

Klesko's second-inning blast lifts Braves past Houston

Atlanta ace, Greg Maddux pitches a seven-bitter to give the Braves a 1-0 lead in the division series

The Associated Press

ATLANTA — It was a game fitting of the playoffs: tight, well-pitched and could have changed on one play.

Of course, what else would you expect from the Atlanta Braves and Houston Astros? What else would you expect from Greg Maddux and Darryl Kile?

Maddux pitched a seven-hitter and Atlanta defeated Kile and the Astros 2-1 in Game 1 of the NL division series Tuesday afternoon.

Houston, playing in the post-season for the first time since 1986, has stayed close to the Braves all year. The 11 regular-season games each were decided by one or two runs, with Atlanta winning seven.

Tuesday was more of the same. The Braves, making an unprecedented sixth straight postseason appearance, had only two hits against Kile and two relievers — none after the first pitch in the second inning — but both led to runs.

"They've been on our butts the whole season," said John Smoltz, who'll be the starter when the best-of-five series shifts to the Astrodome on Friday. "It's not going to be easy getting to the league championship series."

Two hits were enough with Maddux on the mound — especially in a day game. He was 10-0 with a 1.94 ERA in daytime starts during the season.

Working on eight days' rest, the four-time Cy Young Award winner limited the Astros to seven singles and shut down the top three hitters in Houston's order. Craig Biggio, Derek Bell and Jeff Bagwell were a combined 0-for-12 with three strikeouts.

"I'd like to think I can pitch better than I pitched today," Maddux said with a shrug. "I don't think you're ever satisfied unless you throw a perfect game."

Bagwell, who had 43 homers and 135 RBIs, struck out swinging in the eighth with a runner at second. Maddux's 114-pitch complete game ensured the Braves didn't have to go to their shaky bullpen.

"We didn't go out and choke," Bagwell said. "The top three guys went up there and didn't get any hits. But, shoot, Maddux has done that to us before. They got two hits and they beat us."

Kile, a 19-game winner, is used to losing these sorts of games to Maddux. Since 1993, Kile is 1-3 with a 1.69 ERA against Maddux, who has a 1.32 ERA in head-to-head meetings with the Houston pitcher.

"He pitched a tremendous game," Houston manager Larry Dierker said of Kile. "The series still has a long way to go — I hope."

Kenny Lofton, hampered most of the season by a pulled groin muscle and unfamiliarity with NL pitchers, blooped a hit just inside the left-field line and turned on the speed to stretch it to a double. Lofton tagged and sprinted for third on a fly to medium right, sliding in just ahead of the throw from Bell, then scored on Chipper Jones' sacrifice fly to left.

Kile threw a hanging curve to Ryan Klesko leading off the second, and Atlanta's top home-run hitter made him pay by putting it in the right-field bleachers.

"It was the pitch I wanted to throw," Kile said. "I hadn't thrown a curveball for a strike (in the first inning), so I wanted to show them I could throw it for a strike. He hit it out of the park. What can I say?"

The Astros scored their only run in the fifth in a most unlikely fashion.

With one out, Tony Eusebio singled and stunned the Braves with the first stolen base of his major league career. Eusebio, not known for his speed, has gone 296 regular-season games without swiping a base.

Eusebio moved to third on a groundout and scored on Kile's single up the middle.

Pac-10: Oregon-UCLA game time rescheduled

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Shaw is second in the nation in receptions per game with nine and third in yards receiving per game with 149.8.

Stanford receiver Troy Walters, who burned the Ducks last weekend for 169 yards, is not far behind Shaw. Walters is averaging 8.25 catches a game and 120.75 yards receiving per game.

He could also have a shot at breaking Johnson's mark.

"I'm very pleased with Troy and his leadership as a young player," Willingham said.

Scheduling changes

Thanks to Idaho's drop from Division I-A to I-AA, Cal was forced to drop the Vandals from its schedule and add Louisiana Tech this Saturday. The game, in Shreveport, could prove to be tougher than it sounds for the Bears.

Louisiana Tech is leading the nation with 382.5 yards passing a

game and the trip 2,000 miles east will not make the game any easier.

Oregon is experiencing its own scheduling changes. The Ducks have moved their game against UCLA on Oct. 11 at Autzen Stadium from 1 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. in order to have their game televised on fX (cable channel 16).

Two-headed monster

Oregon used both Jason Maas and Akili Smith through their first three games, but at Stanford, Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti set a new standard.

With Oregon facing third and goal from the six-yard line and Smith at the helm, Bellotti sent Maas in the game. Maas promptly completed a touchdown pass to Tony Hartley.

"I think we have taken [the rotation] to the new trend," Bellotti said. "We felt we needed to do that to maximize each player's potential."



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