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Giants make it six straight with convincing win over Emeralds

Dan Schneider came up a home run short of the cycle, and 18-year-old Fausto Macey picked up the win in his Northwest League debut Wednesday night as the Everett Giants destroyed the Emeralds, 11-2.

The Giants racked up 15 hits, including Schneider's

four-hit evening, and took advantage of four Ems errors for their sixth straight win.

Macey held the Ems to one run on five hits in six innings of work in his first game with the Giants. Jim Murray pitched the final three innings to notch his first save of the year.

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NFC

Continued From Page 5

Favre, Sterling Sharpe and free-agent acquisition Reggie Cobb will keep a strong offense chugging along.

The Detroit Lions finally feel that they have their quarterback in free agent Scott Mitchell. All the other offensive slots are in order with Barry Sanders and more quality wide receivers than you can shake a stick at. The offensive and defensive lines are improving and should not be a big concern for the Lions. A major concern will be the line-backing corps and the secondary, but that should be offset by a high-octane offense.

The Minnesota Vikings feel that Warren Moon should revitalize a stagnant offense and the return of Terry Allen in the backfield will balance out the running game. Moon should find plenty of receivers willing to run under his passes and will have plenty of time to throw due to a strong offensive line. The Vikings defense was one of the best last season and will be one of the best this season. The Vikings could sneak up on teams this season.

The Chicago Bears should have been fined for impersonating an offense last season. Look for more of the same this season from a ballclub that has no outstanding running backs. Eric Kramer needs some quality receivers if he is to survive his first season as a starter and the Bears just don't have many. The defense of the Bears will once again be its strength and should outperform last season's efforts.

The Tampa Bay Buccaneers will finally win the Super Bowl. Not this season, but maybe someday. The Bucs' offense is completely overhauled with rookies Trent Dilfer and Ernie Rhee leading the way. The defense will get scored on often. The offense will show sparks of life, but not enough to put wins on the board.

NFC WEST

When have the San Francisco

49ers ever looked as dominating as this year? How can they have so many top-notch players and still be under the salary cap? Next season's top acquisition will be the 49ers accountants, no doubt about it. The offense is stocked with quality players and the defense just gets better with the acquisition of Ken Norton, Gary Plummer and rookie Bryant Young. Depending on what happens to the Cowboys and others in the NFC East, pencil the 49ers in as world champions for 1994.

The New Orleans Saints hope that a change of scenery will be good for quarterback Jim Everett. He has good receivers to throw the ball to and should get decent protection from an emerging offensive line, but who will run the ball for the Saints? Vaughn Dunbar, if healthy, is an outstanding candidate and will battle for the spot against Derek Brown and rookie Mario Bates. The Saints' defense always keeps them in the game and this season will be no exception with talent at all areas.

The Atlanta Falcons revolving door of mediocrity keeps spinning year after year and an end is not in sight. First year coach June Jones will start the season with off-season acquisition Jeff George at quarterback in another hope that new scenery will make the difference. The offensive and defensive lines are good enough to compete, but the line-backers and secondary will be beat often.

The Los Angeles Rams have a budding superstar in running back Jerome Bettis. If Chris Miller remains healthy and Bettis continues his dominance, the Rams can get by with a decent receiving corps and offensive line. The defensive line and secondary are developing into formidable threats, but the poor linebackers open up too much field for opposing teams to work with.

Kris Henry is a sports reporter for the Emerald.

MINORS

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Hansen looks at the bus rides more optimistically, saying that the "bonding time" that the bus brings with it can bring a team that much closer.

On the subject of pay, most of these happy-go-lucky Ems don't seem to worry about it too much, not yet anyway.

"It's just a pleasure to get paid for what I do, right now," Ritter said cautiously. "It's nothing that I can live off of. I want to start a family too, and I can't do it playing minor league baseball."

"Yeah, the pay's not too great," Pinoni added. "But I just like coming to the ballpark and being around the guys. I'm having fun doing this."

But as diverse as the Ems are, so too are the off-field activities that each player uses to take their mind off the game and somehow ease the pressure.

"Lately we've been hanging out playing Sega," Pinoni said, with a sheepish grin.

"At first I wasn't doing anything but eat, sleep, wake up and come to the park," McNally said. "Now I get out and do things. It's important to do something else besides baseball. Baseball becomes the only thing, it dominates your mind. That makes the mental pressure that much tougher."

For Cepeda, his family provides a comforting distraction

from the game.

"My baby makes me laugh," Cepeda said, who credits his wife and child for their understanding. "If I have a bad game, they help me relax and erase it. They support me 100 percent."

Cepeda appreciates the support as he believes that playing baseball is what he was meant to do.

"I got to be here. I want to be here," Cepeda said. "This is what I do for a living."

Like for most young men out on their own, food can become a cumbersome issue. Fast food and pizzas are the staples for most of the Ems, with the players receiving \$15 a day for meals on the road, an amount that Kurnick seems to think is just about right.

"You can go do Denny's and get a Grand Slam for \$1.99, then you can get yourself a good dinner at night," he said excitedly, noting that most guys on the team eat only two meals a day. "I eat better on the road than I do at home. I have a refrigerator at home with food in it, but it just sits there."

"We do what we can to eat," Hansen said. "It's definitely not something you would do if you were training for the Olympics though."

The Olympics this is not, but for these 30 or so men that have dreamed of playing in the major leagues since tee-ball, theirs is the breakfast of champions.