

Triple-A Bulls top visiting Devil Rays in exhibition

DURHAM — Steve Cox hit two home runs and Scott Aldred pitched three scoreless innings as the Durham Bulls defeated their new parent club, the expansion Tampa Bay Devil Rays, 5-2 in exhibition baseball Monday.



A crowd of 10,013 welcomed Triple-A baseball to North Carolina as Tampa Bay visited its top affiliate en route from Florida to play the Detroit Tigers. The Bulls had been a Class A club of the Atlanta Braves since 1980 before switching over to the International League this season.

Cox's first homer was a two-run shot in the bottom of the first off losing pitcher Albie Lopez, the only pitcher on the Devil Rays roster to see action. Cox then blasted a long, solo shot in the eighth after the Devil Rays had closed to 4-2.

"I saw the ball and I felt good, but it doesn't count," said Cox. "It's a lot more fun whenever the big guys get to see ya."

Cox said he received some good-natured ribbing after the game from Tampa Bay manager Larry Rothschild.

"He asked me after the game, 'Where was that all spring?'" Cox said. "I said, 'Come on, give me a break.'"

Wade Boggs and Fred McGriff, two fan favorites, played one inning each for the Devil Rays, who borrowed pitchers and several position players from the Bulls.

The Devil Rays, batting .352 during a 4-2 start to the season, managed just four hits off six pitchers.

"Our guys were a little bit more pumped up than they were," said Bulls manager Bill Evers. "They've got a road trip to go and get to business."

Dave Eiland started and got the win for the Bulls, giving up one unearned run in three innings. Aldred, the former Minnesota Twins left-hander, recorded five strikeouts in three innings and looked sharp.

Brewers sweep Marlins

MIAMI — Jeff Cirillo tied a club record with three doubles and the Milwaukee Brewers completed their first series sweep in the National League, beating the Florida Marlins for the fourth consecutive time Monday, 8-5.

Milwaukee has won five in a row,

while the World Series-champion Marlins have lost six straight since an opening-day victory.

It's the Marlins' longest skid since they dropped seven consecutive games June 30-July 6, 1996, a streak that ended with the firing of manager Rene Lachemann.

Cirillo went 4 for 4 with a single, a walk and two RBIs. His three doubles tied a club record achieved 17 times previously, most recently by Dave Valle on July 24, 1994, against Minnesota.

Florida rookie Mark Kotsay hit his first major-league homer with a man on in the fifth, but the Marlins, who traded away many of their high-paid players during the offseason, were again plagued by poor pitching and shaky defense.

Pirates avoid sweep vs. Mets

NEW YORK — Francisco Cordova struck out eight in seven innings and the Pittsburgh Pirates, with some help from a disputed balk, beat the New York Mets 4-2 Monday.

With New York trailing 2-0, Mets manager Bobby Valentine was ejected in the fourth inning by crew chief Frank

Pulli after Bobby Jones was called for a balk for a pickoff throw to first with first baseman John Olerud a few steps from the base.

Baseball rules say pitchers can't throw to unoccupied bases.

Keith Osik went to second on the balk, took third on a grounder and scored on Tony Womack's single.

Cordova (2-0) allowed five hits and walked none, helping Pittsburgh avoid a four-game sweep. Turner Ward backed him with a two-run single in the first and Freddy Garcia homered in the ninth.

Jones (0-1) gave up three runs and five hits in six innings, walked five and struck out three.

Cubs take 4 from Expos

CHICAGO — Unlike last year, the Chicago Cubs are happy with their early season streak.

Pitcher Mark Clark hit a go-ahead single with two outs in the sixth, and the Cubs won their sixth straight Monday, 3-2 over the winless Montreal Expos.

Chicago, which lost its first 14 games last season, is an NL-best 6-1. That's the fastest start for the Cubs since they began 1985 7-1.

Montreal, which purged most of its veterans to save money, is the only winless team in the majors at 0-6 and set a franchise record for worst start.

Mark Grace added an RBI double for the Cubs, who swept a series from an NL team for the first time since Sept. 25-27, 1995, when they took three games from St. Louis at Wrigley Field. It was Chicago's first four-game sweep since July 15-18, 1993, against Colorado.

Bagwell's 3 RBIs pace Houston rout

HOUSTON — Jeff Bagwell drove in three runs with a grounder and two-run homer, and the Houston Astros overcame five hits by Dante Bichette to beat the Colorado Rockies 13-4 Monday.

Houston, which outbit the Rockies 15-13, won three of four games against Colorado, outscoring the Rockies 37-13 and outhitting them 51-38.

Colorado, 35-45 on the road last season and 47-34 at Coors Field, finished their first road trip 4-3 and play their home opener against St. Louis on Tuesday night.

Bichette was 5 for 5 with two RBIs, matching his career high for hits and raising his average to .531. It was his first

five-hit game since June 30, 1996, against Los Angeles.

Bagwell had an RBI grounder in the first and hit his third homer of the season in the sixth for a 9-2 lead.

Jack Howell added a two-run, pinch single in a four-run seventh, and Derek Bell went 3 for 5.

Ordonez lifts White Sox past Rangers

CHICAGO — Magglio Ordonez tied the score with a sixth-inning homer and singled home the go-ahead run in the eighth Monday as the Chicago White Sox won their first home opener since 1992, 5-4 over the Texas Rangers.

The smallest crowd for a home opener in 23 years, 25,358, watched on a chilly 52-degree day at Comiskey Park as the White Sox overcame a 4-1 deficit.

Ordonez's first homer of the season, a solo shot off Bobby Witt in the sixth, tied it 4-4.

With the score 4-4 in the eighth, Frank Thomas singled and Albert Belle doubled for only his third hit in 20 at-bats. Robin Ventura was intentionally walked by Roger Pavlik (0-1) to load the bases, and Ordonez singled to center.

FROM WIRE REPORTS

Smith recommends Ford for Texas job

Courier's win leads U.S. past Russia in Davis Cup

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

AUSTIN, Texas — Former North Carolina basketball coach Dean Smith called Texas athletic director DeLoss Dodds on behalf of UNC assistant Phil Ford, recommending him for the open head coaching job, the Austin American-Statesman reported yesterday.

The opening came when coach Tom Penders resigned last week.

Utah's Rick Majerus is reportedly a leading candidate to take over at Texas.

Other top candidates on the UT's list reportedly include Rick Barnes of Clemson, Bob Bender of Washington and Kelvin Sampson of Oklahoma.

The Austin American-Statesman, cit-

ing an unnamed source close to the selection committee, reported Sunday that Majerus will meet with UT officials about the job.

The panel met Saturday to begin the search for Penders' replacement. Penders resigned after three weeks of controversy that began when



UNC assistant coach PHIL FORD is a candidate for the head coaching job at Texas.

unhappy players met with Dodds.

Majerus led the Utes to the championship game of this year's NCAA tournament. Last week, he rejected a seven-figure offer from Arizona State.

Majerus, 50, makes about \$1 million annually at Utah, with about half coming from endorsements.

Dodds has said UT will not pay its next basketball coach more than the \$750,000 made by new football coach Mack Brown, who left UNC last year. Penders had received \$550,000 annually.

Ford and one other coach interested in the job have received strong recommendations.

Ex-NBA coach John Lucas, a

Durham native, also received an endorsement from a prominent UT booster, according to the American-Statesman.

Dodds declined to name his top candidates.

"I've got real strong feelings about some coaches I want to talk to," he said. "We have a long list, but I guess you can say in my mind there's a short list where we have a real serious interest."

UT guard DeJuan "Chico" Vazquez, a player adviser to the screening committee, met with the group Saturday. Vazquez said that players would like a coach who will keep the full-court style implemented and endorsed by Penders.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

STONE MOUNTAIN, Ga. — Jim Courier saved the United States from Davis Cup elimination.

He rallied from the brink of defeat today to beat 18-year-old Marat Safin 0-6, 6-4, 4-6, 6-1, 6-4, giving the United States a dramatic 3-2 victory over Russia in the first round.

Andre Agassi was beaten in straight sets by Yevgeny Kafelnikov to even the best-of-5 series earlier in the day. Then the Americans seemed headed for their first Davis Cup home loss since 1987 when Courier lost the first eight games against the Russian teenager, ranked No. 170 in the world.

But Courier, a former No. 1 whose skills have declined in recent years, had too much experience and grit for Safin, a Davis Cup rookie who had never played in a five-set match.

After Safin saved two break points with booming serves for deuce, Courier volleyed into position for a slam and won the game when the Russian sent an easy forehand beyond the baseline.

The two players held serve the rest of the way, with Courier sealing the victory when Safin couldn't handle a serve on

double match point. As the return sailed far beyond the court, Courier sank to his knees and was mobbed by captain Tom Gullikson. Soon, Agassi and the rest of the U.S. team piled on.

Safin sat slumped in his courtside chair, consoled by Russian captain Shamil Tarpishev and Kafelnikov.

The Americans have won 31 Davis Cup titles, more than any other country. Their last title came in 1995, when a Pete Sampras-led team beat the Russians in a classic final at Moscow. Now the two countries have another stimulating series to add to their budding rivalry.

The United States advanced to the second round against Belgium, which defeated the Netherlands 3-2.

The Americans have never been beaten in a Davis Cup series when Courier plays, going 11-0. That streak appeared in jeopardy, though, when Agassi lost in singles for the first time since 1990, losing to Kafelnikov 6-3, 6-0, 7-6 (7-3).

After losing the tiebreaker, Agassi slammed his racket to the court, grabbed his bag and hustled to the locker room. His match lasted all of 90 minutes.

"I haven't played a match that poorly in a long time," said Agassi, who had only three break chances — all in the first set — and failed to convert any. "I just didn't find the range on my shots."

But the match turned on more than Agassi's shortcomings. Kafelnikov is one of the world's premier players, and he played like it.

"I was able to place my shots wherever I wanted," he said. "I felt like everything was working for me."



U.S. tennis player ANDRE AGASSI lost his first Davis Cup match since 1990 against Yevgeny Kafelnikov on Monday.

Challengers take aim at Woods at 62nd Masters

■ Tiger Woods won his first Masters title in his first professional try last year.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

AUGUSTA, Ga. — Tiger Woods returned to Augusta National Golf Club the way he left it a year ago — in a class by himself.

For the first three years that Woods came to the Masters, the always-thinking Butch Harmon made certain his star pupil played practice rounds with former champions.

On Monday, Woods returned to Augusta as one of the former champions and fittingly played his practice round alone. It was symbolic of the way he finished last year at the Masters — 12 strokes ahead of his nearest competitor.

Woods' victory was a tribute to his ability, but it was also a tribute to Harmon's brilliant game plan. Local knowledge at Augusta is so important, Harmon wanted to make certain Woods had every opportunity to soak up every bit of information possible.

"There is a route around Augusta," three-time winner Nick Faldo said. "You just have to find it and follow it."

In search of that route, Woods played practice rounds with Jack

Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer, Ben Crenshaw, Seve Ballesteros, Jose Maria Olazabal and other Masters champions.

That was my main purpose in those practice rounds — to have him play with people who know how the greens break, know where the pins will be on Sunday, know what spots you have to hit on the green to have the ball funnel to the hole," Harmon said.

Harmon was the perfect schoolmaster, setting up the curriculum cleverly and selecting the best teachers who shared their insight willingly. And in Woods, he had a pupil whose learning curve is as impressive as his tee shots.

"One of the great things about Tiger is how open he is to information," Harmon said. "He knows that as good as he is, he can't do it on talent alone. He listens and he soaks up information like a sponge."

Faldo said it took him "six or seven Masters" to feel comfortable at Augusta. Woods mastered the layout in one-third that time, shooting a record

18-under-par last year.

There likely is not a better golf course to match Woods' game. Augusta is wide open with no rough, so while his occasional wild tee shots may cost him a bogey, they will not cost him a double bogey or triple bogey like those that did Woods in at the U.S. Open, British Open and PGA Championship last year.

Woods played 10 holes in those three tournaments a total of 24 strokes over par. But he made only seven bogeys all week at Augusta last year and never had a score higher than bogey on any hole.

Watching Woods work his way around Augusta is similar to watching Nicklaus play the course at his peak.

While Augusta may already feel like home for Woods, there are a number of challengers who will give him a run

when the 62nd Masters starts Thursday.

Ernie Els has two firsts, two seconds and two thirds worldwide this year. Justin Leonard was impressive in coming from five strokes back to win The Players Championship.

Lee Westwood, the 24-year-old Englishman who won Sunday in New Orleans, joins Jim Furyk, Phil Mickelson and David Duval in the tier of under-30 players right behind Woods, Els and Leonard.

Woods, however, is here. The whoops and hollers that greeted his arrival on the first tee told that story.

That both his drive and a mulligan landed in the pine needles well right of the fairway said there is still a long way to go until Sunday and a possible second green jacket.

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