

# Touching all the bases: reviewing the season so far

By **EDDY LANDRETH**  
Sports Editor

July 4 marks the birth of our nation and the traditional midway point of the major-league season, and now seems the appropriate time to assess the action to date.

Once again, last year's winners are proving success is indeed a difficult thing with which to live.

The World Champion Kansas City Royals are the nearest to first place of any of the previous year's division winners and they are playing below 500.

Royal pitcher Bret Saberhagen won the American League Cy Young award as the league's top pitcher last year after winning 20 games. This year, he has four wins and 10 losses, a much larger contract and a steady stream of hate mail.

Toronto, last year's American League East winner, is the only

reigning division champion with a winning record, yet they are further out of first place than the Los Angeles Dodgers, who lie wallowing in last place in the National League West. Such are the rewards for being a member of baseball's toughest division.

The battered and bruised Dodgers could still make a comeback, but they would have to do it from a wheelchair: all but two of their original starting fielders are on the disabled list. Manager Tom Lasorda is fond of saying he would go to war with his team — they appear as if he did.

The most surprising collapse may be that of the St. Louis Cardinals. The Cardinals arguably had the best team in baseball for the better part of last year, regardless of the World Series loss. This year they have taken a mental hike. This crowd appears to have lost all conception of how

the game is played. It is difficult to understand how such a team could totally disintegrate.

So much for past glory and present misery.

The Boston Red Sox and the New York Mets continue their methodic march to October.

The Red Sox still lead the league in Earned Run Average, which is a minor miracle playing in Fenway Park. They added a reknown arm to their staff with the acquisition of future-hall-of-famer Tom Seaver.

Red Sox third baseman Wade Boggs is having what would be a career season for most players, but it is just another year at the office for Boggs.

Met pitcher Dwight Gooden has been repeatedly questioned as to what his problem is this year, yet he has won ten games and lost only

three, with an ERA of 2.58. Most pitchers in baseball wish they had such problems.

The surprising Texas Rangers are still leading the American League West. It appears these guys are for real. They have had a lot of injuries, yet they keep on winning. The second half of the season will tell the story for the Rangers; just a couple of years ago, they found themselves in this position and proceeded to wilt in the late summer sun.

The National League West is conducting a summer-long celebration of mediocrity. There is an old baseball cliché that says the team leading the division on July 4 will be the eventual champion. In this division all bets are off.

The San Francisco Giants and the

Houston Astros have taken turns in the number one spot all year, but only eight games separate first and last place. Even the last place Dodgers could make a run for the crown.

The team to watch just may be "America's Team," the Atlanta Braves. But, for the Braves to win they are going to have to score runs by the truckload or learn to pitch. Manager Chuck Tanner has done an excellent job keeping the Braves in the hunt, in spite of their pitching and an off year by Dale Murphy.

The Braves traded for Doyle Alexander and Jim Acker from the Toronto Blue Jays in two separate trades in the last week. Maybe this will solve their great pitching dilemma; maybe not, remember Len Barker?

Stay tuned for the second half . . .

## UNC pitcher drafted by Mets

By **RUTH DAVIS**  
Staff Writer

Bill Robinson III spent the past four years pitching for the Carolina baseball team, with the ultimate goal of being drafted by a major-league team.

In June, the 6-foot-5-inch 200-pounder was drafted by the New York Mets — as an outfielder.

Why is he playing the outfield instead of pitching?

"When I went to try out, my arm was hurt, so I tried out as an outfielder," he explained. "Also, I felt I could show my ability better in the outfield than on the mound."

He added, "Since my dad is the Mets' outfield coach and hitting instructor, he could help me with my fielding and hitting."

Robinson admitted that after four years of only pitching in games, batting again would be strange.

"I had been taking batting practice on my own and outfielding on my own, but it will be weird because I haven't faced pitching in an organized game since high school," he said.

In high school Robinson pitched

and played the outfield.

"I first started playing intensely my freshman year in high school," he said. "But my main sport was basketball, until I hurt my knee. Then I concentrated on baseball."

He admitted, "I didn't know about the Carolina baseball program until coach Mike Roberts got in touch with me. Then, on a recruiting trip, I fell in love with the school."

With his long, lean build, Robinson could have been easily mistaken for a Carolina basketball player.

"Once when B.J. Surhoff and I were playing basketball in Carmichael," he said, "the assistant coach for the J.V. team asked us to play on the team." Robinson declined the offer because he thought it would take too much of his time, and he wanted to concentrate on baseball.

The weekend before the draft, May 30-June 1, Robinson drove from Chapel Hill to Shea Stadium in New York City for his tryout.

"My father is an influential member in the Mets organization and he arranged a tryout with the scouting director," he said. "It was a 'special-case' tryout. I wasn't drafted

for it. I was invited to try out before the draft."

For the tryout Robinson had to run a 60-yard dash, take batting practice, and face a "live-pitcher," which is batting against the pitchers who are trying out in a game situation.

He said, "The coaches were impressed because in the 60-yard dash I made the best time of anyone there."

Of the 45 players who tried out for the team, only two or three were picked, he said.

On June 28, two days before his 22nd birthday, Robinson went to Little Falls, N.Y., to play in the New York-Pennsylvania Baseball League, which is a minor league.

During the first session of summer school, Robinson took his last class for his bachelor's degree in physical education.

"If baseball doesn't work out," he said, "I'll go into sports medicine as a trainer. To do that, I would have to get eight months of practical experience to go along with my degree."

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