#### INSIDE BASEBALL / JOE STRAUSS

# Balance of Power Shifts Sharply to the West in American League

American League East could put six of its own above .500 by feasting on the pathetic West? Remember when the American League World Series representative could be determined the day a team clinched the AL East title? Hold on to those memories. They no longer apply.

The AL West has battered the East 43-24 in interdivisional play. Only two teams in the East, Baltimore (11-9) and Milwaukee (10-9) are above .500 While the Atlanta Braves have surprised many in the NL, the Orioles are leading the AL East the year after losing 107 games. And Boston won the division last year with 89 vic-

tories. . . . If the Oakland Athletics repeat as champions of the American League West, the rest of the division likely will remember the season's first three weeks as the

NEW YORK — Remember when the reason. Without MVP right fielder Jose ... Royals outfielder Bo Jackson has been going to cut him in half. Somebody is go- last Sunday against Charlie Leibrandt. ... Canseco and first baseman Mark McGwire, the A's are 15-7, only 11/2 games behind first-place Texas, which is off to its best start in history. The A's have survived on pitching. Dave Stewart, trying for a third consecutive 20-win season, is 4-0, while reliever Dennis Eckersley has seven saves. In his first outing since suffering a strained muscle in his rib cage on April 7, Gene Nelson earned the win Monday against Toronto. McGwire returned to the lineup Wednesday night and went 0-for-4.

> ... Roger Clemens's 11-0 win over the White Sox on Tuesday ended his fivegame losing streak against them. It was his first win over Chicago since April 11, 1986. . . . The Yankees have been outscored 97-69. The margin is the largest negative differential in either league, yet they remain only three games off the lead.

a player of extremes, even for Bo. After 67 at-bats, Jackson had 17 runs, six home runs, 16 RBI and eight stolen bases, by far all team highs. His 11 extra-base hits were second in the league to Texas's Ruben Sierra. Bo also led the Royals with 19 strikeouts and carried only a .329 on-base per-

SPEAKING OF BO: The two-sport star had strong words Tuesday for Atlanta Falcons No. 1 draft choice Deion Sanders. Jackson is sensitive to comparisons between Sanders, under contract to the Yankees' AA affiliate in Albany, and himself. "I get gassed when people say that," said Jackson. "I hate to say it, but somebody is

ing to bring that kid down off his high horse." Added Jackson, "I think right now, Deion Sanders has diarrhea of the mouth and he doesn't know how to handle it. Let his playing do the talking." ... How tough is Mets reliever Terry Leach's submarine ball? Leach is a lifetime 20-0 in night games. ... Braves third-base coach Roy Majtyka managed both Mets first baseman Keith Hernandez and professional wrestler Randy "Macho Man" Savage in 1972 while with St. Petersburg of the Florida State League. "Macho Man" then went by the handle of Randy Poffo.

POP GOES THE BOGGS: Red Sox third baseman Wade Boggs popped out for the first time in 148 plate appearances

Yankees first baseman Don Mattingly began last year without a home run in his first 124 at-bats. This year, he has been shut out in 76 at-bats. ... Nolan Ryan has 10 career one-hitters. Of the 10 hitters who kept him from a no-hitter, seven are no longer active. Only four had a career average above .270. ... The Bob Knepper rumor mill is at full output once again. The latest has the Astros' disgruntled starter going to Boston — again — for disgruntled Dennis "Oil Can" Boyd.

□ The lineup — Sunday: Sportsbeat. Monday: Inside High Schools. Tuesday: Inside TV/Radio Sports. Wednesday: Inside the NFL. Thursday: Inside Baseball. Friday: Inside TV/Radio Sports. Saturday: Inside the NBA.

#### ON THE BEAT

## Davis Worries Nixon, But Won't Be Benched

NEW YORK - Braves manager Russ Nixon isn't downplaying the slump of catcher Jody Davis, but he also isn't considering benching him. Davis is hitting .134 with 21 strikeouts in 67 at-bats. "It bothers me a little more with him than with Murph [Dale Murphy]," said Nixon. ... The Mets scratched BRAVES first baseman Kelth Hernandez from their lineup because of

back spasms. Dave Magadan replaced Hernandez as the No. 3 hitter. ... Braves second baseman Jeff Treadway started for the eighth consecutive night. He is 7-for-22 in his last seven games. . . . Nixon reiterated his faith in his bench, especially 41-year-old Darrell Evans. Nixon used Evans, a left-handed hitter, with two outs and the tying run on second base against lefthanded reliever Randy Myers Tuesday night. Evans grounded out to end the game. "I want the old man whenever I'm in that situation," said Nixon. In the first 22 games, Braves pinch-hitters are 2-for-34. Evans (1-for-8) and Geronimo Berroa (1-for-5) are the only players with a pinch-hitting average. ... Mets catcher Gary Carter passed Gabby Hartnett Tuesday to move into sixth place on the all-time list for games caught. At 1,791, Carter now goes after Rick Ferrell at 1,805. ... Durham starters Steve Avery, Dennis Burlingame and Ben Rivera continue to dominate the Carolina (Class A) League. Burlingame pitched six innings Tuesday, allowing one hit while striking out nine, to improve his record to 2-0 with an 0.36 ERA. He has struck out 27 in 25 innings this season. The trio has a combined 7-0 record with an 0.46 ERA and has struck out 56 in 59 innings pitched. Avery has an ERA of 0.50, and Rivera is at 0.56. . . Ed Whited drove in five runs with two home runs to pace the Richmond Braves to an 8-7 win over the Pawtucket Red Sox in a Triple-A Alliance game Wednesday night. Mark Lemke contributed a two-run single for the Braves. Starter Tommy Greene (3-0) pitched 63/3 innings and allowed six hits and four runs for the win.

-Joe Strauss

### Opening Series Doesn't Interest Fans

season, but he's played in only 12 playoff games.

The Hawks-Bucks first-round series has fans in both cities yawning. The Hawks have 3,000 tickets for sale for Games 1 and 2. The Bucks are only assured of 12,000 for Game 3 at Bradley Center. . . . Doc Rivers said Wednesday he no longer suffers soreness in his right ankle. ... John Battle, who sprained HAWKS his right ankle Sunday against Detroit, did light work and said he felt fine. . . . The Bucks are without swingman Paul Pressey (shoulder) for at least two games and his participation in the first round is highly questionable. ... This is Reggle Theus's 11th NBA

—Jeffrey Denberg

#### Campbell Looking For Help From Free Agents

Atlanta Falcons coach Marion Campbell said he expects to sign up to 10 free agents for the 1989 season. "We won't sign as many as we used to because of the [80-man] limit for training camp," said Campbell. "But we should be able to find some that can help us." Campbell expects the group to include a FALCONS couple of running backs due to the trade of Gerald Riggs to Washington.

-I.J. Rosenberg

#### Ross Encouraged by Receiver, Fullback Depth

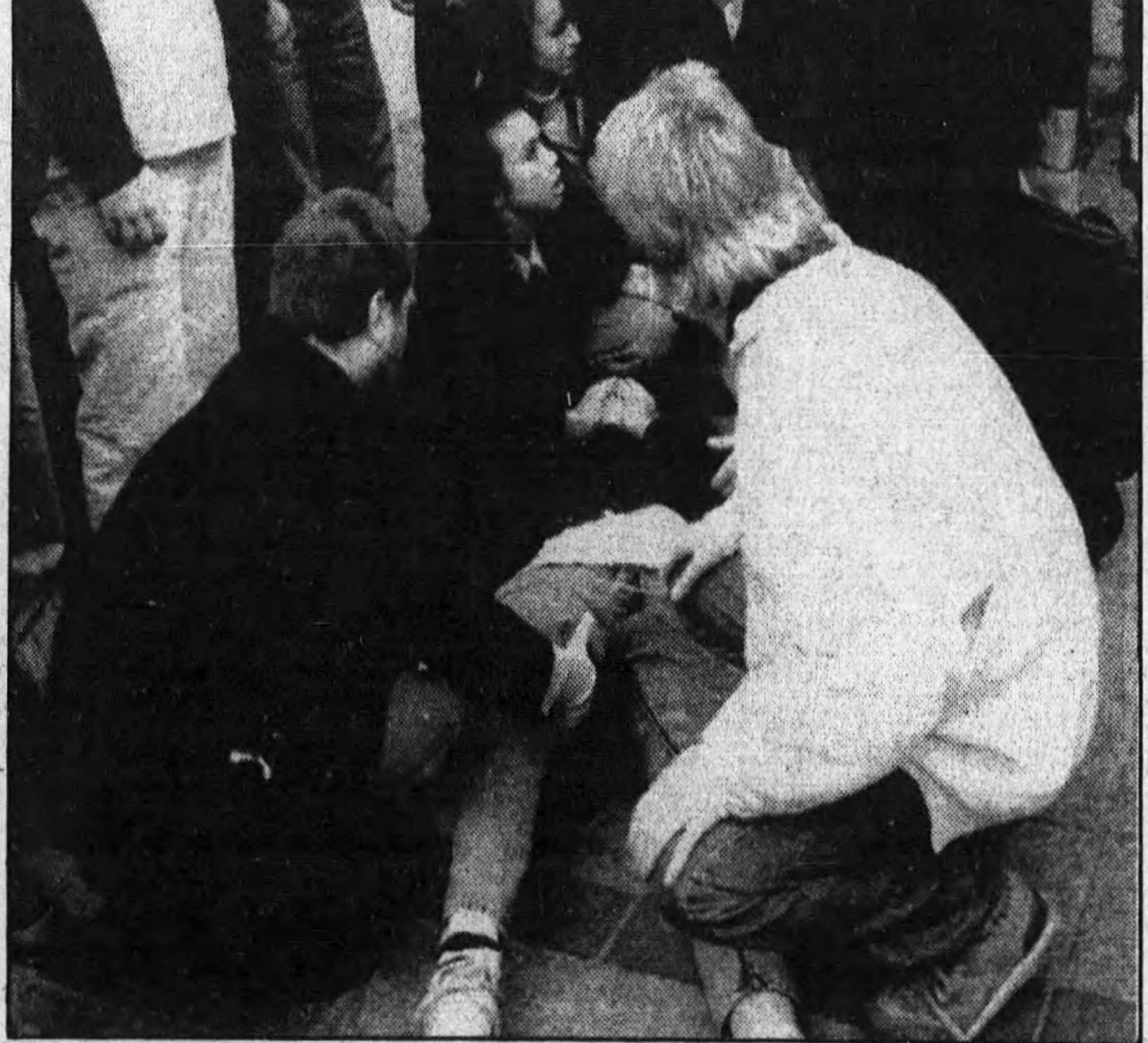
The football team held its final practice in pads Wednesday as it prepares for Saturday's T-Day Game at Bobby Dodd Stadium. "Overall, we've had a very good spring practice," coach Bobby Ross said. Among the highlights, he said, is improved depth at wide receiver and fullback. . . . Ross is con-GA. TECH cerned that he won't have enough offensive linemen for Saturday's game. Guards Joe Siffri and Scott Beavers are hurt, as is tackle Scott Gold. "I hope we will be able to keep everyone healthy enough to get a good evaluation in the spring game," Ross said. . . . If the baseball team doesn't win in the ACC tournament next month in Greenville, S.C., the Yellow Jackets may still get an at-large bid to the NCAA Tournament based on their schedule. The Jackets have played 13 games against nationally ranked teams. They are 2-12 in such games, however, including an 11-4 win over 16th-ranked Clemson Wednesday night.

— Darryl Maxie

### Baseball Team Rallies Past Davidson 4-2

ATHENS - Doug Radziewicz and J.R. Showalter drove in runs in the seventh inning as Georgia broke a 2-2 tie and beat Davidson 4-2 in Athens. Mike Rebhan (7-3) pitched 31/3 scoreless innings for the win. ... Defensive back Chuck Carswell said he knew his neck injury was serious as soon as it hap-GEORGIA pened. "My whole upper body was burning," said Carswell, a sophomore from Walton High. "It was like I was on fire." Carswell suffered a compressed vertebra in his neck during last Friday's scrimmage. He will wear a neck brace for three months. His availability for next season remains in doubt. "I hope I can come back," said Carswell. "The doctors think it's going to heal pretty well." ... The football team scrimmaged for about an hour Wednesday, the final day in pads. Head coach Ray Goff said the offense was "sloppy at the start, but I was real pleased to see them pick it up and score a couple of times at the end." No injuries were reported. □ Baseball Box Score, Statistics, Page 12D

-Thomas O'Toole



The Associated Press

More Soccer Violence

ROTTERDAM, The Netherlands — Fellow soccer fans comfort a man injured Wednesday in riots in the center of Rotterdam before the World Cup soccer qualification game between the Netherlands and West Germany. At least 40 were arrested before the game and 23 were injured.

### BETWEEN THE LINES

#### Reds' Dibble Doubles | Forget Bears' Fridge; As Clubhouse Flake, Favorite of Writers

The eccentricities of Rob Dibble, a relief pitcher with the Cincinnati Reds, are making interesting copy this season for Ohio sportswriters.

First, there's his personalized license plate, which reads I-PITCH.

He's also superstitious. When Dibble wasn't pitching well this spring, he told his wife, Joanne, to send her parents home "or at least get them out of my sight because I don't pitch well with them around."

And he's absent-minded. After pitching the eighth inning of a game in Houston April 10, Dibble undressed, threw his uniform into a washing machine and was stepping into the shower when pitching coach Scott Breeden told him, "You're pitching the ninth."

"Quickest I've ever dressed in my life," he said.

## Houston Draft Choice Says He's an Original

Move over William Perry. The Houston Oilers' No. 1 draft pick says he was the original Refrigerator.

As a ninth-grader at Lakeland (Fla.) High School, David Williams played only one way. He was a 6-foot-21/2, 230pound defensive end.

But when his team got down to the goal line, he would enter the game at fullback, just like Perry did for the Chicago Bears in 1985. Except Williams did it five years earlier.

"I scored quite a few times, I don't know how many," Williams said. "But I don't know if I could do that in this league."

At Florida, Williams was redshirted his first year, then started every game over the next four seasons.

#### THE FINAL WORD

Philadelphia 76ers start forward Charles Barkley told an official after being assessed his fifth foul and replaced by sub Bob Thornton:

You think these people are paying money to see him play?

#### ON THE WIRE

## Sports Agents in Florida Are Grand Jury Targets

A federal grand jury will reconvene next week and prosecutors may seek indictments in an investigation that has involved the University of Florida athletic department for nine months, a newspaper reported. The Gainesville Sun, quoting anonymous sources, said the focus of the probe the last several colleges months has been on two sports agents who allegedly gave money to Gators athletes while the players were still in school. A source close to the investigation told the newspaper that the grand jury meets in Tallahassee on Monday and that charges are expected to come next week. The indictments are not expected to include officials, coaches or current players at the SEC school. Federal prosecutors and drug agents declined to comment on the case or their investigation of sports agents Greg Latimer and Gerald C. Gratenstein, who have represented several former Florida football players and Vernon Maxwell, the school's all-time leading scorer in basketball. Monday's grand jury meeting is the first since the courts broke new legal ground in Illinois with convictions of Norby Walters and Lloyd Bloom, two sports agents awaiting sentencing for racketeering and conspiracy. Federal prosecutors in Tallahassee have used the Chicago case as a blueprint for the investigation of Latimer and Gratenstein, the Sun

#### TV Station Reports Indiana Violations

Indiana athletic director Ralph Floyd is checking a Lexington, Ky., television report that two Hoosiers assistant basketball coaches may have violated NCAA regulations in trying to sign Lawrence Funderburke to a national letter-of-intent. WKYT-TV of Lexington reported that assistant coaches BASKETBALL Joby Wright and Ron Felling tried three times to get Funderburke to sign during the Kentucky Derby Classic at Louisville two weeks ago. According to the television station, NCAA regulations prohibit contact with a recruit once he becomes involved in team activities at such all-star competitions. The 6-foot-8 Funderburke, from Wehrle High School in Columbus, Ohio, returned a signed letter-ofintent to Indiana last week. ... Joe Dean Jr., who guided Birmingham-Southern to six consecutive winning seasons, has been named head coach for men's basketball at Central Florida. During Dean's six-year tenure at Birmingham-Southern, the Panthers had a 137-45 record, including 21-8 this past season. ... Ron Abernathy, 13 years an assistant coach at LSU, was named Tennessee State men's basketball coach. Tennessee State was 4-24 last season, the worst record in school history. . . . The Burdett Park Trojans of Forest Park, who finished third in the Georgia AAU basketball championship for players 17 and under in 1988, this year captured the title and will represent the state in the nationals, which will be played in Jonesboro, Ark., July 22-29.

#### Classic Account Beats Regal Classic

Classic Account, a 4-year-old son of Private Account and owned by Laura Leigh Stables of LaFayette, Ga., won the Grade Three Ben Ali Handicap at Keeneland on Wednesday. Classic Account beat Regal Classic and Brian's Time in a stretch duel covering the mile and 1/8th in 1:50 3/5. Classic Account RACING was up by a neck over Regal Classic and paid \$9.00, \$3.80 with no show betting. Clasic Account was ridden by Pat Day.

#### Briefly . . .

Jack Fouts, the offensive line coach at Cornell University, was named head coach at the Ivy League school Wednesday night, replacing Maxie Baughan, who resigned Tuesday amid published reports he was romantically involved with the wife of a different assistant coach. ... By winning their singles etc or doubles matches in the Trans America Athletic Conference tennis finals last weekend, Georgia State's Jake Martyn, Pete

Peterson, Martin Bray, Jean Sperling and Carlos Burgos were all named All-TAAC. Martyn, who won at No. 1 singles and No. 3 doubles, was named TAAC Player of the Year and GSU coach Chuck McCuen was TAAC Coach of the Year.

#### SOUNDOFF

### Hawks' Bench Needs Life

Many say that the fans do not support the Atlanta Hawks as they should. Well, there was plenty of fan support Friday night when the Hawks "played with" the Cavs; but the bench was petrified.

Come on, guys.

Even if you are not in the game, you are part of the team. So let go with some strong support for your team. After all, you are part of it, win or lose.

Look at Dennis Rodman (of Detroit). He leads the cheers even when he is not in the game, and you guys could do the same. So come on, bench, help this fan cheer and

let's win it all. G. Louis Jackson, LaGrange, Ga.

#### Murphy Rap Song Gets Old

I am getting tired of hearing everyone's hypocritical comments about Dale Murphy. Correct me if I'm wrong, but didn't we just recently vote Dale Murphy our current and alltime favorite athlete?

Just because Murph had a sub-par year in '88 and is off to a slow start in '89, I don't think we should demand that he be benched or trad-

Even if his best years are behind him, they are years that I personally have enjoyed.

The slump could last forever and it may end tomorrow. Regardless, I think we owe a lot more to our favorite athlete than this.

Come on Atlanta, show a little class. Graham Carrol, Decatur

#### Where Are the Braves' Fans?

It's really disgusting to see the lack of support the Braves are receiving. These overachievers are playing an exciting brand of baseball which deserves recognition from their fans.

However, Fulton County Stadium looks like the middle of a doughnut — empty. If this continues, the Braves should pack it up. How does "the Tampa Bay Braves" sound?

Robert Moore, Tucker

Send letters to Sports Soundoff, Atlanta Journal-Constitution, P.O. Box 4689, Atlanta, Ga. 30302. Comments may also be expressed by calling 526-5340. All comments must include return telephone number and address.