

Rivera, Yankees cool off Red Sox win ALCS opener

Despite arriving late from a funeral in Panama, closer Mariano Rivera quieted Boston's comeback

BY RONALD BLUM
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — Mariano Rivera showed up just in time to save the New York Yankees.

Shortly after jetting back from a funeral for relatives in Panama, baseball's greatest closer stopped the surging Boston Red Sox, who had cut an eight-run deficit to one.

Rivera got Kevin Millar to pop out to strand the tying run at third base in the eighth inning, then finished out a thrilling 10-7 win for the Yankees in Tuesday night's opener of the American League Championship Series.

Hideki Matsui tied an ALCS record with five RBIs, four off Curt Schilling. Mike Mussina was perfect through six innings before Mark Bellhorn doubled on a drive that hit the left-field wall on a hop with one out in the seventh and Bernie Williams drove in three runs, including a two-run double in the eighth that gave Rivera some breathing room.

For much of the night it seemed like a laugh, with the Yankees ahead 6-0 by the third and 8-0 in the sixth. But after Bellhorn's hit on Mussina's 86th pitch, the stubby faced pitcher's huge curveball quickly became hittable.

Millar hit a two-run double with two outs and scored on a single by Trot Nixon. Tanyon Sturtze relieved and Jason Varitek hit a two-run homer on his third pitch, pulling the Red Sox to 8-5.

David Ortiz made it 8-7 with a two-run triple in the eighth off Tom Gordon, who would have been the Yankees' closer had Rivera not been

back and ready. Ortiz's drive to left-center bounced off the glove of Matsui near the top of the wall, and the crowd got up to welcome Rivera, perhaps the biggest factor in New York's six AL pennants and four World Series titles since 1996.

He had returned to his native country Sunday after two relatives were electrocuted in the swimming pool of his home, and arrived back at the ballpark in the second inning after a private plane arranged by the Yankees took him to Teterboro Airport in New Jersey.

Given a huge ovation by the sell-out crowd of 56,135, he fell behind 2-1 to Millar, who popped the next pitch to shortstop Derek Jeter behind second base.

Williams doubled in the bottom half off Mike Timlin, a ball that soared over Manny Ramirez in left.

Varitek and Orlando Cabrera singled with one out in the ninth, bringing up Bill Mueller, whose two-run homer off Rivera beat the Yankees at Fenway Park on July 24. Mueller hit a comebacker that Rivera turned into a game-ending double play, and the Yankees came on the field, a few of them hugging the reliever who earned his 31st postseason save.

Pedro Martinez pitches for the Red Sox on Wednesday night against Jon Lieber. Martinez is sure to be reminded by fans of his remark last month that the Yankees are his "daddy."

Mussina, assuming the ace role on a rotation that's struggled, ended New York's streak of losses in four straight playoff openers, striking out eight and allowing four runs and four hits in 6 2/3 innings.

Volleyball: Four Pac-10 teams fall in polls

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the Pacific-10 Conference. Mason has recorded consecutive double digit totals in kills in all five league matches.

Kelly Russell, last season's kills leader for the Ducks, is averaging only 2.41 kills per game over the last five matches. The junior outside hitter has 174 kills on the season and has played in 51 of 52 games this year.

Libero Katie O'Neil holds an average of 4.55 digs per game, good for fourth in the conference. O'Neil's career average was 2.25 coming into this season. The senior posted a career-best 27 digs against Arizona State. She sits in sixth among Pac-10 active career leaders in digs with 792 behind Allison Lawrence (797) of Oregon State.

The Ogonna factor

Stanford's Ogonna Nnamani was named the Pac-10 Player of the Week for the second time in four weeks and the fourth time in her career.

The senior outside hitter has 1,955 career kills, the most among active players in the conference, and third on the all-time list. She surpassed Logan Tom's career mark of 1,939 career kills to become Stanford's all-time leader in kills.

Nnamani finished the Cardinal's road trip last week with a combined total of 60 kills (7.50 per game) against No. 2 USC and No. 10 UCLA.

She tallied 24 kills and nine digs in a 3-1 loss to USC. Nnamani then posted a career-high 36 kills and hit at a .385 clip against UCLA. Her 14 digs in that match gave her a double-double, her sixth of the season. She has accrued a team-best 328 kills this season.

Sophomore outside hitter Kristin Richards leads the Cardinal with nine double-doubles, which is second in the Pac-10.

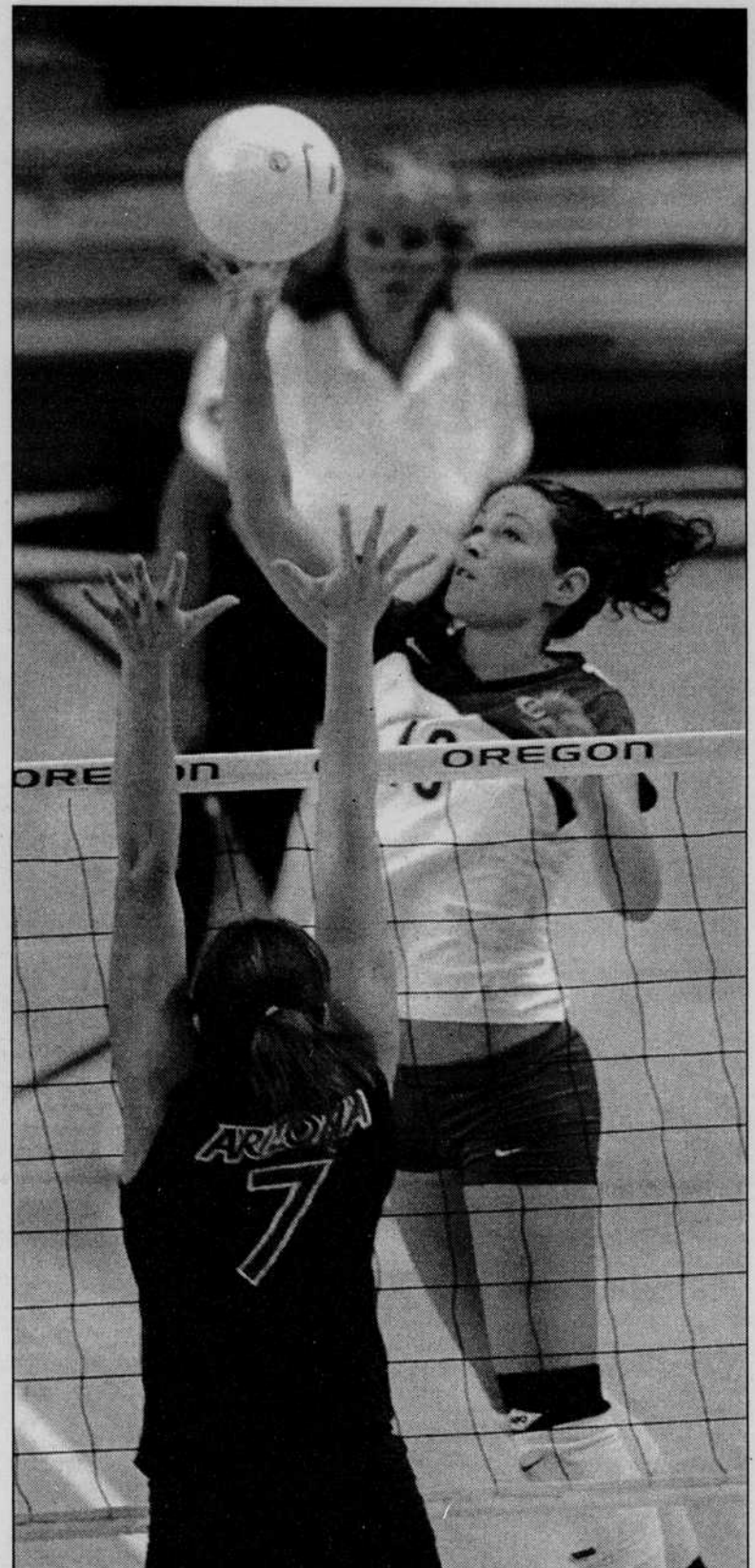
She also leads the team with 3.76 digs per game and 21 solo blocks. Richards is second on the Stanford squad with 227 kills, averaging 3.91 per game.

Up and down

Four of the five Pac-10 teams ranked in the most recent USA Today/CSTV Top 25 poll have lost some footing.

Washington, for the second straight week, is perched atop the list. The Huskies received 63 of a possible 65 first-place votes; No. 3 Hawaii was given the other two. No. 6 USC fell from the second spot after losing to California last weekend.

No. 11 UCLA and No. 22 Arizona each moved down on the list. No. 12 Stanford moved up from No. 14, with No. 13 California jumping four spots from No. 17.



ERIK R. BISHOFF | PHOTOGRAPHER

Outside hitter Kelly Russell is third in kills for Oregon with 174 this season. Russell has only landed 41 of them throughout five Pac-10 Conference matches.

Filling seats

Washington is the lone Pac-10 team to own an undefeated record in the conference, and is one of four teams in the nation that has yet to suffer a loss. The Huskies are 13-0 overall and 5-0 in the conference.

A record crowd of 3,673 witnessed Friday's intrastate match-up between

Washington and Washington State. That was the largest audience for a Pac-10 volleyball match this season, dwarfing the previous attendance record of 1,917 (USC at Arizona on Oct. 2) and doubling the Oct. 1 fan count at the Bank of America Arena — 1,812 versus Oregon.

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