

Cone and Yankees shut down Braves for 5-2 win

■ **BASEBALL:** New York's late charge put the game out of reach

By Paul Newberry
The Associated Press

ATLANTA — The Atlanta Braves are human, after all.

Bunts were popped up. Grounders were bobbled. And worst of all, Atlanta may be starting to realize the New York Yankees' bullpen really is what it's cracked up to be — exceptional.

Tom Glavine added another brilliant performance for the Braves starting pitchers in Tuesday night's Game 3 of the World Series. But on this night, a 5-2 loss, allowing only four hits and one earned run in seven innings wasn't enough.

The hitters, who had produced 48 runs in the past five games, were due for an off

night. David Cone, a former National League pitcher who was used to facing many of the Atlanta hitters, pitched brilliantly for six innings. He left after escaping a bases-loaded jam with only one run scoring.

Atlanta didn't do those so-called "little things," which were displayed so brilliantly in a 4-0 victory in Game 2.

Mr. October, Mark Lemke, hit into a double play in the first and popped up a sacrifice bunt attempt in the sixth. Jeff Blauser, a frequent target of Atlanta fans the past three years, bobbled a grounder in the fourth that led to an unearned run. Andruw Jones and Luis Polonia were both thrown out trying to steal second.

But it was the middle relief that should be most troubling to Atlanta heading into a Game 4 that suddenly becomes crucial to both teams.

Greg McMichael, the bridge between the stellar rotation and dominating closer Mark Wohlers, looked all too hittable once again. It was McMichael who gave up a game-winning homer to St. Louis' Brian Jordan in Game 4 of the NL championship series.

The Braves had not lost since that night — until Tuesday. Once again, McMichael



found himself right in the middle of it, coming on in the eighth with the Braves trailing only 2-1. The change-up specialist faced a grand total of three batters and didn't exactly fool anyone.

Derek Jeter singled to lead off. Bernie Williams, who had snapped an 0-for-7 slump with an RBI single in the first, slammed a homer deep into the right-field

seats. When Cecil Fielder followed with a double to deep center, McMichael's night was done.

The final line: zero innings, three hits, three runs.

The Yankees have shown that if their starters can keep the game close for six innings, the Braves are beatable. Mariano Rivera, though he did give up a meaningless run in the eighth, can be a dominating pitcher for one or two innings. Then he'll turn the ball over to John Wetteland, who had 43 saves during the regular season and picked up another one in Game 3.

Suddenly, the mood around Atlanta isn't so relaxed. The team that returned home on an incredible roll, to a crowd that was ready to celebrate, won't be breaking out the champagne on Wednesday night.

Atlanta Falcons release quarterback

■ **NFL:** Jeff George's big salary may prevent a team from signing him this season

By Paul Newberry
The Associated Press

ATLANTA — The Atlanta Falcons waived goodbye to a disenchanted Jeff George Tuesday, ending a stormy relationship that led to the quarterback's suspension, then his release.

After 4 p.m. Wednesday, George is an unrestricted free agent. But any team claiming George on waivers assumes the remaining share of his \$3.6 million salary — about \$1.9 million.

"There really aren't any options," said coach June Jones, who suspended George for conduct detrimental to the team after a sideline tirade Sept. 22.

Leigh Steinberg, George's agent, said he fears his client's salary may prevent him from getting signed.

"Our assumption is that no one will claim him" immediately, Steinberg said. "Then, in one or two days, we'll talk to different teams. Jeff would like to play the remainder of the season."

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Blazers' new look could be costly in 1996

Change, inexperience and a lot of doubt. All three of those words surround the 1996 version of the Portland Trail Blazers as the season nears its start.

Portland will begin its 1996-97 campaign with its fair share of new faces and young players.

Gone from the 1995-96 team is a total of seven players, including guards Rod Strickland, James Robinson and Rumeal Robinson and forwards Buck Williams and Harvey Grant.

Strickland finished fourth in the NBA last year in assists and was Portland's second-leading scorer with more than 18 points a game. In addition, he had become one the Blazers go-to guys.

But mid-way through the summer he and fellow NBA veteran Harvey Grant were shipped away to the Washington Bullets for rookie Rasheed Wallace and third-year player Mitchell Butler.

Then, eight days after Strickland was dealt away, James Robinson and Bill Curley found themselves involved in a trade of their own. The two were sent to Minnesota for Isaiah Rider.

And then Rumeal Robinson was let go by the Blazers on Aug. 10 after half a season in Portland where he was just beginning to establish himself as a solid player off the bench.

Those departures leave some big holes to fill on the Blazers' roster.

Insert 10 unproven players with no more than three years of NBA experience and a collection of 15 players with an average age of 23.

So just five years removed from a trip to the NBA finals, the Blazers could find themselves looking to ... Clifford Robinson as their go-to guy?

As sad as that may sound — after Clifford Robinson's proven inability to produce in the clutch — it looks like reality.

He has the most NBA experience of any player on the team — seven years — and at 29 he is the third-oldest player on the team.

Who are Portland's other options for a clutch player?

Chris Dudley, Arvydas Sabonis or Kenny Anderson.

Dudley and Sabonis are both out of the question.

While Dudley may be a great role player for the Blazers, collecting his nine rebounds a game while blocking a few shots, he has a career average of five points and half an assist a game.

I may not be Dr. Jack Ramsey, but I do know that those are not the kind of offensive numbers to build a



OPINION

Ryan Frank

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