

Pirates, Braves begin rematch for National League title

ATLANTA (AP) — Barry Bonds has never been Mr. Post-season and the Pittsburgh Pirates are 0-for-October since 1990. The only question about the National League playoffs rematch that begins tonight seemingly is which Atlanta Braves' pitcher will be this fall's Zero Hero.

Maybe not. Sure, the Braves — one run short of winning the World Series last year — will start John Smoltz, Steve Avery and Tom Glavine against Pittsburgh, which was shut out in its last

three home games of the '91 playoffs.

But, this year, the Pirates — not the Braves' Big 3 — enter the playoffs on a tear, winning 42 of their last 56. The Braves' young gun starters have won just three times among them in a month, the beat-up bullpen is questionable with Alejandro Pena out and Kent Mercker hurting. Mike Stanton is the only healthy Braves' left-handed reliever to counter the Pirates' left-handed strength of Bonds and Andy Van Slyke.

So the NL's first playoffs re-

match since the Dodgers and Phillies met in 1977 and 1978 just might not be an instant replay of the pitching-dominated 1991 series that featured three 1-0 games. This one might be an Oktoberfest of hitting ... or, maybe, an October slugfest.

The Pirates are the first team to win three consecutive NL East titles since Philadelphia (1976-78), but those Phillies never made it to what Pirates GM Ted Simmons calls "the Grand Banana" — the World Series.

Pittsburgh also doesn't want

to be reminded of the past two playoffs, when Bonds had no RBIs in 13 games and the Pirates got zeroed out in the big games. They lost 2-1 on one hit in 1990's decisive Game 6 in Cincinnati and were shut out at home in Games 6 and 7 in '91 after taking a 3-2 series lead in Atlanta.

Smoltz beat the Pirates twice in last year's playoffs but is 0-2 against them this season. Also, by starting Smoltz, Cox allows Pittsburgh to start its strong left-handed-hitting lineup — Alex

Cole in right, Mike LaValliere catching, Orlando Merced at first, Bonds and Van Slyke — that was 70-34 against right-handed starters.

One of just two NL 20-game winners, Glavine (20-8) still is recovering from a cracked rib and won't start until Game 3 Friday against Pirates knuckleballer Tim Wakefield (8-1). Avery will start Game 2 Wednesday afternoon against playoff-tested Pittsburgh left-hander Danny Jackson.

Game injury kills soccer player

FLORENCE, Ky. (AP) — A 15-year-old Kentucky high school soccer player died Sunday, 36 hours after he was injured in a game.

Scott Christian, the leading scorer for Boone County High School, was hurt Friday night in a collision during a tournament game against Highlands High School of Fort Thomas. Tim Grimes, the team's assistant coach, said Christian hurt his stomach in a collision with another player.

The 5-foot-1, 145-pound sophomore walked off the field after the collision. He asked later to go back into the game, but was not allowed. Coaches later noticed that he was vomiting, and an ambulance was summoned.

Christian was taken to St. Elizabeth Medical Center South in Edgewood. Doctors said X-rays showed that the boy had bruised his diaphragm, a muscular partition that separates the abdomen and chest cavity. They told the family to bring him back in 24 hours if he didn't improve.

Scott's brother, Gordon, 24, said the family thought the boy was OK until Saturday night, when he began spitting up blood. Family members were getting ready to take him to the hospital Sunday morning when he turned purple and collapsed, the brother said.

The boy was in cardiac arrest when he arrived in the emergency room at St. Luke Hospital West in Florence, Ky., on Sunday morning. The medical staff revived Scott once, but he died within an hour, spokeswoman Laura Cook said.

The Boone County coroner scheduled an autopsy to determine the cause of death.

The boy's death is the first from an injury in high school soccer in the state, according to Brooks Downing, spokesman for the Kentucky High School Athletics Association.


Members of the Boone County soccer team met at the school Sunday evening to comfort each other.

"They've got to pull together and help each other," soccer coach Cheryl Jones said. "It's a great loss."


School staff and students observed a moment of silence Monday morning for Christian and plans to fly the flag at half-staff all week, school principal Bill Baker said.

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
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
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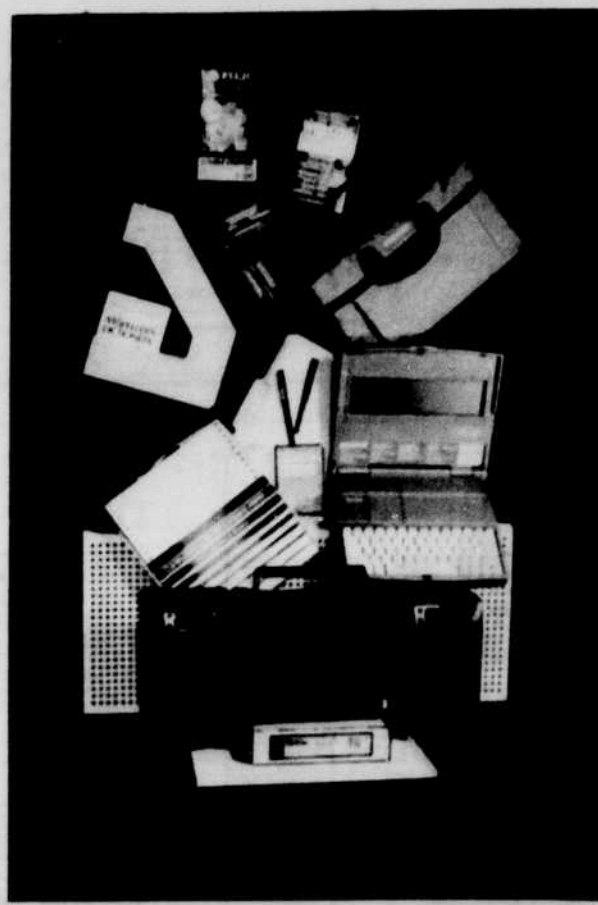
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