

Lakers have more than loss to deal with

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Los Angeles Lakers have a lot to dwell on - the least of which being why they were so badly beaten by the Sacramento Kings.

After being criticized by his coach for thinking too much about scoring, Kobe Bryant took just one shot in the first half of a 102-85 loss to the Kings on Sunday.

"I've never seen Kobe take just (one shot)," said teammate Gary Payton, who had 15 points. "I don't think any of us came to play, and this is the outcome that happened."

Bryant insisted he wasn't avoiding shots - even though that seemed obvious to everybody else at Arco

Arena. After finishing with eight points on 3-of-13 shooting, he praised the Kings' defense, which has been among the NBA's worst this season.

"They doubled me every time I touched the ball," said Bryant, who scored at least 34 points in each of his last five games against Sacramento. "So I just moved the ball, waiting for the game to kind of open up. I've done that before when teams have doubled me."

Shaquille O'Neal also struggled in the first half, getting two quick offensive fouls and taking just one shot for Los Angeles, which lost for the third time in four

games - their worst stretch since the All-Star break. O'Neal finished with 10 points and five rebounds, then risked another one-game suspension for using an expletive in a postgame interview.

O'Neal, banned for a game in February for cursing during an on-court TV interview, used a profanity when saying he was "not impressed" with the Kings' play.

Chris Webber had 25 points and 12 rebounds for Sacramento, which led by as many 21 in the first half. The rout of their division rival was quite a turnaround for

the Kings, who won for only the fourth time in 10 games.

Doug Christie added 21 points and played tough defense on Bryant. Sacramento needs just one more win or one Lakers loss to clinch its third straight Pacific Division title and the second seed in the playoffs.

"I can't really take credit for the defense on Kobe," Christie said. "First of all, it was a great gameplan from the coaches. Then, guys were helping me when he was putting the ball on the floor. ... He's a smart player. I was thinking he would pick his time to start shooting, but the guys stayed with me."

Retro becoming more common in baseball parks

By Ben Walker

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

PHILADELPHIA - Barry Larkin is a big fan of ballparks. Heck, he even named his oldest daughter after a favorite place to play - she's Brielle D'Shea, as in Shea Stadium.

So what did he think after walking into Citizens Bank Park, the latest in baseball's ever-growing collection of old-style fields?

"Sure are a lot of them," the longtime Cincinnati shortstop said Monday.

And how. Coors Field. PNC Park. Jacobs Field. Plus plenty more, now that Petco Park in San Diego and this new ballyard in south Philadelphia opened.

Brick-and-steel facades. Double- and triple-decked grandstands. Oddly angled outfield walls. Pretty to look at, comfortable to play inside.

Only one problem: There are so many, this retro thing might be getting a bit old.

"Who knows? Maybe these will be the cookie-cutter stadiums of their day," Hall of Famer Mike Schmidt said.

Fact is, almost half the parks in the majors fit the mold started by Camden Yards. Built a dozen years ago, commissioner Bud Selig called the Baltimore ballpark and the trend it started "one of the most important developments in baseball in the 20th century."

"It changed it for everybody. As a result of Camden

Yards, everybody has done something," Selig said while the Phillies were losing their opener to the Reds 4-1.

Cute, cozy and far removed from the huge concrete bowls and domes that once sprung up and seemed to be the wave of the future, these new homes have changed the landscape - and language - in the majors.

On hand for the Phillies' opener, Reds chief operating officer John Allen was asked whether he was excited to see another new stadium.

"Ah, they're not stadiums," he said. "They're parks. I have to correct my people on that sometimes."

No matter that the public-address announcer for the opening ceremonies at Citizens Bank Park welcomed a U.S. Navy parachute team to "Citizens Bank Stadium."

Indeed, there has not been a ballpark built for a big league team that contained the word "Stadium" in more than a quarter-century. That was Olympic Stadium and even though the Montreal Expos moved in, the 1976 Summer Games got to use it first.

Compare that to 1980, when 19 of the 26 stadiums actually included the name "Stadium."

These days, that's a dirty word. During the ballpark boom that's taken over - nearly 20 baseball-only fields built in the last 20 years - retro is the only way to go. With or without a retractable roof, too.

Miller Park. Pac Bell Park. The Ballpark in Arlington, the Great American Ball Park.

"Everybody wants to have some old-style ballpark," Schmidt said.

Schmidt played his entire Phillies career at Veterans Stadium, and a statue at Citizens Bank honors him.

In his era, the Vet, Riverfront Stadium, Three Rivers Stadium and Busch Stadium were the talk of baseball. Multisport bowls erected between 1966-71, they were built to last forever.

"I thought it was state-of-the-art. They thought it was a pretty neat idea," Schmidt said.

Driving into town Sunday night toward the site where the Vet recently was reduced to rubble by a demolition team, Schmidt had mixed feelings.

"I was thinking it's going to feel funny with the big flying saucer not really there," he said. Yet he added, "It's really hard to get attached to a big concrete circle like that."

Mostly because those stadiums really did look alike.

"If you had too much to drink, you'd have a hard time knowing where you were," Selig said.

Selig loves the renaissance of the retro parks and insists they'll all be different. And there some unique touches.

The warehouse beyond the right-field wall in Baltimore. The train whistle at Safeco Field, the mini-train atop the left-field wall in

Houston. The rivers in Cincinnati and Pittsburgh, the bay in San Francisco.

At San Diego, the Western Metal Supply Co. building, a 95-year-old brick warehouse, helps create the left-field corner. At Philadelphia, there's a giant Liberty Bell in center field that will light up for Phillies home runs.

Before the Phillies' opener, Hall of Fame pitcher Robin Roberts wandered around Citizens Bank Park, where he's also honored with a statue.

Roberts smiled, recalling when the Astrodome and the Vet were undeniably baseball's best show places. He remembered pitching for the Phillies when they played at Connie Mack Stadium, and made trips to the long-gone, hallowed palaces of Ebbets Field, Forbes Field and the Polo Grounds.

"There was a lot of nostalgia at those stadiums," he said, "but none of them were any good. Not compared to these."

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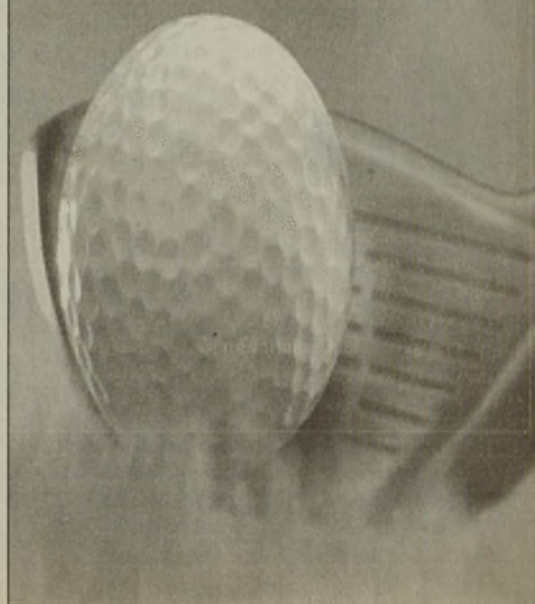
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CIAA upstarts look to top favorites

Continued from page 1C ruled the CIAA since 1992, but Livingstone's Jordan Vaden has the nation's fastest collegiate time in the 200 meters at 20.63 seconds.



Vaden

• Golf (starts Thursday at Sunset Hills Golf Course):

This should be a race to finish second behind powerhouse Fayetteville State. N.C. Central, Smith and Virginia Union have enjoyed varying amounts of success in league play. Fayetteville's Steve Wright and J.C. Smith's Chris Parker are among the top individual players.

• Baseball (starts Thursday at Victory Christian School, final at 1 p.m. Saturday):

Virginia State (13-14, 9-2 CIAA) has been the top base-

ball team in terms of consistency, but Elizabeth City State (14-9, 6-2) is expected to offer a challenge. Despite a 9-14 record, St. Aug's (4-3 CIAA) has the potential to be a dark horse challenger.

• Softball (starts Thursday at Hornets Nest Park, final 1

a.m. Saturday):

Winston-Salem State (18-7, 15-1) and Shaw (14-13, 14-2) are the teams to beat, but Virginia State (13-19, 11-7) and Fayetteville (13-20, 12-6) have the potential to pull off an upset.

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