

Braves wrap up NL East, beating Mets, 7-1

by Marty Noble
Newsday
September 26, 2000

NEW YORK - Their intent was to eliminate the Mets, come to Shea Stadium, win the first game of this all but after-the-fact, three-game series and remove the last mathematical possibility of the Mets displacing them as division champions.

The Braves did as planned last night, planned their work and worked their plan, as Bobby Valentine likes to say. They eliminated the Mets by winning. It was the Mets who eliminated all doubt even before the 7-1 victory was complete with another subpar performance against the team that brings out their worst.

So the status quo remained Tuesday night in the raw at Shea. The

Braves retained the National League East championship. And the Mets played poorly against the Braves.

Standard operating procedure.

The Mets weren't eliminated by standard baseball means, however. In fact, the Braves' magic number still is one. But because the Braves clinched their season series last night against the Mets (they have won seven of 11 games with games remaining tonight and tomorrow night), the Mets can do no more than finish the regular season with the same overall record.

The record in head-to-head competition is the tie-breaker.

Not all participants were aware of that possibility before the game last night. Braves manager Bobby Cox contacted the NL office to confirm the possibility. Mets management was

aware and hopeful that it wouldn't apply and that a visiting team wouldn't celebrate on their lawn.

But though they gained their ninth straight division championship, the abridged 1994 season excluded, the Braves hardly celebrated. In a very subtle manner, as if it were a victory against the Cubs in July, the Braves gathered and acknowledged each other. They'll celebrate two series from now, if they get that far.

The Mets can, and must, look past this hollow series and to the postseason without hiding their objective.

With their magic number at one, they were awaiting the results of the Dodgers and Diamondbacks games to learn whether they were, in fact, the wild-card entry, for the second straight season.

Now they have five games to prepare for a best-of-five series against the Giants or the Cardinals and not have to bother with the division race.

Given their druthers six months ago, they would have opted for a chance to challenge the Braves. But since their second loss to the Braves last week in Atlanta, the Mets have been in wild-card mode. Last night, it merely became official.

With Mary Wilson in the house to sing "The Star-Spangled Banner," it was the Braves who were Supreme, overwhelming the Mets with three-run rallies in the sixth and seventh innings after they had taken a 1-0 lead against Al Leiter in the fifth inning. It was more than the superiority of the Braves that showed last night. The Mets played poorly as they so often do when the Braves are the opponent.

Justices to hear case of partly disabled pro golfer

by David G. Savage
Los Angeles Times
September 26, 2000

WASHINGTON - The Supreme Court took up the case of partly disabled golfer Casey Martin on Tuesday and said it would rule on whether anti-discrimination laws require sporting events to make special accommodations for disabled athletes.

The Professional Golfers' Association Tour is challenging a judge's order that allows Martin to ride in a golf cart rather than walk the course. The case gives the high court another chance to clarify the reach of the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990.

It is one of 12 cases the Supreme Court added Tuesday to the schedule for its upcoming term. The new cases will be heard in January.

They include tests of the police power to search for drugs and the scope of federal civil rights law. In an Oregon case, the court will decide whether police can use a thermal-imaging device to detect marijuana growing in a house. In an Alabama case, the justices will decide whether Spanish-speaking residents can challenge a state's policy of giving driv-

ers' tests in English only.

The Casey Martin case involves the law passed by Congress to protect the more than 43 million Americans who have mental or physical impairments that affect their ability to live and work. Generally, the law requires employers and owners of public buildings to make reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities.

Because of a rare circulatory disorder that affects his right leg, Martin, 28, finds it painful to walk more than a few steps. But he says that he can compete on the professional golf tour if he can ride in a cart.

"Golf is a game of shot-making, not walking," he said in his legal appeal.

But PGA Tour officials said all tournament golfers must play by the same rules, which includes walking the course, often about five miles a day. It would "fundamentally alter" the nature of the competition if some players could ride rather than walk, the tour officials said.

A federal judge and then the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco rejected that argument, however. "A golf course is a place of public accommodation while the

PGA is conducting a tournament there ... (and) providing a golf cart to Martin was a reasonable accommodation to his disability," said Judge William C. Canby.

In its appeal in the case (PGA Tour vs. Martin, 00-24), the tour's lawyers

attack this reasoning as flawed. A "public accommodation" usually refers to a hotel, restaurant or building that is open to all. While the general public may attend a golf tournament, only a few select players play on the course, they said.

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The rise of the major-college athletic empires

by Gilbert M. Gaul
and Frank Fitzpatrick
Knight-Ridder Newspapers
September 26, 2000

STATE COLLEGE - When Penn State's football team took the field against Toledo in early September, it was a scene steeped in American sporting lore.

The players wore plain blue-and-white uniforms, a nod to their strait-laced coach, Joe Paterno. Beaver Stadium swelled with loyal fans, many of whom had traveled hundreds of miles to take in the game. And in the distance, towering above the south end zone, rose Mount Nittany, hinting of cool autumn evenings and turning leaves.

But look carefully behind that simple, almost pastoral scene and another picture emerges - one colored by the relentless pursuit of money that defines big-time college sports today. Those uniforms include a Nike swoosh, advertising for which the Beaverton, Ore., company paid dearly. Most of the fans are not students but boosters and alumni wealthy enough to shell out thousands of dollars to acquire season tickets. And those lovely hills? Next season, they will be blotted out by a 28,000-square-foot lounge, 58 luxury skyboxes, and a commercial-laden replay screen - part of a \$94 million expansion that will increase Beaver Stadium's capacity to nearly 105,000.

Down on the field, Rashard Casey isn't just a student-athlete. He's an endowed quarterback, whose scholarship is underwritten by a \$250,000 contribution from Kerry Collins, a former Penn State quarterback - the same way a donor would endow a professor's chair in the humanities. It is one of 16 endowed positions on the team, from middle linebacker to tight end to tailback.

Seventy years ago, the Carnegie Foundation warned that commercial-

ism threatened to cast "the darkest blot upon American college sport."

And that prophecy has come to pass - and then some.

At Penn State and scores of other large universities, sports is a multibillion-dollar business fed by corporate sponsorships, television and cable deals, booster payments and advertising.

Games have become marketing tools to promote the college brand and gain national acclaim. Entertaining alumni and boosters has become more important than encouraging enjoyment and participation among students and athletes - the original idea behind college sports.

A flood tide of television and corporate dollars has allowed athletic departments to operate like separate entertainment divisions of their universities, with their own employees and budgets, not subject to the same financial scrutiny as academic departments. Now television networks, boosters and corporate sponsors have as much a stake in a team's success as the university.

That's not to suggest that all schools make money from sports. Most don't, and the gap between the haves and the have-nots is widening. Some schools, like Temple, lose millions each year in an attempt to break into the elite.

A six-month Inquirer investigation of the business of college sports, including a review of the financial records of nearly every major school from Alabama to Yale, found a \$3.5-billion enterprise sheltered from most taxes. It is an enterprise in which profit margins of some powerhouse football and basketball programs dwarf those of Fortune 500 companies.

In the world of big-time college sports:

- Top-tier programs are increasingly selling their names and logos to corporate America in return for millions of dollars in tax-free payments, blurring the lines between professional and

amateur sports.

- Celebrity coaches are paid CEO-type salaries and receive lavish perks, ranging from luxury cars to lakeside homes to memberships in exclusive country clubs. Meanwhile, coaches at some smaller schools earn so little, they qualify for food stamps.

- The cost of putting athletes on the playing fields in big-time programs can run to nearly \$90,000 per athlete annually - about the cost of a fully tenured professor at those schools.

- Buoyed by a boom economy and hefty booster donations, elite athletic programs have been on an unprecedented spending spree, with expenses in the 90s having increased at a rate four times that of inflation.

- At some schools, athletic programs have larger budgets than biology, his-

tory, English and most other academic departments, and the cost of athletic scholarships outpaces merit awards for student scholars.

- Administrative overhead has soared as athletic departments have added battalions of middle-level administrators, advertising and marketing executives, academic advisers, tutors and sports psychologists.

- Schools are engaged in a risky \$4-billion stadium building spree, adding thousands of luxury suites and club seats aimed at attracting well-heeled fans. In the last seven years alone, spending on athletic facilities has increased 260 percent, a recent NCAA study found.

There are still some critical differences between college and professional sports.

Penn State and other schools pay no taxes on the millions they take in from ticket sales, booster payments, television revenue and corporate fees. Boosters also enjoy tax breaks on the donations they make to secure season tickets. In 1988, Congress triggered a flood of such donations by deciding that those payments are the equivalent of charitable contributions, the same as checks to a children's hospital or a homeless shelter.

And unlike the pros, college athletes form an unpaid labor pool, though tremen-

dous pressure is placed on them to win. Of Casey, Paterno said this spring: "There's no one else to get the job done. He's got to get it done."

Paterno has continued to play Casey even though he faces charges of assaulting an off-duty police officer. The coach has expressed confidence that Casey will be exonerated.

A small percentage of athletes are pros-in-training. Penn State's Courtney Brown and LaVar Arrington, the first two picks in the NFL draft last spring, signed contracts worth a combined \$100 million. But most never see a payday.

Athletic programs don't earn profits in the usual sense. The surpluses they generate don't go to shareholders. They are used to cover losses by women's sports and other money-losing sports, to expand facilities and to pay for the ever-growing ranks of middle managers and support staffers.

For most schools, profits are a pipe dream. There is a growing financial gap between large athletic programs like Penn State's, which dominate college sports and receive the most television revenue, and smaller, more modestly funded programs.

Consider that the 114 schools that comprise the big time - Division I-A of the National Collegiate Athletic Association - account for six of every 10 dollars collected by athletic departments each year. That leaves more than 800 schools - think of them as the have-nots - to fight over table scraps.

The athletic programs at those schools often wallow in red ink. Losses are typically made up from student fees and general funds, adding to the cost of tuition.

One could fairly ask what all of this has to do with education, a university's reason for being. In some elite programs, the answer is: not much.

Schools admit athletes with dismal academic records, then spend millions to keep them eligible, in some cases even paying graduate students to make

sure that the athletes attend classes.

Even so, graduation records are an embarrassment at some schools, as low as 13 percent for basketball players entering the University of Cincinnati in 1992. (By contrast, Penn State graduates more than 80 percent of its football and basketball players.) And academic fraud continues to plague major programs, such as those at the University of Minnesota, where an academic adviser admitted to having written scores of term papers for athletes.

"College athletics have been transformed into a multibillion-dollar entertainment industry that has compromised the academic mission of the university," said Jon Ericson, a professor at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa, who heads a group trying to strike a better balance between academics and athletics.

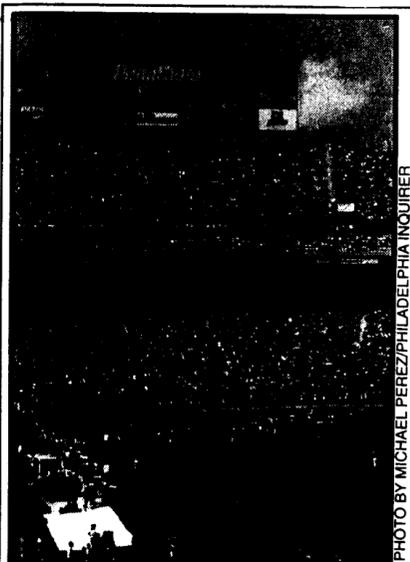
"We're definitely in the entertainment business, and I think we have been for a long time," said Jim Delany, commissioner of the Big Ten Conference. "We're also in the education business and trying to balance it in a way that there are reasonable outcomes. We're not always as successful at that as we would like."

At Penn State, athletics are both a form of entertainment for alumni and boosters and a vital part of student life, according to Graham Spanier, the school's president.

"We're very mindful of maintaining that balance," said Spanier, who spoke with pride of Penn State's ability to juggle athletics and academics.

"I think we come as close as anybody to upholding the principles that have provided the foundation for intercollegiate sports."

As for entertainment, Spanier said: "We want people to come to our events, have a good time, and feel proud. We want them to tune in and watch us on television. To the extent people are proud of Penn State athletics, we believe that enhances the image of the university."



A crowd of 94,296 watches a Penn State football game. A planned stadium expansion will increase seating to almost 105,000. At schools such as Penn State, corporate sponsors, such as the advertisements on the scoreboard, and boosters fund an athletic juggernaut.

PHOTO BY MICHAEL PEREZ/PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER