

Boston tries to catch Toronto

By DAVE O'HARA
AP Sports Writer

BOSTON — One side promises to "fight and scratch." The other vows to "fight to the death."

Get ready for Toronto vs. Boston in a three-game weekend series at Fenway Park that could decide the winner of the American League East.

With six games left in the season, this series has players from both teams talking about what could have been. And what might be.

"Everybody has to wait until the very end," Toronto's Mookie Wilson says. "The series might not decide anything at all. If either of us had been consistent over a month, we'd be ahead."

The Blue Jays, smarting from two straight losses in Milwaukee, were off yesterday, while the Red Sox, a half-game behind the Jays, had to fly to Detroit for a game — a makeup rescheduled because of last spring's training camp shutdown.

"We're gonna fight and scratch and give it everything we've got," said Boston's Mike Greenwell. "If it's meant to be, it will happen."

"It's important for us to go in and just fight, fight to the death," said Toronto pitcher David Wells. "We can't let up."

"It's in our hands, what more can you ask for," Toronto manager Cito Gaston said. "We can't worry about it."

"I'm sure they would like to be four games up and we'd like to be four games up. It just didn't happen that way. In your wildest dreams, would you picture us to be in this situation?" said Boston's Jody Reed.

"It's anybody's ballgame," Greenwell said. "You couldn't ask for a better scenario — unless we beat them three straight and get this thing over with."

The Red Sox led the Blue Jays by 6½ games early this month, an advantage built with a 10-game winning streak that started with three victories in Toronto.

However, after a sweep by Oakland and the loss of Roger Clemens with shoulder tendinitis, the Red Sox went into a swoon. They lost 15 of 21 games, falling 1½ games behind Toronto.

Then, with just their third victory in 11 games, a 7-2 decision over Cleveland on Wednesday, they pulled even with Toronto in the loss column.

"We've been on a pretty good roller coaster ride, haven't we?" Reed asked. "We've been able to keep things in perspective."

The Red Sox have dominated the Blue Jays so far this season, leading the season series 8-2.

The two rivals split two games in Toronto June 19-20, leaving the Blue Jays with a 2-game lead.

Then, on June 25, the Red Sox ended the Blue Jays' 15-game Boston winning streak and went on to a four-game series sweep and a 2½-game lead.

Then, after losing in Toronto on Aug. 23, Boston won the next three games to go from one game ahead to four games in front.

"Up and down," Wilson said. "First place for a day or a week. They're there for a day or a week. It was bound to come down to this."

The Blue Jays expect to have third baseman Kelly Gruber back from a bout with the flu for today's game, while the Red Sox hope to have third baseman Wade Boggs back. Boggs had to leave early because of lower back pain in a game Tuesday night.

Toronto's Dave Steib (18-6) and Boston's Mike Boddicker (16-8) were named to open the series. Steib is 1-0 with a 4.91 ERA in three starts against the Red Sox this year. Boddicker is 1-0 in one start against Toronto.

Clemens (20-6), sidelined since Sept. 4, is scheduled to go Saturday against the Blue Jays' Jimmy Key (12-7). Boston's Greg Harris and Toronto's Bud Black.



Roger Clemens warms up last week while manager Joe Morgan looks on. Clemens has missed recent starts because of shoulder tendinitis but may pitch this weekend.

Pirates see fan support increasing

PITTSBURGH (AP) — The Pittsburgh Pirates, the winningest team in the National League, rank eighth in attendance, but figures can be misleading.

Pittsburgh is the second-smallest city with a National League team. When attendance is measured as a percentage of population, the city supports its team better than all but two of 12 league cities.

Through Sunday, Pirates attendance amounted to the equivalent of 81 percent of the population in nearby Beaver, Fayette, Washington and Westmoreland counties.

In comparison, the New York Mets ranked last, at 14 percent. Cincinnati, which is leading the National League West, was first at 127 percent.

"Obviously we're pleased as punch with the fan response," Pirates President Carl Barger said. "It's obvious we will reach 2 million. Do I think that's the end of it? Absolutely not."

The Pirates have been first place 142 of 169 days this season. A season attendance record was set Tuesday night at 1,870,640, eclipsing the former high by 3,927 fans with five home games remaining.

The Pirates must compete against larger, more lucrative markets when negotiating contracts for players eligible for free agency. Free agents after this season will include Zane Smith, Sid Bream, Wally Backman, Ted Power, Gary Redus, Don Slaught and Rafael Belliard. Bobby Bonilla and Andy Van Slyke will be eligible after next season and Barry Bonds and Doug Drabek after 1992.

Attendance plays a big part in the financial success of a franchise. In 1988, when the Pirates set an attendance record, home game receipts and concessions accounted for \$13.8 million, or 53 percent of total revenue. The previous year, with 705,520 fewer fans, attendance brought in \$8,814,969, or 44 percent of total revenues.

"That's the scary part," Barger said. "We need to continue to grow and have stability in the franchise so we're not totally dependent on being in first place."

'Shebilske method' may help athletes who choke under pressure

By JACK KEEVER
AP Sports Writer

COLLEGE STATION, Texas — It's not always the successes that are engraved in the minds of sports fans. The failures have their own place in history.

Who can forget watching the ball roll under Bill Buckner's glove, and the World Series slipping away from the Boston Red Sox?

Or hometown idol Carl Yastrzemski popping up to end that 1978 playoff game, making a hero of Bucky Dent and a pennant-winner of the hated Yankees?

This year, baseball's best known chokers have seen a 6½-game lead in the American League East evaporate, although the Red Sox are just a half-game back of the Blue Jays and still have hope.

Maybe they should also have Wayne Shebilske. The psychology professor at Texas A&M says he has developed the "Shebilske maneuver" to prevent athletes from "choking" under pressure. By learning to perform well in clutch situations,

stars could become superstars, Shebilske says.

"I feel I can make a difference," Shebilske said, by developing a routine styled for each individual.

"I think I can improve . . . not so much the overall batting average but getting a hit when the stakes are high."

Getting rid of butterflies is not the answer; harnessing that pent-up energy is, Shebilske said in an interview.

In short, he says, "calm down and pay attention."

"I believe that the . . . mind causes neurological lies," he said.

"I think those neurological lies can be reduced somewhat by the people who work with the team's mental attitude and coach those people to calm down."

"My goal is to get the athlete so that they have their swing when they need it, and they have it even when their internal environment changes due to game conditions."

"Game conditions can range from emotional intensity to very high temperatures, low temper-

atures; early in the game, late in the game; over-all fatigue versus temporary fatigue."

Shebilske said this is where feedback comes into play, and feedback is not all that mysterious.

"It can be such things as the feel of the bat in the hand isn't quite right. It can be the tug of the sleeve on the hand as the bat comes around, the feeling of the shirt," he said.

Superstars use such feedback without thinking to give the brain information it needs to compensate for stressful circumstances, Shebilske said.

"What I think I can do at that point is to teach people to cope with those neurological lies," he said.

Shebilske said he did not have time in high school in Appleton, Wis., for organized sports because he had to work to earn money for college.

Also, former Pittsburgh Steeler running back Rocky Bleier was a schoolmate, "and I got to see the kind of body and soul it took to be an athlete and realized I would do better to devote that same kind of energy to school," Shebilske said.

His interest in amateur athletics, he said, was

mostly as a coach, umpire and spectator, including at minor league baseball games in Appleton.

Shebilske is cautious about details of his technique, presumably because if it is successful, it could have commercial value.

But he listed steps as: identify a short training procedure to perfect a skill, and practice the procedure during game conditions "close to actual performance time in both high- and low-tension situations."

"I think I can prevent choking by getting batters to change what they do in the on-deck circle, when they step out of the batter's box — better things they can do to make use of those moments," Shebilske said.

The key is to get players to use the procedure without thinking.

"I'm just helping nature do what it already does. Nature already thrives on variability," Shebilske said.

As for the Red Sox, Shebilske harkened back to his early work on the effects of "head tilt" on a batter's swing.

"Keep your chin up," he said.

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PERSONALS

CAROLINE, HAPPY BIRTHDAY. Simple and no sap!!! Love, Mike.

CHAR BLUECHEESI, I am cheesy. Can't believe it's true. 21 you are the one, wish I could be there too. Happy Birthday Saturday night my little dance fever. Love, Cam.

CONGRATULATIONS TO the stir fried wassels on their first of many victories this year. Your loyal fans.

C.DAVID HAVE A happy birthday! Live it up! You still have to beat me at hoops! Slam dunk Prask!

DAVE B. "OPIE" HAPPY twentieth you shroomer! Have a great weekend. Remember: "Say no to the draft and yes to draught." Tom

DAVID, WE'VE BEEN through good times as well as bad and we're still together! We must have what it takes baby! Happy Anniversary-one year, the second time around! I love you! Julie.

DEAR VICKY-HAPPY Birthday! Words can't say how special you are to me: To my favorite partner! Love in Jesus, Warren.

FRANK FROM CROW-I think I'm the 2nd hardest person to get a hold of! Please call. Your football partner.

GIRL TRAVELING FROM PSU to turnpike exit 23, Friday 9/21, 6:00 p.m. I exercised poor judgement; should've followed: sorry. How can we meet? Guy in blue/silver Bronco.

GREG, HAPPY 20TH! I hope it's the best ever! Here's to a fantastic weekend! I love you! Steph.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY VIDYA, and thanks for everything. The one and only Houston boy. P.S., Depeche Mode rules. Ni. Mohamie!!

HAPPY 21ST BIRTHDAY Lou! Remember you'll always be our "cuddles!" Love always, Beth and Elenie.

INTERESTED BLONDE: YOU are the one! If interested, come to 127 White anytime between 11:15 and 2:00 on Friday (or Monday). Guy wearing orange tie-dye

JEFF, I FEEL the same way you do. What are we going to do about it? Leslie.

KAREN, HERE'S THE personal I promised. If you'd like more than a personal, reply with a personal. If not, see you at Zeno's. George.

KATHY, WE'VE HAD our problems, but all things considered, it's been the best two years ever! I love you! Paul.

LISA, HAPPY BELATED Birthday. I'm sorry that I missed it. Someday I will buy you a birthday drink. Love, Red.

LOST SOFTBALL PLAYER with friend and dog. Talked last Thursday. I was helpful umpire. Would like to continue conversation over dinner. Reply personals.

MICHELLE FROM MCELWAIN HFS, you burned yourself on Wed. 9/26 and you told me about it. Sorry about your burn. How about going out to dinner. Reply personals, Tom.

M&M- LET'S HAVE a ball at the party tonight! Party time dude! Next time this will be better. Love, Turtle.

PEGGY SUE:THE time has come, are your lips numb? Happy 21st and ode to a real good year. Now you don't have to run from the cops. Laine, Auge, Diane, Mich.

PEP, I HAVEN'T shown it, but I do and will support whatever you decide for now and the future. As a friend, I'll drive or just ride along any road you travel. RGL.

STACELINA EZEMERELDA- HAPPY birthday to one of the bestest friends ever! Have fun-do lots of "bonding"! I love ya! -The Girl Longing For Cake

TERRI, TERRI QUITE very merry, how will you celebrate turning 21? With beer, shots of liquor, Red Devils too! And Jodi, Michele, and Jessi who all love you!! Happy 21st Terri!

TO GIRL I met by candy machines in Findlay on Sunday night 9-23. Would like to get to know you better. Respond to personals. The guy who couldn't get his whatchamacallit bars out of the machine.

TO S- CANDLES are expensive but not out of reach. Even if you don't get them you'll get the promise that comes with them. I love you! Gellybean

TO: SLY AS a fox, remember the following: shaving cream and razor. Love, Me.

TO THE GUY from the dugout on the night of June 1st. Hope that your birthday can be half as wonderful as that.

TO THE BROTHERS of Pi Kappa Phi: We'd like to say the time has arrived; while off to nowhere land we drive. To your dismay, the house is a mess; but you'll surely miss us, you must confess!! Your Little Sister Pledge Class of 1990

WOMAN IN RED, you grew your hair just for the yearbook. I had a nice time talking with you. Would like to talk again over dinner. Reply Personals. Bearded man.

ZUMVAR MY LOVE! Please forgive my mad obsessions. How we make truce for good? Zumvette

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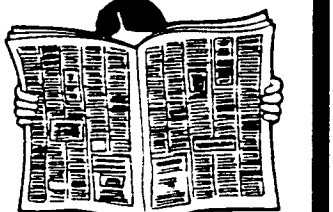
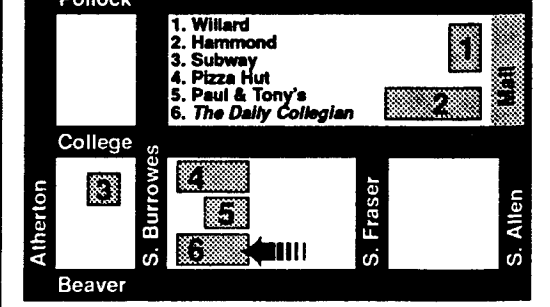
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