

Atlanta earns return to Series

By Ben Walker
The Associated Press

ATLANTA — It was amazing all right — and in the end, it was Atlanta who came up with the miracle.

Andruw Jones drew a bases-loaded walk from Kenny Rogers with one out in the 11th inning and Atlanta somehow survived a final string of Mets' comebacks, beating New York 10-9 Tuesday night to win the NL Championship Series 4-2.

"We had chances to die and we didn't," Atlanta manager Bobby Cox said. "There's more than one way to win a ballgame."

On a night that had even more drama than the Mets' 4-3, 15-inning victory Sunday at Shea Stadium, the teams gave a roaring, raucous crowd of 52,335 all it could handle in one of the most thrilling playoff games ever.

Atlanta wrecked the Mets' hopes of a Subway Series and advanced to the World Series to face the New York Yankees. Game 1 in the rematch of the 1996 Series will be Saturday night at Turner Field.

The Mets, who trailed 5-0 in the first inning, nearly became the first team in postseason history to win three games in a row after losing the first three.

"I told them they played like champions," Mets manager Bobby Valentine said. "We don't have a trophy, but they did everything they had to."

But after the Mets took a 9-8 lead on Todd Pratt's sacrifice fly

in the 10th at exactly the stroke of midnight, Atlanta tied it in the bottom of the inning on pinch-hitter Ozzie Guillen's single.

Then in the 11th, Gerald Williams led off with a double and moved up on Walt Weiss' sacrifice. Two intentional walks loaded the bases for Jones, and he worked the count full before taking a ball high and outside.

Valentine slammed the railing on the top step of the dugout and shouted, "Oh, no!" when Rogers missed.

"I was just going out there, taking pitches until he threw me a strike," Jones said. "He didn't, and I took a walk."

The tension showed on both sides, as every player, coach and person in each dugout was up against the railing for the final batter. The crowd, including a healthy dose of Mets fans, shouted along in the fifth straight game of the NLCS decided by one run.

Russ Springer wound up the winning pitcher. Atlanta catcher Eddie Perez, a starter because Javy Lopez was out for the season, was MVP of the series. Perez was 10-for-20 with five RBIs.

"We never could give up. They never gave up," Perez said.

Now Atlanta gets a chance to avenge their ills to the Yankees in the October 1996. This marks the first time Series rivals have met in the regular season — Atlanta went 2-1 at Yankee Stadium in interleague play right after the All-Star break.

"We've got another shot at

"We had chances to die and we didn't. There's more than one way to win a ballgame."

Bobby Cox
Atlanta manager

them," Atlanta third baseman Chipper Jones said.

The Mets, four outs from elimination in game 4 and two outs away in game 5, almost found another way to win.

With "Why not?" written on a clubhouse board, they scored three times in the sixth to chase starter Kevin Millwood and make it 5-3. Mike Piazza, banged up and silent for most of the week, homered off reliever John Smoltz to tie it at 7 in the seventh.

Both teams scored in the eighth — the Mets on Melvin Mora's single, Atlanta on Brian Hunter's single — and each club had its chance to win in the 10th.

For Atlanta, its eighth straight trip to the NLCS wound up with a win and a chance for the team to win that elusive second World Series title in the 1990s.

For the Mets, the loss marked the end of an incredible run. They needed a sweep on the final weekend of the regular season and a win over Cincinnati in the wild-card tiebreaker just to reach the playoffs.

No-quit Harding back in the ice rink



Scott Peznecker

Tonya Harding, the most infamous Oregonian of the 1990s, quietly returned to the spotlight Monday night at the Pro Figure Skating Championships in Huntington, W. Va.

Barely half of the 5,780-seat Huntington Civic Arena was filled to see her comeback performance. She fell on her first and final jumps, finishing fourth out of five competitors.

But she's back. Tonya Harding, once a small-town Milwaukie girl who beat the odds and became a world-class skater, is back.

Tonya Harding, who revolutionized women's skating with her incredible strength and athleticism, is back.

Tonya Harding, who was implicated in the 1994 attack on rival Nancy Kerrigan, one of the darkest moments in modern sports history, is back.

Nobody thought it would happen. When Harding was banished from the amateur circuit after being implicated in the attack on Kerrigan, she was the bad guy. The media painted Harding as an antagonist and a victimizer.

Nothing she did could redeem her public standing. Time passed by as she tried and tried to find an open doorway back into competitive skating. Each time she failed.

Until now. The girl who beat the odds by becoming an Olympic skater has beat the odds again by returning to the rink. Tonya Harding is back, and nothing can stop her.

Am I saying she's going to return to her form in the 1994 Lillehammer Games? Not necessarily. Her agent insists that Harding is in great shape, weighing almost 10 pounds less than at the 1994 Olympics. But losing a few pounds can't make up for five years of silence.

What I firmly believe is this:

As long as she is allowed to compete, Harding won't quit. It's not her style, and it never has been.

And as she has shown through the past five years, she won't let others keep her from what she wants to do. Even in the heat of the breaking Kerrigan conspiracy, Harding walked calmly in public, sporting her memorable "no comment" sweatshirt.

Gimmicks like that are no longer needed for Harding. When asked about her return to the ice, Harding enjoys telling the media — and the public — how glad she is to be back on the scene.

"I was very nervous, and my legs were shaking," Harding told the Associated Press. "But at the same time, the audience was wonderful. I went out and did the best that I could after being off the ice for so long. I just had a great time."

Harding did receive the best reception of the night, earning the loudest applause from the crowd at Huntington.

Yet there will always be something about her, a feeling that I can't figure out how to put into words. It's a feeling that was borne from images of the past. Images of Kerrigan on the ground, sobbing and holding her knee. Images of Harding during her final amateur competition, in tears on the ice because she claimed her shoelace was broken.

It too lived in Milwaukie. It's a town where nobody has ever grown up to be the best on the planet. It's a small Portland suburb that people usually mistake for Milwaukee, Wisc., in the course of conversation.

Harding defied the odds. She had a dream to be the best figure skater on the planet, and she came so close to making it happen.

But in the same way Portlanders associate former Trailblazers guard Isaiah Rider with smoking pot and stolen cell phones — even if they liked him — the world of figure skating will always remember the tearful 1994 night in Lillehammer every time Harding takes the ice.

But Tonya Harding is back.

Scott Peznecker is a sports reporter for the Emerald. He can be reached via e-mail at jtlak1@aol.com.

Sports brief

Oregon's Wygonowska bounced from All-America Tournament

After opening with a win Tuesday at the All-America Tournament in Los Angeles, Alina Wygonowska of the Oregon women's tennis team lost her afternoon match to fail to advance to today's second day of action.

Wygonowska defeated Ohio State's Kristy Dascoli in three sets, before she lost to Duke's Kathy Sell in straight sets.

"It was a good showing for her because she got a win," Ducks head coach Jack Griffin said. "There are

some of the nation's best players here. She hit the ball well but unfortunately couldn't keep it going for another round."

Wygonowska and Oregon next play Nov. 12-15 in the Rolex Regionals at Stanford.

Date set for 200 Pre Classic

In a change from the usual late May date, the 2000 Prefontaine Classic Grand Prix has been set for June 24 at Hayward Field.

The late September to early October schedule of the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney apparently dictated the change, which was finalized at the just concluded IAAF World Calendar Conference in Funchal, Portugal.

Find Love



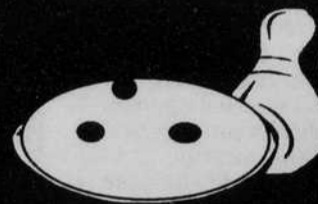
FREE Personals

Check out collegestudent.com's online personals



going overseas? catch the oregon daily emerald on the world wide web: www.dailyemerald.com

STRIKE CITY



Cosmic Bowl!!

Everything glows, with a slammin' sound system.

\$5 MONDAYS
10pm TIL 1am
BOWL 3 GAMES
FOR ONLY 5 BUCKS

10pm til 1am

COSMIC THUNDER!!

shoes only \$1

- \$2 GAMES
- \$1 SHOES
- \$2 cover @ door
- Food & Bev. Specials!!

1170 Hwy. 99 @ the Gilbert Center ph. 688-8900