Griffey's numbers add up to MVP

He could be youngest with 50 homers

By GORDON WITTENMYER

SEATTLE TIMES

Seattle, Wash. - Forget Toronto's John Olerud and his six-month pursuit of .400. Forget Chicago's Frank Thomas with his .317 batting average and all those runs-batted-in.

It is the home run that is remembered. The power, the force, the metaphor for everything ultimate.

And as Seattle's Ken Griffey Jr. showed again Thursday night in the Mariners' 6-3 victory over Toronto, he might be the best in the game at hitting them.

Griffey lined a 3-0 pitch into the right-field bleachers against Toronto starter Dave Stewart in the first inning. Then, trailing in the count, 0-2, to Stewart in the fifth, he fouled off three straight pitches, took a ball and drilled the 1-2 pitch into the seats in right field.

Griffey is tied for the major-league lead with 39 homers.

"I tell you what," Mariner Manager Lou Piniella said. "Junior's amazing. Amazing."

How amazing? Let his numbers count the ways. And the most impressive numbers are 23 and 50 his age and his projected season home-run total.

Only 10 players in major-league history have hit 50 home runs in a season. They have done it only 18

Nobody younger than 24 years, 5 months has ever hit 50 in a season. That was Willie Mays, with 51 in 1955. Jimmie Foxx and Mickey Mantle also were 24 the first times they

Griffey turns 24 in November. "If somebody told me I'd hit 39 out by August, I'd laugh," Griffey said. "Maybe 19."

He has hit 17 in Seattle's 40 games since last month's All-Star Game.

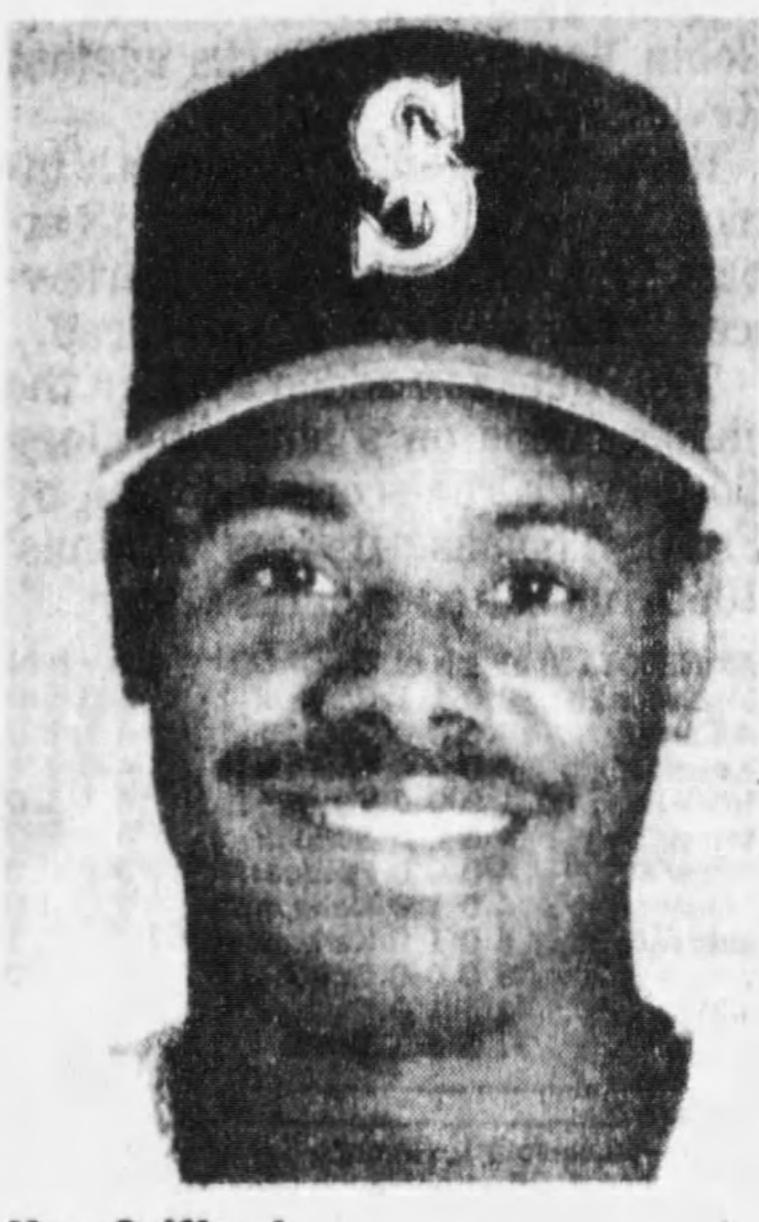
Eight of those came during his record streak of consecutive games with a home run last month. But if you doubt his ability to maintain such a pace, consider that he's starting to hit them out two at a

Thursday night's performance gave him back-to-back games with two homers, and gave him six home runs in five games. When he connected on his second Thursday night, it was his fourth homer in six at-bats.

"I don't know what to say," Piniella said. "He's seeing the ball good, that's for sure."

Good enough to rack up such numbers as: .313 batting average, 90

RBIs, 94 runs, 19 intentional walks. He also leads the American League



Ken Griffey Jr. Two homers Thursday night

COMMENTARY

with 294 total bases and is second in extra-base hits with 70 and slugging percentage, .646.

And don't forget No. 39. With all those numbers, he seems only to be lacking a few letters:

A.L. MVP. Ridiculous? A player 10th in the league in RBIs playing for a losing team winning the most valuable

player award? Before dismissing Griffey in favor of Olerud with his .388 average and 46 doubles, or Thomas, who already has 106 runs-batted-in, consider

these points: A .400 season is no guarantee of winning the most valuable player award. The last player to do it, Ted Williams in 1941, hit .406 but lost the award to Joe DiMaggio, whose record 56-game hitting streak was considered the highlight of the season.

• While Thomas' average and runs-batted-in total are slightly higher than Griffey's, Griffey is outslugging Thomas by 26 points and four home runs.

 Griffey is the best defensive center fielder in the game and set an American League record over two seasons with 573 consecutive errorless chances, a streak that started April 16 of last season and ended earlier this month. Both Olerud and Thomas are first basemen.

• If he reaches 50 homers this season, he's a near lock. Four of the last six players to hit 50 homers won their league's most valuable player award. The two who didn't were Cecil Fielder, who finished second to Rickey Henderson (who hit .325 with 28 homers and 119 runs scored) in 1990, and Mickey Mantle, who finished second to Yankee teammate Roger Maris (who hit a record 61

"I think we have the MVP right here in our clubhouse," said Mike Blowers, the Mariners third baseman. "You think about all the injuries we've had and how many guys he's had to pick up slack for, and he's the MVP as far as I'm concerned."

Griffey already has surpassed by seven the club record for homers in a season and has 12 more than his career best, in 1992.

"It doesn't surprise me anymore," Piniella said. "When the season started — the most homers he'd hit for a season was 27 — you figure high 20s, low 30s."

Yet with 34 games remaining, he's on a pace to reach 50.

"I don't even look at that stuff," Griffey said. "That's the furthest thing from my mind.

"You just try to stay through it," he said, trying to explain the difference in his hitting this year. "I've been trying to stay through it all season, stay through the ball. That's the one thing my dad's taught me this season."

But Ken Griffey Sr., the Mariners hitting coach, isn't taking any credit for the power surge.

"It's all experience," he said. "He's got five years under his belt. He's seen pitchers day after day. He's learning what he can do and what he can't and what the pitchers are going to throw to him.

"People have said he's not a student of the game. That's bull."

If Griffey's a student and his subject is baseball, he looks ready to advance beyond Ph.D.

Maybe even on to MVP.

Giants get Deshaies to bolster rotation

ASSOCIATED PRESS

The San Francisco Giants helped their shaky starting pitching Saturday by acquiring left-hander Jim Deshaies from Minnesota for three minor-leaguers.

The Twins will get left-handed pitcher Aaron Fultz, switching-hitting shortstop Andres Duncan and a player to be named later.

Deshaies was 11-13 with the Twins this season, with a 4.41 earned-run average in 27 starts. He lost his past six despite having a 3.64 ERA and five quality outings.

Deshaies was signed by the Twins as a free agent last December. His contract runs through the end of the season and includes a player option for 1994.

The Giants' once-big lead in the National League East has been cut to four games by Atlanta.

Deshaies, who played six full seasons for Houston, is 76-80 lifetime. He also pitched for the New York Yankees and San Diego. His career high for victories was 15 in 1989.

Ryan disabled - Nolan Ryan, struggling to make it through his 27th and final season in the majors, was put on the disabled list Saturday

NOTES

for the third time this year by Texas. Ryan, 46, pulled a muscle in his left ribcage during a start in Baltimore on Aug. 21, and had missed one turn in the rotation.

Ryan warmed up on the sidelines before Saturday night's game at home against the Orioles, but stopped after 5 minutes because of discomfort.

"There's a lot of improvement," Ryan said. "But I really can't project what's going to happen."

After Texas' 11-1 victory, however, the Rangers put him back on the disabled list, retroactive to Aug. 22.

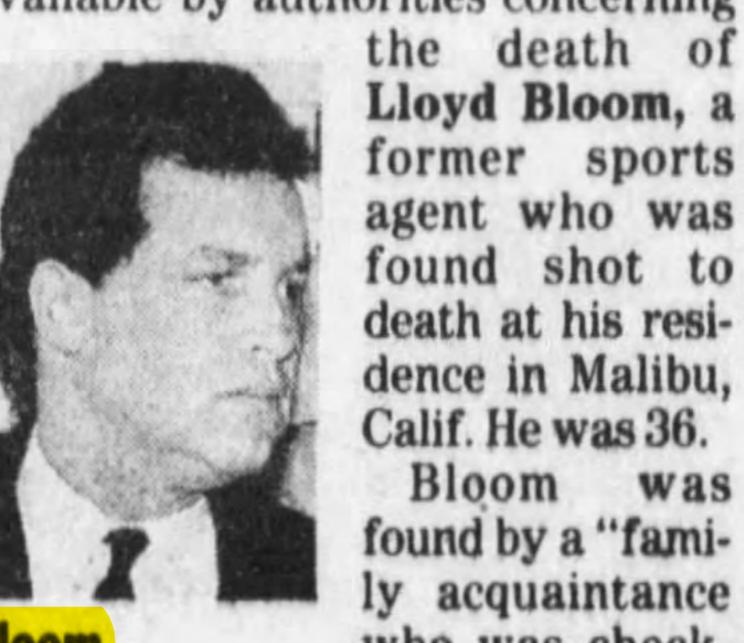
Ryan is 5-3 with a 4.53 ERA in 10 starts. He had been hoping to start again sometime this week.

Ryan was on the disabled list from April 15 to May 7 because of surgery on his right knee. After one start, he again went on the disabled list from May 8 to July 19 with a strained left

Top dollar - Pitcher Kirk Presley's contract with the New York Mets is for \$960,000, including a \$900,000 signing bonus, the most for any draft choice this year.

COLLEGES

Bloom shot, killed - Only sketchy information has been made available by authorities concerning



Former agent

the death of Lloyd Bloom, a former sports agent who was found shot to death at his residence in Malibu, Calif. He was 36. Bloom was found by a "fami-

who was checking on the wel-

fare of Bloom" Thursday morning, sheriff's spokeswoman Benita Hinojos said Friday. Bloom was shot several times in the upper body, Hinojos said. No weapon was found, there appeared to be no forced entry, there was no obvious sign of a break-in, and it was unclear if anything had been taken

from the home, Hinojos said. "There's nothing else I can tell you," Hinojos said.

Bloom and partner Norby Walters were convicted in federal court in Chicago in 1989 of racketeering and other charges relating to their attempts to sign college football players to representation agreements before their eligibility had expired. The 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals reversed the convictions a year later.

Both Bloom and Walters then entered conditional guilty pleas to two counts of mail fraud for allegedly derauding the players' schools. Those convictions were overturned in

Among their clients were lowa's Ronnie Harmon and Devon Mitchell.

Ineligible at Illinois? — Illinois is hunting around campus for another guard in case Rennie Clemons is declared ineligible because of poor grades, basketball coach Lou Henson said Saturday. "I kept thinking he would proba-

bly make it. I've been optimistic on it. I don't know at this point," Henson said.

The loss of Clemons, a senior, would be significant for the Fighting Illini. He averaged 10.7 points in 18 Big Ten games last year and also averaged 31.1 minutes of playing time, second on the team behind center Deon Thomas. Clemons failed to complete some

spring classes and tried to make up the work during the summer.

"He's got his papers in. The question is whether his grades are high enough to be eligible," Henson said. A ruling on Clemons' status is ex-

pected in a few days. Henson's staff is bracing for the worst. "We've started looking in the stu-

dent body for a walk-on," he said. Henson said he would need a player to back up freshman Kiwane Garris, who probably would replace Clemons in the starting lineup.

Stanley considers appeal - A lawyer for Marianne Stanley is considering an emergency appeal of a federal judge's ruling denying his client's reinstatement as women's basketball coach at Southern Cali-

Robert Bell said he could file a motion with the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco by Monday to overturn Thursday's ruling by U.S. District Court Judge John G. Davies.

In a document filed Friday by Davies explaining his decision, the judge conceded the case has done irreparable injury to Stanley but disagreed that Southern Cal was guilty of sex discrimination.

Stanley filed an \$8 million lawsuit three weeks ago against the school and Athletic Director Mike Garrett charging sexual discrimination is the reason she is not paid the same reported \$150,000 salary as men's basketball coach George Raveling.

"She is devastated," Bell said of Stanley, whose four-year coaching contract expired June 30. "It seems Title IX has been ignored here."

Before filing her lawsuit, Stanley turned down a contract from Southern Cal calling for \$90,000 a year in salary and a housing allowance of \$6,000. Bob Lane, the school's acting general counsel, said, "Our obligation to (Stanley) is over."

IOWA SCENE

lowans beat Angola — Former Iowa State basketball players Howard Eaton and Justice Thigpen scored 18 points apiece to lead the All-Sport All-Stars to a 102-95 victory over the Angola Olympic team Saturday night at Des Moines Area Community College in Boone.

Terry Woods and Mike Born, also former Cyclones, scored 12 and 11 points, respectively.

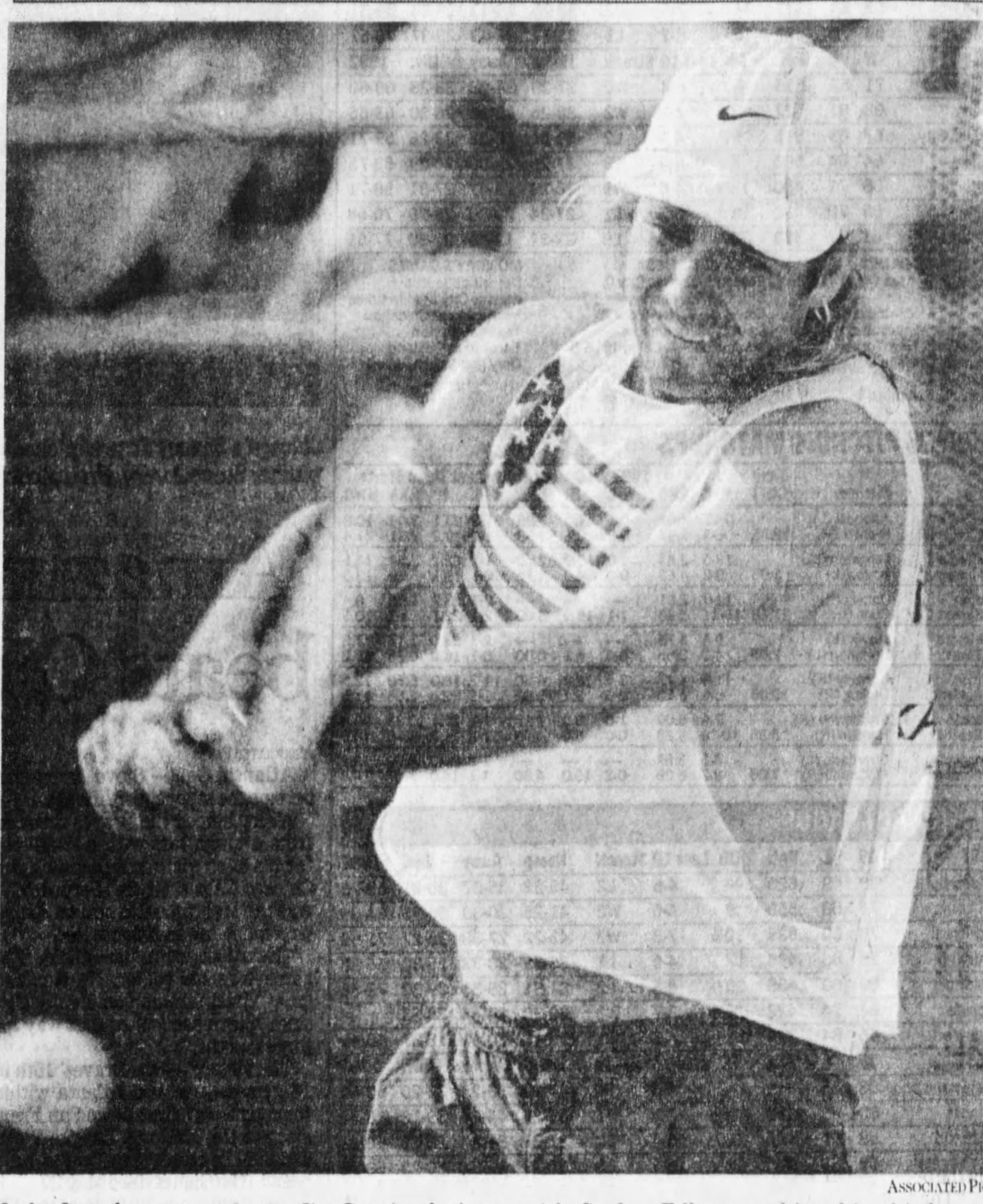
David Dias led Angola with 27. The two teams play at 7:30 tonight at West Des Moines Dowling High School, and again Monday night at Iowa Central Community College in Fort Dodge.

Pfiffner silver medalist - Ann-Marie Pfiffner of Dubuque won the women's air rifle silver medal at the World Cup Final shooting competition in Munich, Germany.

Sports

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TENNIS



Andre Agassi returns a shot to Jim Courier during practice at the U.S. Tennis Center. The U.S. Open,

with Stefan Edberg seeking his third men's singles championship in a row, begins Monday.

Electronic line judges junked

After three days of system failures and complaints from players and referees, U.S. Open officials scrapped their electronic line-calling system Friday and returned to that old umpiring standby, human beings.

"New technical problems, previously unknown, were discovered. As a result, the use of the system was discontinued so the manufacturer can have an opportunity to find a solution to those problems," tournament chairman J. Howard "Bumpy" Frazer said.

The system, developed by Tennis Electronic Lines of Australia, began having serious problems Wednesday, the first day of Open qualifying play.

"It was 3-2 in the first set and the chair umpire told me he was turning it off because it missed a few calls," said Steve Bryan, the eighth seed in the qualifying tourney. Things worsened the next day. There was an uncon-

firmed report that a female player wearing an anklet activated the underground sensors. And a player wearing K-Swiss brand shoes, which

have metal lace eyelets, set off the equipment in the middle of a point. The system had been installed on the four show courts at the National Tennis Center, including the 21,000-seat stadium court and tested at the 1992 Open without knowledge of the players. Muster advances - Top-seeded Thomas Muster of

Austria advanced to his seventh finals of the year Saturday when he beat Renzo Furlan, 7-6 (7-3), 6-3, in the \$400,000 Croatian Open at Umag, Croatia.

Sixth-seeded Alberto Berasategui of Spain will face Muster for the title today after he beat No. 2 Magnus Gustafsson of Sweden, 1-6, 6-2, 6-3.

OTB marked by upsets — In yet another upset at the OTB International Open, 19-year-old Thomas Enqvist of

Sweden beat sixth-seeded Carlos Costa, 6-1, 6-4, in the men's semifinals Saturday at Schenectady, N.Y. Engvist will meet Brett Steven, the world's 46th ranked player, for the men's final today. Steven beat

No. 2 Karel Novacek, 6-3, 6-1. Enqvist used a devastating serve and steady, aggressive baseline play for the best tournament showing of his

In women's semifinals, unseeded Larisa Neiland of Latvia, who is ranked 42nd in the world, squeaked by top-seeded Nathalie Tauziat, 7-5, 1-6, 7-6 (13-11), and Natalia Medvedeva, a strong server from Ukraine, de-

feated Meike Babel of Germany, 6-2, 6-3. Neiland, who has won four Grand Slam doubles titles. will meet Medvedeva, ranked 62nd and the 21-year-old sister of Andrei Medvedev, today.

Iliness strikes Sabatini — Gabriela Sabatini, complaining of nausea, retired after five games of the second set, giving Arantxa Sanchez Vicario of Spain a 6-3, 4-1 triumph on the final day of the \$200,000 Elizabeth Arden WTA Challenge Saturday night at Washington, D.C.

The victory assured a team of three Europeans and one South African of the overall championship and the \$125,000 first prize in the unique four-day event. In the second match of the evening, which had no bear-

ing on the outcome of the team competition, Mary Joe Fernandez won, 4-6, 6-1, 2-1, when Jana Novotna of the Czech Republic called it quits because of a sore right shoulder.

Many in the crowd of 5,029 booed as the players left the court. Ironically, Fernandez had pulled out of a doubles

match on Friday with severe abdominal pains.

Four-way tie - Greg Norman and Nick Price each mounted a comeback and secured places in a four-way tie for the lead Saturday after three rounds of the World Series of Golf at Akron, Ohio.

Price and Norman, battling for Player of the Year honors, were tied at 3-under-par 207 with Jim Gallagher and David Edwards.

Four others were a stroke back going into today's final round of the chase for a \$360,000 first prize.

Langer in lead - Bernhard Langer overcame his highs and lows in the third round of the German Open at Dusseldorf and held a twostroke lead.

The two-time Masters champion fell three strokes behind Northern Ireland's David Feherty, but rallied to shoot a 2-under-par 70 to go 13under at 203 after 54 holes. Feherty and England's Peter Baker were at

Tie at Bruno's - Bob Charles and DeWitt Weaver were tied Saturday after two rounds of the Bruno's Memorial Classic at Birmingham, Ala.

Charles had a second-round 67 for a 9-under 135. Weaver shot a 68.

King in lead — Betsy King shot a 1-under 71 on Saturday for 54-hole total of 206 and a one-stroke lead over Beth Daniel and Brandie Burton after three rounds of the LPGA's duMaurier Classic at London, Ontario.

King thus ensured that for the sixth time this season she will carry a lead or a share of the lead into the final round of a tournament. However, she is yet to win a tournament.

AUTO RACING

Another pole to Prost — Frenchman Alain Prost, the Formula One points leader, set a lap record in edging English teammate Damon Hill and winning his 11th pole position this season at the Belgian Grand Prix Saturday at Spa-Francorchamps, Belgium.

The Williams-Renault team dominated the two days of qualifying, shutting out the opposition for the 10th time in 12 races this season. German Michael Schumacher,

the 1992 Belgian Grand Prix champion, put his Benetton-Ford in third place on the grid. Goodyear wins pole - Scott

Goodyear edged Bobby Rahal for the No. 1 spot Saturday in a surprising final day of qualifying for today's Molson Indy Vancouver on the 10-turn, 1.648-mile course near downtown Vancouver.

Knoxville postponed — The Knoxville 360 Nationals for limited sprint cars was postponed Saturday because of rain at Knoxville Raceway.

The event has been rescheduled for next Saturday, when it will be held simultaneously with the season championship.

Fans holding tickets for the 360

Nationals may use them next week or seek refunds. For information, contact the raceway ticket office at (515)842-5431.On Friday night, Kevin Frey of Chambersburg, Pa., captured the 20-

lap feature in the opening round of the 360 Nationals. Mike Chadd of Lincoln, Neb., led for 10 laps until a yellow flag came out for a stalled car. On the restart Frey moved into the lead from his

third place spot.

Gill trade rumor grows - The rumored trade of guard Kendall Gill from Charlotte to Seattle appeared more likely Saturday when the Hornets announced the signing of the free-agent guard to a long-term contract.

With Gill signed, his chances of finding a team interested in trading for him are greater.

It is team policy not to reveal terms of any contracts.

"By having Kendall signed, we are now able to look into some possible scenarios with other clubs, while still holding the option of keeping the current team intact," Hornets President Spencer Stolpen said.

Gill, 25, was selected by the Hornets with the fifth overall pick in the 1991 draft. He is third on the franchise's scoring list with 3,695 points

McSorley to Penguins - Marty McSorley's way out of Los Angeles was paved by St. Louis, but Pittsburgh eventually got the 30-year-old defenseman in a trade Friday.

The Kings matched the Blues' contract offer and then traded McSorley to the Penguins for 24-year-old center Shawn McEachern.

McSorley went to Los Angeles five years ago as an afterthought in the Wayne Gretzky deal. This past season was his finest with the Kings (41 points, 399 penalty minutes). and he was a key figure in their drive to the Stanley Cup finals. But McSorley's sticking penalty in game two that helped Montreal climb back and eventually win the finals also will be his legacy.