

SPORTS

Coyotes in squabble with centre

PHOENIX (AP) — Russian centre Alexei Zhamnov and the Phoenix Coyotes are engaged in a faceoff away from the ice.

"Alex won't be coming back," agent Ron Salcer said Wednesday. "We've requested that they trade him."

Bobby Smith, executive vice-president of the team which officially moved here July 1 from Winnipeg with a new name, a new head coach, new owners and mostly new executives, doesn't think that will happen.

"He's a very gifted player, and we feel he's going to be in our lineup this season," Smith said.

Zhamnov, 25, has missed 63 regular-season games over the last four years, including 24 last season after a vicious hit. A problem related to a disk in his lower back accounted for the rest.

He earned \$1.25 million Cdn last season.

For his career, Zhamnov has 103 goals and 164 assists in 187 games, and earned second-team all-star honors in the 48-game 1994-95 season.

Zhamnov handles the puck well and is an outstanding skater with great lateral movement, and with solid play-making skills. But he's earned a bad reputation for missing all those games.

As a Group II free agent, he can entertain offers from any team. The Coyotes have the right to match, and Smith said they will do so.

"They're going to tell you there, 'Yeah, nobody really wants to offer us anything,'" Salcer said. "But I'm hearing lots of teams want him."

Smith said the Coyotes made the required offer of at least 100 per cent of last year's salary by the July 1 deadline.

"We expect we will pay him more than that, when all is said and done," Smith added.

Salcer said there's more than money involved, that Zhamnov feels underpaid, overshadowed and put down.

Besides that, Salcer said, Keith Tkachuk and former Jet Teemu Selanne "were given gratuitous increases of over a million dollars each, and Alex didn't get it."

Rookie says plenty

Expos hurler lets his pitching do the talking

by JEFF BLAIR
Montreal Gazette

ST. LOUIS — Ugueth Urbina's English still consists mainly of frowns, grimaces, shrugs and looks that could kill. Body language. But no matter. Urbina is still capable of making a statement.

Like he did last night.

Urbina (5-3) tossed seven innings of three-hit ball and had a one-hitter through six, while Mark Grudzielanek made the defensive play of the night and drove in the winning run in a 4-2 win over the St. Louis Cardinals.

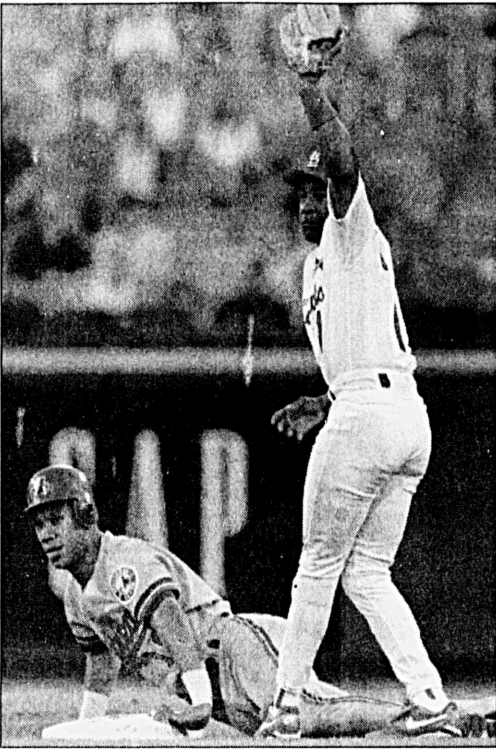
The Expos looked flat in two losses to the Pittsburgh Pirates, especially considering they had just finished putting the New York Mets in their place with a 3-1 series win.

But Urbina came out throwing darts and that set the tone for the night in what has to be one of the most satisfying wins of the season.

It was Grudzielanek's single on a 2-2 pitch with two out in the eighth that drove in F.P. Santangelo with the winning run after Santangelo had reached on a two-out, pinch-hit single and stolen second.

Mel Rojas struck out Ron Gant with the tying run on second to end the eighth, then retired the side in the ninth.

The Expos bench came up big in this one, with Andy Stankiewicz driving in the fourth run in the ninth with a pinch-hit



AP photo

Montreal Expos' Moises Alou is safe at second with a stolen base as St. Louis Cardinals shortstop Ozzie Smith waves his glove after the late tag attempt.

single up the middle with two out.

That scored Henry Rodriguez, who'd gone to third when Rondell White singled after a long battle with veteran lefty Rick Honeycutt. The Expos outhit the Cardinals 11-3.

Urbina struck out six and walked three and threw 98 pitches, 61 strikes.

One of those pitches ended up over the left-field wall in the second inning, a two-run home run by Tom Pagnozzi.

Urbina retired 13 of the next 14 batters until Brian Jordan slashed his first pitch of the

seventh into the left-field corner for a lead-off double.

Then Urbina really went to work. He blew a high strike three by John Mabry and induced Gaetti to bounce out to third on the next pitch. After Pagnozzi was walked intentionally, veteran Willie McGee stepped in to pinch-hit and sent a ball into the hole at short.

Grudzielanek dove for the ball and jumped up, looking shocked as Jordan ran through a stop sign at third and raced toward home. Grudzielanek's throw beat him easily.

Silver goes to McGwire, but Carter grabs gold

TORONTO (CP) — If this were the Olympics, Mark McGwire's home run would have won the gold on form alone. But this was baseball, and Joe Carter's homer won the game.

Carter's two-run homer with two out in the bottom of ninth vaulted the Toronto Blue Jays to a 4-3 win Thursday night over the Oakland Athletics.

"I was thinking home run when I went to the plate," said Carter. "It's not too many times when you're thinking home run do you actually hit a home run."

Jay Witasick

(0-1), called up earlier in the day from Class AA Huntsville, threw nothing but fastballs in his relief appearance, thereby telegraphing to Carter the pitch.

"If the ball stays straight, then that doesn't mean you can throw it by major-league hitters," said Carter. "He threw it right where I wanted to swing. 'I'm glad I was able to come

through."

Carter's 24th homer eclipsed McGwire's major-league leading 37th homer. McGwire extended Oakland's consecutive-game home-run streak to 21, four shy of the major-league record, although the club's run of multiple-homer games ended at six.

McGwire's was a huge homer, silencing the crowd of 30,174 as it sailed into the seventh row of the fifth deck over the left field wall.

Estimated at 488 feet, it's believed to be the longest ever hit at the SkyDome, a few rows deeper than Jose Canseco's fifth-deck shot in the 1989 American League playoffs.

McGwire's mammoth homer and Ernie Young's fielder's choice RBI gave Oakland a 2-0 lead in the fourth, the only blemishes for Jays rookie lefty Huck Flener, who went six innings. Paul Quantrill relieved to start the seventh and gave up an unearned run as the A's went up 3-0.

Alex Gonzalez doubled home Charlie O'Brien to cut Oakland's lead to 3-1 in the seventh. The run ended Toronto's scoreless drought at 18 innings. Ed Sprague homered off Mike Mohler in the eighth to cut Oakland's lead to 3-2. Domingo Cedenio walked in the ninth to set up Carter's heroics.

"Joe rises to the occasion," said Jays manager Cito Gaston. "If there's a guy on base, he's the guy that wants to drive them in."

Appier will stay with Royals

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — Kevin Appier, who was eligible to become a free agent following the season, agreed Thursday with the Kansas City Royals on a \$14.9 million US, three-year contract extension through 1999.

Appier will get \$4.8 million per season and the Royals have a \$5.2 million option for 2000 with a \$500,000 buyout.

The Royals can't trade him from July 30 of this season through next July 30. After that, there are six teams he can't be traded to.

Royals general manager Herk Robinson had steadfastly opposed giving Appier a no-trade clause, saying it was against club policy and would limit the team's options.

Appier had said that, in exchange for the clause, he would take less money than he may have gotten as a free agent.

"As an organization, we felt it was important to step up and make a deal that would keep Kevin in Kansas City for a long time," Robinson said.

"We believe this action fits with our plan of maintaining our quality players, building from within and giving the fans of Kansas City the type of club of which they are deserving."

So-so Eskimos dump Riders

OTTAWA (CP) — The Edmonton Eskimos think they can play better.

The Ottawa Rough Riders figure their very survival depends on it.

Edmonton ended a two-game losing skid with a fitful 34-18 CFL win over the hapless Riders on Thursday night.

Only 13,323 showed up at 31,000-seat Frank Clair Stadium. With the Riders, 1-4, on the road for the next two weeks, the team is facing a critical cash flow problem in just the sixth week of the season.

"Quite frankly, that was a disgraceful performance," said new Ottawa president Jim Durrell, installed by CFL commissioner Larry Smith only last week.

Durrell said winning football is the only way to save the franchise and promised personnel changes.

"There's no question this team can't stand pat," he said.

Edmonton seemed to have the game well in hand but got a scare late in the third quarter when Ottawa scored 10 points in 21 seconds to pull within three points.

Ottawa kicker Wayne Lammle's 53-yard field goal was set up by Kenny Wilhite's 74-yard return of a missed Edmonton field goal at 11:09. On Edmonton's next play from scrimmage, Riders corner Leonard Humphries picked off a Danny McManus pass in the flat and spinted 39 yards untouched to the Eskimo endzone.

MacManus hit Shalon Baker with a 17-yard



CP photo

Ottawa's Leonard Humphries goes in to tackle Edmonton Eskimos Eric Blount during first quarter CFL action in Ottawa.

touchdown strike early in the fourth quarter and kicker Frank Jargas added two field goals as Edmonton pulled away for the win.

"I don't evaluate it," said Edmonton coach Ron Lancaster.

"We take the two points and get ready to play the next one. We'll take it. We needed it."

Cowboys insert Sanders into Irvin's empty spot

AUSTIN, Tex. (AP) — With the Dallas Cowboys, there's always a superstar lurking. So Deion Sanders will replace Michael Irvin at wide receiver for the first five games of the 1996 NFL season.

But who replaces Deion?

Irvin's loss for almost one-third of the season weakens the Cowboys at wide receiver and cornerback. Sure, they still have Troy Aikman and Emmitt Smith, but Irvin hasn't missed a game since the start of the 1991 season.

Sanders has been brilliant as a spot receiver — of his 13 career receptions, four have been for touchdowns. But he's never played the position on a regular basis, and even an athlete as extraordinary as he is can't necessarily become a full-time pass catcher in one preseason.

Moreover, Sanders leaves a secondary already hurt by the defection of Larry Brown, the Super Bowl MVP who left as a free agent for Oakland, and by the Achilles tendon tear from which Kevin Smith is still recuperating.

So second-year player Alundis Brice will step in as one cornerback. But if Smith doesn't make it back for opening day, that means Sanders will have to move back.

No wonder Barry Switzer was ecstatic earlier this week when told Smith's rehabilitation was ahead of schedule.

The NFL announced the five-game suspension Wednesday night, providing some relief to a team that had been preoccupied during the first week of training camp by speculation over the ruling.

"It's closure," owner Jerry Jones said.

The suspension is strictly for the five opening games. Irvin is free to report to camp any time and is eligible for exhibition games.

Irvin is in Miami with his family.

Williams set to gas Hill

LONDON (AP) — Formula One driver Damon Hill, despite winning six of 10 races this season for a 15-point lead in the world drivers' championship, may lose his place next year at Williams-Renault.

A report in the magazine Autosport says Williams team owner Frank Williams has already reached an agreement with Sauber's German driver Heinz-Harold Frentzen to team with Jacques Villeneuve next season.

Williams issued a terse statement today, but didn't refute the rumor.

"Jacques Villeneuve, having commenced a two-year contract with the team at the beginning of the 1996 season, is the only confirmed driver for 1997," Frank Williams said.

"Negotiations regarding the team's other driver for 1997 will commence in good time."

The magazine said the deal was already done and that Hill will be removed even if he wins the championship.

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