

Mariners, Yankees set to do battle again

By Josh Dubow
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Ken Griffey Jr. and Randy Johnson left Seattle. Alex Rodriguez and Derek Jeter have become full-blown megastars. Tino Martinez, Jeff Nelson and Luis Sojo shed their Mariners' uniforms for Yankees pinstripes.

Much has changed since the Mariners beat the Yankees in a classic, five-game duel in 1995.

Perhaps most importantly is that the Yankees have the mystique of winning three World Series titles in four years, and the Mariners have undergone an overhaul from a power-hitting team to a club that relies on pitching and situational baseball.

"It's a different Yankees club and certainly a different Seattle club," said Mariners manager Lou Piniella, one of the few holdovers on either

team. "I don't think you can go back to 1995 and draw any comparisons."

The teams begin a new series Tuesday night at Yankee Stadium, with Denny Neagle (15-9) starting for New York against Freddy Garcia (9-5) in Game 1 of the AL championship series.

Many of the changes the teams have undergone stem from that memorable week in October 1995. The series featured two extra-inning games, including Jim Leyritz's game-winning homer in the 15th inning that gave the Yankees a 2-0 series lead.

Then Griffey, Johnson and Edgar Martinez took over, with the Big Unit winning two of the next three games — one in relief — and Griffey scoring the winning run on Martinez's double in the 11th inning of the deciding fifth game.

"That memory is apparent for all

Yankees fans, as well as Mariners fans," New York manager Joe Torre said.

Buck Showalter lost his job following that series, and Yankees owner George Steinbrenner, in one of his best moves, hired Torre. Jeter became the starting shortstop in 1996, Martinez took over Don Mattingly's spot at first base, and Nelson helped give New York the best postseason bullpen in history.

"Losing that series was such a huge disappointment for us," said Paul O'Neill, one of five Yankees still on the roster. "When you lose like that, it's something you never forget. But that experience has made this team better. We learned you don't take any year for granted because you know it can go so quickly."

The Mariners' changes took longer to develop. Their dramatic playoff

run helped spur voters to approve funding for a new stadium, which opened last season. But Seattle was unable to keep Johnson and Griffey, losing their ace pitcher and star hitter.

"In '98 we lost Randy, in '99 we lost Griff and in 2000 we're in the postseason," Rodriguez said. "It's kind of ironic."

Part of the reason is a new philosophy that coincided with the opening of spacious Safeco Field and the closing of the homer-happy Kingdome.

"We've adapted to Safeco," Rodriguez said. "We don't sit around and wait for the three-run homer anymore. We bunt, move people over, steal bases and pitch a lot better. Pitching and defense are what win baseball games."

Seattle will rely on a deep bullpen led by Japanese import Kazuhiro Sasaki and an inexperi-

enced rotation fronted by Garcia and Halama — two of the prospects acquired from Houston for Johnson.

"We need for them to settle down and throw strikes," Piniella said. "But they both have the equipment. Both Freddie and John will pitch good ballgames if they are pitching on their games."

There are other intriguing story lines to this series: the Yankees trying to become the first team in 10 years to make three straight World Series; Rickey Henderson playing in the postseason in New York after his reported in-game card-playing during last year's NLCS with the Mets; and buddies Jeter and Rodriguez squaring off in the postseason for the first time.

"It's very exciting playing against my best friend," Rodriguez said. "But we have lots of time to spend together in the offseason. This week, it's war."

Alonzo Mourning's spirits good, prognosis uncertain

By Steven Wine
The Associated Press

BOCA RATON, Fla. — At first the workout sounds like any other Miami Heat practice, with Pat Riley's voice and the squeal of sneakers reverberating in the gym.

This is more than just basketball, though. The Heat are playing a tense waiting game.

They broke training camp Monday without All-Star center Alonzo Mourning, and they don't know if or when he'll return. He has been in Miami undergoing further tests so doctors can determine the best course of treatment for an apparent kidney disorder.

Mourning told his best friend in the NBA, Seattle center Patrick Ewing, that he'll play this season. At Mourning's request, the Heat have declined to discuss his condition or prognosis.

"Zo left me a message Sunday and

told us to keep working hard, and he'll take care of his end of it," Riley said. "He's in great spirits. He just wants to find out what's available out there and what the definitive answer is, and then we'll go from there."

Mourning's ailment was discovered during a routine physical examination before training camp began Wednesday.

"We're more concerned about Alonzo as a person than as a player," forward Brian Grant said. "We're not even thinking about when he's going to come back, but just is he going to be all right. We should know that pretty soon."

Mourning discussed his condition last week with Ewing, The Miami Herald reported.

"Our conversation went fine, and he was in good spirits," Ewing said. "In fact, he cursed me out because I

sounded depressed on the phone when he told me what he had....

"He's going to play again this sea-

son. He just said he is going to play again at some point. I don't know when that is."

The Heat will play their first pre-season game Wednesday at New Jersey. The regular season opens Nov. 1.

Pac-10

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Beavers and the Wildcats changed that.

Not only are the Trojans unranked now, but they are on their way to a repeat of last season when they won just three Pac-10 games.

"I think we're not going to know how this team responds to adversity until it plays Arizona," USC coach Paul Hackett said last Friday. "I'm hopeful and I feel good, but they have to show something Saturday."

That said, Hackett probably felt a little sick on Saturday night.

To make matters worse, receiver Kareem Kelly sat out against the Wildcats with nagging injuries, and fellow receiver Marcell Allmond broke his leg in the fourth quarter and is gone for the season.

Instead of playing two seasoned veterans, the Trojans' receiving statistics now depend on Matt Nickels, a nonscholarship athlete, and freshman Keary Colbert, who had six receptions for 113 yards on Saturday.

At least USC still has Carson Palmer in good health. His injury early last season set the tone for the Trojans' soon-to-have disap-

pointments. Oh yeah, his injured shoulder was sustained in his team's triple-overtime loss to the Ducks.

Dawg tired

The Huskies kept themselves in the Rose Bowl race by taking care of business against a passionate Oregon State team. But will the bruising win hurt the Dawgs in the long run?

"It was a costly victory," Washington head coach Rick Neuheisel said. "We've got a lot of guys who are nicked and banged up, to the extent I don't know. The team was certainly fired up and excited from the victory, but there wasn't much left in the tanks."

Among the most "banged up" Husky is starting fullback Pat Conniff, who could miss the next few weeks with a sprained knee.

Fortunately for Washington, it faces Arizona State, California and Stanford before it plays No. 22 Arizona on Nov. 4 and 13th-ranked UCLA on Nov. 11.

"While people might point to the UCLA game as the reason we didn't go to the Rose Bowl, Arizona State looms every bit as large," Neuheisel said, referring to last season when the Sun Devils upset the Huskies, 28-7.

Tennis

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urday. The team of Menke and Mink lost to Pacific's duo of Thomas Abrahamson and Claus Lindholm 8-6, while Teig and Becker fell to Chase Exxon and Steve Raccioppi of Pepperdine 8-5.

Oregon will have the next three weeks off before competing in the International Tennis Association's Regional tournament in Berkeley, Calif.

The Ducks will face some of the same opponents later in the season. Fresno State, Washington, Pacific and Santa Clara are all on the Oregon schedule.

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