

Wild-card Astros, Roger Clemens rout Atlanta 9-3

NL East champions Atlanta Braves could not shake off Clemens as he won his first-ever Game 1 start

BY PAUL NEWBERRY
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Houston Astros opened this postseason without a bit of concern for the past.

No wonder.

They had Roger Clemens on the mound and a powerful lineup that took the burden off the Killer B's.

Picking up where they left off in the regular season, the wild-card Astros routed NL East champion Atlanta 9-3 in Game 1 of the NL division playoffs Wednesday — a major step toward winning their first postseason series.

Clemens continually pitched out of trouble against the Braves, while Brad Ausmus, Lance Berkman, Carlos Beltran and Jason Lane homered for the Astros, who set a franchise record for runs in a postseason game.

Bagwell finally came through with his first postseason extra-base hit, an RBI double that put the Astros ahead for good in the third inning.

"I enjoy being a part of the offense," said Bagwell, who came in with a career playoff average of .174.

The Astros trailed 1-0 when Ausmus led off the third with the first of Houston's three homers off Jaret Wright, sparking a four-run inning. Bagwell's RBI double was followed by Berkman's two-run homer into the Braves' bullpen.

Beltran knocked out Wright in the

fifth with another two-run homer.

Clemens showed the effects of a stomach virus that kept him from making his last start of the regular season. The Hall of Famer-to-be walked six — all in the first four innings.

But Clemens displayed plenty of grit in winning a Game 1 start for the first time in his storied career.

It worked out fine. Clemens lasted seven innings, threw 117 pitches, gave up six hits and two earned runs, and struck out seven.

When Atlanta loaded the bases in the first on Berkman's error and two walks, Clemens limited the damage to Johnny Estrada's sacrifice fly.

The Braves put runners at second and third with one out in the second. Rafael Furcal, playing just hours after appearing in court on a probation violation stemming from drunk-driving arrest, struck out and Marcus Giles grounded out.

Clemens walked the bases loaded in the third, but escaped by making Charles Thomas look foolish. The rookie flailed at a pitch far out of the strike zone, then took a called third strike over the inside corner.

While Clemens was frustrating the Braves, Wright was watching the ball fly out of the park. After giving up just 11 homers in 32 regular-season starts, he equaled a career high in one game.

Golf: Ducks 10 strokes behind Cowgirls

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Much like Oregon, Southern California leap-frogged Pepperdine with a 301 finish to find themselves in third at 605 before the last day of the tournament. Pepperdine sat in fourth place, trailing by nine strokes.

Heading into the final day, Washington State continued its upstart ways and moved ahead of No. 2 Washington (617) on the leaderboard, with a score of 615. Stanford (620) trailed Washington in seventh place by five strokes followed by San Francisco (622), UNLV (625), BYU (627), California (628), Long Beach State (629), Oregon State (657) and Stirling (Scotland) (687).

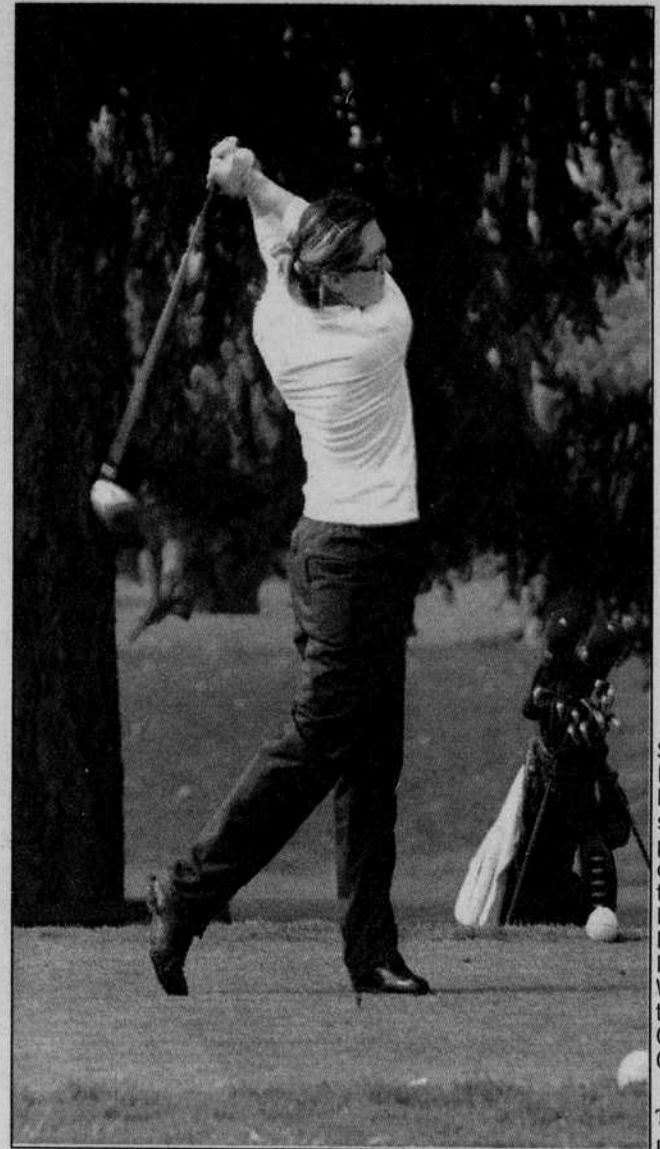
For the Ducks, the magic number was seven — the amount of strokes that separated them from the first-place Cowgirls.

In the first round Monday, Nealy was one of Oregon's top-10 finishers after carding a 1-over 73, good enough to tie for second place. McCready and Andrews joined Nealy in the top 10 going into Tuesday's play. McCready shot a 2-over 74, placing her in a tie for fifth, whereas Andrews's finished tied for ninth at 3-over 75. Andrews penciled an eye-sore triple bogey on the par-4 seventh hole but rebounded with two birdies to keep pace with Veronica Felibert of Southern California.

Oregon's highest counter of the day went to junior Michelle Timpani, who found herself in a tie for 25th place after finishing at a 6-over 78.

The first round belonged to No. 8 Oklahoma State (296). The Cowgirls finished first as a team and featured individual first-place leader Karin Sjodin, who shot a 2-under 70. Nealy would trail Sjodin by three strokes going into the second round. Oklahoma State enjoyed a comfortable two-stroke lead over Pepperdine — sitting two strokes ahead of the Ducks in second place.

Aside from non-conference oppo-



Senior Johnna Nealy, seen here last season, placed a career-high third in the Edean Ihlanfeldt Invitational Wednesday at the Sahalee Golf and Country Club.

TIM BOBOSKY
PHOTOGRAPHER

nents, the Ducks finished the first round atop the seven total Pacific-10 Conference teams at the tournament. The Ducks topped Southern California, who finished fourth at 303, followed by No. 20 Stanford at fifth with

308. Washington tied Washington State for sixth at 310 to round out the top 10 for Pac-10 teams.

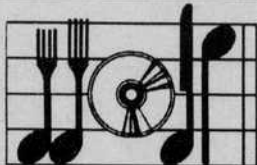
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