



AARON AT BAT

Playing in the Heat

Like most baseball players, I prefer playing in hot weather to those chilly games early in the season. I played in Milwaukee for the first 12 years in the major leagues, and they have just two seasons up there, spring and winter. Having grown up in Mobile, Ala., and then playing minor league ball at Jacksonville, Fla., I had to adapt to the weather in Milwaukee. I've known players in chilly games to be afraid to swing the bat because they would get that buzz in their hands if they didn't hit the ball just right.

But just as the cold can affect a ballplayer's performance, so can the heat. As the season progresses deep into summer, the temperature and humidity can become factors in the game.

Some players who get off to slow starts in the spring become known as hot weather players. When the weather heats up, so do their bats. This seems particularly true of players from really hot countries such as the Dominican Republic.

The manager of a team has to be very careful when his team is playing in a ballpark where the temperature and humidity are both in the 90s. Pitchers suffer the most, and the manager has to watch and see how many pitches are thrown.

When the heat is really bad, the average major league pitcher may be able to throw only about 100 pitches effectively. After that, he can lose his "good stuff" quickly and be in trouble before a relief pitcher can warm up. The manager has to have his bullpen ready from the sixth inning on.

The catcher also takes a beating in hot weather. He's back of the plate with all that equipment strapped on his body. He's standing or squatting on bare ground without a blade of grass under him to soak up any of the heat.

On a really hot day, I would much prefer playing on natural grass. There is no question that it gets a great deal hotter on artificial surfaces. I'd say the difference is easily 10 or 15 degrees, and on a day when it's 95 or 100, that is really rough on the players.

Thinking back on all the cities and ballparks I played in, I'd say St. Louis had to be the hottest in the major leagues. There, you really had the combination of heat and humidity.

Willie Mays and I were talking the other day about an All-Star game in St. Louis that went into extra innings. We were the only two players to stay in the game all the way. And boy was it hot! The television crew had to pack their cameras in ice to keep them from exploding.

After a series in St. Louis, it was nice to get back to Milwaukee and be rejuvenated by some cool weather. **li**

Hank Aaron is the top home run hitter of all time with 755 homers. A member of baseball's Hall of Fame, Hank is vice president of the Atlanta Braves.

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Russel Sets New World Mark

Charlotte's Joe Russel set a world record in winning a weightlifting gold medal Tuesday in the Stoke-Mandaville Games in Alsbury, England.

Competing in the 132-pound class for wheelchair athletes, Russel lifted 308 pounds.

Another Charlottean, Kater Cornwell, won the heavyweight division with a lift of 375 pounds.

S.C. State Signs Six For Track Teams

ORANGEBURG, S.C. - South Carolina State has signed six track and field prospects to grants-in-aid.

Head track Coach Robert Johnson announced the signing of sprinter and hurdler Angela Crawford of Madison, Ga., sprinter and hurdler Melody Epps of Tallahassee, Fla., and distance runner Teresa Mills of Winter Park, Fla.

Also, Cedric Crumbley, a distance runner of Winder, Ga.; half-miler Sanders Hightower of Pensacola, Fla., and sprinter Michael Ketchup of Augusta, Ga.

Crawford owns a 11.9 and 24.5 clocking, respectively, in the 100 and 200 meters. Epps has run the 100 in 11.8 and has been timed in 14.7 in the 110 meter hurdles.

Crumbley has covered the mile in 4:26 while Hightower has been clocked at 4:06 at 1500 meters and in 1:53 in the half-mile. Ketchup has a 10.4 clocking in the 100 meters and a 21.4 in the 200.

Volleyball Leagues

The Charlotte Parks and Recreation Dept. is sponsoring registration for its fall volleyball league.

Registration began Wednesday and continues to Aug. 22. Registration is \$150 and can be paid by mail only.

Thirteen leagues with eight teams each will be formed. Play will run from Sept. 18 to Nov. 16. For more information, contact the Parks and Recreation Dept. at 336-2584.

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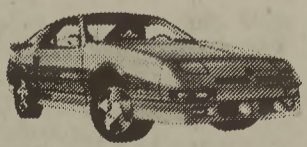




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