bid, leading off the sixth with a double, but he was caught in a rundown between second and third on Chacon's grounder to short. Pierre and Neifi Perez then singled, loading the bases, but Larry Walker, on the first pitch, hit a comebacker to Reynolds that started an inning-ending 1-6-3 double play.

"I made a bad judgment call on the bases," Mayne said, "and it turned out

to make a big difference. The ball was hit behind me, but it was hit too hard. In that situation, you don't go. I knew the second I flinched that it was the wrong move. I was totally in no-man's land."

Dierker called Walker's double-play grounder the key play of the game.

"With Walker up there and (Todd) Helton coming up next, I don't think you even dream you are going to throw one pitch and get completely out of it," Dierker said.

After Kieschnick's homer in the eighth, Perez and Walker singled with two outs, chasing Reynolds. But reliever Jay Powell retired Helton on a popup, and Mike Jackson pitched the ninth for his first save since Sept. 28, 1999.

Craig Biggio was hit by a pitch leading off the game, and Bagwell followed with his 14th homer.

Notes: Chacon's 13 strikeouts ranked as the second-most in Rockies history, trailing only the 14 by Darryl Kile on Aug. 20, 1998, at Montreal. It was the most ever by a Rockies pitcher in a home game, and the most by a Rockies rookie. ... OF Moises Alou was scratched from the lineup because of tightness in his left quadriceps. ... Rockies RHP John Wasdin, designated for assignment May 29 to Triple-A Colorado Springs, asked for and was given his unconditional release.

sports briefs

Former Chiefs star's estate auctioned off

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — Many of Derrick Thomas' more expensive belongings that were put up for sale two months ago and were expected to generate hundreds of thousands of dollars for his estate remain unsold.

Thomas, a linebacker for the Kansas City Chiefs, died last year of complications after being injured in a traffic accident that left him partially paralyzed. Thomas, who was not married, had no will. His heirs are being determined by the Jackson County probate court.

The four-day sale of Thomas' personal items, which started on March 29 at his home in Independence, generated more than \$200,000 for the estate. And while estate administrators are pleased with that figure, it's far from preliminary best-case projections of more than \$650,000.

Estate administrators are working to liquidate and tally the assets of the estate.

A recent accounting suggests that total assets will eventually surpass \$1.5 million.

But so far, neither of Thomas' two Mercedes Benz customized cars, which were projected to bring in a combined total of more than \$160,000, have attracted a suitable bidder.



Morganne Baehler and Adam Duell rebaited Morganne's pole while Kamee Benisch kept fishing. Benisch and Baehler didn't catch a fish but still had a good time Thursday at the annual Extension fishing clinic at Smoky Gardens. See story on Page 1.

Photo by Lester Bolen/The Goodland Daily News

Royals rocked by Sox; team has lost five of six

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — In his first full season as a major league starter, Mark Buehrle is baffling hitters and surprising himself.

The 22-year-old left-hander extended his scoreless streak to 24 2-3 innings Thursday in leading the Chicago White Sox over the Kansas City Royals 5-1.

"Up here, facing big league hitters, big league teams, going out there and shutting them out is a big surprise," he said. "I've got all the confidence in the world right now."

"I just can't get too high," he said. "I know I'm on a roll right now but eventually I'm going to have a bad game and not do what I'm supposed to do."

He allowed two hits in eight innings, keeping the Royals off balance with sliders, curveballs and cutters inside.

"He was cutting them in on our hands," Quinn said. "They'd start down the middle and then cut in on your hands. They looked like good pitches to hit but when they wound up they weren't good pitches to hit."

The 22-year-old left-hander, taken by Chicago on the 38th round of the 1998 amateur draft, allowed a fourth-inning single to Rey Sanchez and a fifth-inning double to Mark Quinn.

Magglio Ordonez was 4-for-4 with two doubles and went 9-for-13 (.692) in the three-game series.

Buehrle (4-3) hasn't been scored on since May 20 against Oakland and has

allowed just nine hits during his streak, the longest scoreless string by a White Sox pitcher since Alex Fernandez threw 25 2-3 consecutive shutout innings in 1995.

Chicago took a 3-0 lead in the fourth. Ordonez doubled with two outs, Carlos Lee homered and Royce Clayton hit an RBI single.

Tony Graffanino hit a run-scoring single in the seventh off Cory Bailey following a throwing error by catcher A.J. Hinch. Paul Konerko singled in a run in the eighth.

Keith Foulke finished the five-hitter, giving up an RBI single to Mike Sweeney in the ninth.


Kansas City has lost five of six, dropping to 21-38, its worst record after 59 games.

The Royals being interleague play today with a three game serious against the National League West leading Arizona Diamondbacks. Left-hander Randy Johnson, last year's National League Cy Young winner, will go for his seventh win of the season against the recently acquired Paul Byrd. Byrd was acquired from the Philadelphia Phillies earlier this week.

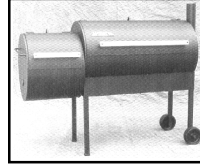
Notes: Royals 2B Carlos Febles is expected to be activated on Friday after being out since April 19 with injury to knee ligaments.

Chicago RHP Lorenzo Barcelo was scheduled for arthroscopic surgery on his right shoulder Thursday.

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