

Mariners steal two in Chicago, near ALCS

By Rick Gano

The Associated Press

CHICAGO — Seattle's bullpen bullied the Chicago White Sox again, pushed aside the majors' most potent offense and landed the road-tough Mariners a 2-0 lead in their division series.

Now the White Sox will try to be sweepless in Seattle when the best-of-five series shifts to Safeco Field on Friday.

"We don't want to get in a slugging match with the White Sox. I don't know if it's them struggling or we're making our pitches," Alex Rodriguez said Wednesday after Seattle's 5-2 victory.

The win featured 3 1-3 hitless

innings by Mariner relievers, a go-ahead homer by Jay Buhner and superb defensive play by Mark McLemore.

It all puts the White Sox, owners of the AL's best record, on the verge of an early exit.

"Right now, obviously, we're in some trouble," Chicago manager Jerry Manuel said. "I think if any team can do it, we can. We won 95 games and feel we can find a way to win three more."

But to have any chance of winning just one game, the White Sox must start hitting the ball, especially with runners in scoring position — they are just 3-for-23 in the first two games.

Seattle's bullpen has allowed just three hits in 10 scoreless innings over the first two games, starting with 6 2-3 innings of shutout ball in Tuesday's 7-4 victory.

Paul Abbott gave up five hits and two runs over 5 2-3 innings Wednesday to win in his first post-season appearance in a pro career that began in 1985.

Relievers Arthur Rhodes, Jose Mesa and Kazuhiro Sasaki didn't allow a hit the rest of the way. Sasaki struck out the side in the ninth for his second save of the series.

"The bullpen has been lights out," Abbott said. "You go out

there and know you have three or four guys who are going to come in and shut them down."

The White Sox stranded eight runners, giving them 18 in the first two games. Frank Thomas was 0-for-4 Wednesday and is hitless in seven series at-bats.

Chicago's 3-4-5 hitters — Thomas, Magglio Ordonez and Carlos Lee — were a combined 0-for-9 Wednesday after going 2-for-13 in the opener.

"To tell you the truth, we're not surprised. But we also know they could turn it on at any minute," Rhodes said.

"I sense they are pressing somewhat. Obviously, what they need is

a bloop hit and not a home run," Manuel said of his floundering middle hitters.

"It seems with all the fly balls and popups, we are probably going about it the wrong way. We should be hitting a few more ground balls and line drives."

The Mariners won eight of their final nine road games in the regular season, including a wild-card-clinching win at Anaheim last Sunday. And now they've carried it over into the postseason.

"We made it interesting and tough on ourselves down the stretch. Those games seemed like playoffs games. Definitely that helped," Buhner said.

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Horoscope by Linda C. Black

Today's Birthday (Oct. 5). You and a roommate may quarrel this year, but the overall outcome is good. Make your opinion known in October. Listen and learn with love in November. Things may not be as you thought in December. Difficulties at home could motivate you to travel around January. By February you should feel well-connected. A foreigner can forward your progress in June, but a moody woman could slow you down in July. Follow a hunch to gain the information you seek in September.

To get the advantage, check the day's rating: 10 is the easiest day, 0 the most challenging.

ARIES (March 21-April 19) — Today is a 5 — Everybody has an opinion about how you should run your life. A little of that goes a long way. Instead of telling them to shove it, be gracious. It'll be more fun, and besides, you're much better-looking when you're smiling.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) — Today is a 7 — Going out seems like a good idea, but it's not. If chores could interfere with an excursion, let them. You'll do better closer to home. You'll make or save money, too. Let your fingers do the walking. Do business over the phone.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21) — Today is a 7 — Something you and a sweetheart are planning needs work. The way it's set up now is too expensive. Go over your budget with a critical eye. Discover this error before you spend the money, rather than later.

CANCER (June 22-July 22) — Today is a 7 — something isn't going well for your mate or partner. Or, perhaps a household project of yours has gone awry. Provide comfort and nurturing food.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22) — Today is a 5 — Your latest scheme may not work as well as you'd hope. Start on a small scale before you take it public. A chance will go best if you let your sweetheart take the lead. Listen carefully, and you'll hear what isn't being said.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) — Today is a 7 — Does a loved one want something special? Are you tempted to splurge and get it? Do you have a steady income? If not, go for the good job first. After you get it, you can buy the toy. It'll be part of your celebration.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22) — Today is a 5 — You and a roommate might clash. You can go for a complete victory, but it'll cost you. Work out a compromise instead. Give in on a point you don't care much about, and you'll win more than you lose.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21) — Today is a 7 — Better double-check the latest gossip before you pass it on. You wouldn't want to look foolish because of somebody else's error. On the other hand, if you're the one who sets things straight, you'll look pretty good.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21) — Today is a 4 — Something that looks like a good deal may be the opposite. Read the fine print before you sign anything. It won't hurt to wait a little, either. Your chances of success improve the more you learn.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) — Today is a 7 — You and your friends know you're right, but take care. Don't bet more than you want to lose to prove it. An older person may be wrong, but if he or she outranks you, be diplomatic. Keep talking and listening.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18) — Today is a 6 — Hold off on travel for a day or so; you'll avoid some hassles. Finish old business before you launch into anything new. Think about something a quiet woman said, and you'll be prepared for a confrontation.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20) — Today is an 8 — You're a generous person, and your contributions are appreciated. Don't overdo it, though. Don't offer your savings account to a good cause unless you'll get a good return. You need to look out for yourself, too!

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