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THE WORLD SERIES

Yanks leave Atlanta up 2-0

By Paul Newberry
The Associated Press

ATLANTA — Pick your poison.

Hitting? Atlanta managed just five hits Sunday night and was routed 7-2 by the New York Yankees, falling behind 2-0 in a World Series that looks like the Debacle of the Decade.

Defense? One night after defensive replacement Brian Hunter made two errors at first base in a 4-1 loss, shortstop Ozzie Guillen let in a run by dropping a soft liner that he could have caught with his bare hands. Another run was gift-wrapped when second baseman Keith Lockhart failed to turn the most routine of double plays.

Pitching? Kevin Millwood, who pitched a one-hitter in his first postseason start, surrendered three hits before he even got an out Sunday night. By the third inning, he was gone.

Team of the '90s? Looks like that title is New York-bound, just like this Series.

Atlanta, the winningest team of the decade, is coming apart at the seams against the Yankees, who are willing and able to take advantage of every mistake. New York is halfway home to yet another Series title, blowing through Atlanta like a sweep in the making.

The next three games in the best-of-7 series are set for Yankee Stadium. Two may be enough to bring down the curtain.

The only consolation for Atlanta: They're in virtually the same predicament that faced the Yankees three years ago, when Atlanta, the defending Series

champion, outscored the AL champs 16-1 to win the first two games at Yankee Stadium.

After two games at Turner Field, Atlanta has been outscored 11-3 by the current Series champion, so maybe there's reason for hope. That's about as good it gets for Atlanta, which may have to be content with being runner-up for the fourth time in the '90s.

Atlanta's hitters are looking downright silly against New York's wily pitchers, very much aware that they can get just about everyone outside of Chipper Jones to swing at offerings beyond the limits of the strike zone. Maybe if Andres Galarraga and Javy Lopez were able to play, things would be different.

But with a revamped lineup that included three players — Guillen, Lockhart and Greg Myers — making their first start of the postseason, Atlanta had maybe four or five hard-hit balls the entire game. They finally scored two meaningless runs with two outs in the ninth but are still batting just .121 (7-of-58) in the Series.

Game 2 was basically over after the top half of the first. Chuck Knoblauch led off against Millwood by lining an 0-2 pitch to center field for a single. Derek Jeter and Paul O'Neill followed with singles as well, the latter driving in a run.

Millwood, Atlanta's most consistent starter during the regular season, had a chance to escape when Bernie Williams hit into a double play. But Tino Martinez singled in another run, Ricky Ledee walked and Scott Brosius

made it 3-0 with yet another line-drive single.

In the third, the Yankees finished off Millwood, whose first World Series appearance became his shortest stint of the season. Williams singled, Martinez singled and Ledee doubled in a run.

Manager Bobby Cox walked slowly to the mound to remove Millwood, who had gone at least five innings in every start — 33 in a row — since lasting just 3 1-3 innings at Los Angeles on April 20. Of the eight hits he surrendered, five came with two strikes.

Then it was time for the defense to fall apart.

Guillen, inserted for offense, cost a run in the field. With a runner at third, two outs and the score still 4-0, David Cone hit a soft liner right at the shortstop. Somehow, the ball slipped through Guillen's glove while Cox, looking on from the dugout, held his hands over his cap in disbelief and anguish.

About that time, some fans began to slide toward the main gate on Abernathy Boulevard. No need to stay up late when one had to be at work Monday morning.

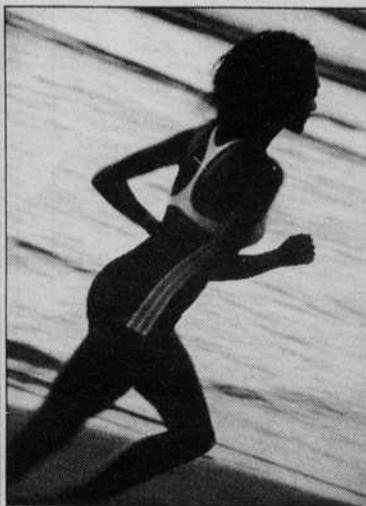
Lockhart contributed to the defensive woes in the fourth. Martinez hit a grounder to shortstop that should have been an inning-ending double play, but Lockhart bobbled the relay throw from Guillen and made a hurried, off-target throw to first, allowing another run to score.

By then, some of the New York fans in the crowd were beginning to chant: "Sweep! Sweep! Sweep!"

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