Ace pitchers suffer opening day setbacks

A funny thing happened Wednesday to Tom Seaver and Frank Tanana, two of baseball's best pitchers. But neither of them were laughing.

Seaver got through the first inning all right, but was kayoed with two out in the second as San Francisco Giants clubbed the Reds 11-5 in the traditional National League baseball opener in Cincinnati.

Tanana fared a little better but still came away a loser. He served up home runs to Larry Cox, Willie Horton and a tie-breaking, two-run shot to Leon Roberts in the sixth inning as Seattle Mariners stunned the highly-regarded California Angels 5-4 in the American League inaugural.

Today's NL schedule has two day games on tap — New York Mets playing the Cubs in Chicago and San Diego Padres visiting the Dodgers in Los Angeles.

In the AL, Toronto Blue Jays play a night game against the Royals in Kansas City, while Milwaukee Brewers meet the World Series-champion Yankees in New York and Boston Red Sox entertain Cleveland Indians in day games. The scheduled Texas-at-Detroit afternoon contest was postponed by rain and snow.

The rest of the openers, including Texas-Detroit, are set for Friday.

BLUE WENT ROUTE

Seaver was charged with seven runs, four of them earned, in 1 2-3 innings. Mike Ivie singled and homered in San Francisco's eight-run second inning, while Terry Whitfield collected four hits. Vida Blue went the route for the Giants, scattering nine hits.

Seaver, who began the season with a 219-117 lifetime record and a 2.51 earned-run average, said he felt good. But in getting the ball over the plate, he made it too easy to hit.

Tanana, who yielded nine hits and five runs — one of them unearned because of his throwing error — in 5 2-3 innings, said all three Seattle homers came on fastballs.

Seattle reliever John Montague allowed two hits and one run over the final 6 2-3 innings.

The umpiring crew in Cincinnati included Paul Pryor, the only veteran major league umpire who has signed for 1979. He worked with three amateurs, while 25 other big-league umpires picketed outside Riverfront Stadium — protesting salaries and working conditions.

The game in Seattle was officiated by rookie Ted Hendry, the only AL umpire under contract for 1979, and three amateurs.

Edmonton out after 5-3 loss

By THE CANADIAN PRESS

Saskatoon Blades defeated Edmonton Oil Kings 5-3 Wednesday night in Saskatoon to eliminate Edmonton from the eastern division playoffs of the Western Hockey League.

In other playoff games Wednesday, Calgary Wranglers posted a 5-4 victory over Billings Bighorns in the central division and western division New Westminster Bruins defeated Victoria Cougars 4-3.

Edmonton finished the threeteam 12-game quarter-final series with two wins and six losses. Brandon leads with a 4-1 record while Saskatoon is 3-2. Saskatoon and Brandon were scheduled to play Friday, Saturday and Sunday to complete the round-robin portion of the playoff.

Bill MacNaught, Blake Stephen, Terry Paskaruk, Brent Ashton and Marc Chartier scored for Saskatoon, which led 2-1 and 4-2 by periods. Steve Blue, Ryan Switzer and Franco Disciglio replied for Edmonton.

Edmonton goaltender Gord Garbutt was a standout, stopping 33 shots. Tom Mucko stopped 27 for Saskatoon.

In Billings, the Wranglers scored two unanswered third-period goals for their win.

The victory improved Calgary's record to two wins and three losses in the divisional playoffs. The Bighorns now are 3-3 and Lethbridge Broncos 3-2.

Kelly Kisio scored twice for Calgary, including the tying goal at 1:34 of the third period. Bill McLean scored the winner less than three minutes later.

The first period ended in a 1-1 tie with goals by Sid Giroux for Calgary and Don Nachbaur for Billings.

The Bighorns led 4-3 after 40 minutes with Pat Rabbitt, Gordie Stafford and Jeff Zilkie scoring for Billings and Kisio and Dave Morrison replying for Calgary.

New Westminster, playing Wednesday on home ice, now has a 2-3 record in the western division while the Cougars are 2-4. Portland Winter Hawks are 4-1 in the three-team series.

Tardif reaches 40-goal plateau

By THE CANADIAN PRESS

Unlike most of his colleagues, Marc Tardif doesn't consider it a big deal when he gets 40 goals in a World Hockey Association season. He has done no worse since he joined the league in 1973.

WHA

	W	L	T	F	A	P
Edmonton	43	28	2	299	239	88
Quebec	40	30	5	276	249	85
New Eng	34	30	9	279	262	77
Winnipeg	35	33	6	284	282	76
Birm	30	38	6	264	286	66
Cincinnati	30	39	6	256	272	66
x-Indian	5	18	2	78	130	12

x-disbanded

In fact, the 29-year-old Quebec Nordiques left winger, WHA scoring champion in two of the last three seasons, has taken a back seat this year to line-mate Real Cloutier who has scored 75.

Neither Tardif nor anyone else is likely to catch Cloutier in the individual scoring race — the young right winger has a 16-point lead over second-place Robbie Ftorek of Cincinnati — but it was Tardif who did most of the damage in Quebec's 4-2 victory over Edmonton Oilers Wednesday night.

After Edmonton had taken a 2-0 lead in the first period, Tardif put the Nordiques on the board in the second, then assisted on the tying goal and scored the winner himself — No.40 — in the third.

Meanwhile, New England Whalers downed Winnipeg Jets 4-2, moving past the losers into third place and clinching a playoff berth for the seventh straight year.

GAIN ON LEADERS

The Oilers' loss cut their margin over the second-place Nordiques to three points, although they have three games in hand over Quebec.

Trailing 3-2, Edmonton pulled goaltender Dave Dryden and stormed the Quebec net when Bob Fitchner drew a penalty late in the third period but the Nordiques centre put the game out of reach by stepping out of the box just in time to put the puck into the empty net with four seconds remaining.

TOM CLEMENTS
. . . option year

Clements headed to NFL?

OTTAWA (CP) — Jake Dunlap faces his first major crisis as Ottawa Rough Riders rookie general manager in what appears to be a no-win situation.

At stake is quarterback Tom Clements, a four-year Canadian Football League veteran considered a premier thrower in the game.

Clements is in the option year of his contract and apparently wants out. Rumor is that Marv Levy, former Montreal Alouettes coach now with the National Football League's Kansas City Chiefs, is interested.

Clements led Eastern Football Conference passers in 1977 and has consistently been among CFL leaders almost every year.

In four years he has thrown 66 touchdowns during regular-season play, averaged 168 completions for 2,400 yards passing a season and been a major running threat.

Clements also threw a last-second touchdown pass to tight end Tony Gabriel in Ottawa's stunning 23-20 victory over Saskatchewan Roughriders in the 1976 Grey Cup.

Those statistics make him a valuable asset and Dunlap does not want to lose him and get nothing in return.

Clements must play this season, his option year, with Ottawa.

But if he does, that frees him to join the NFL in 1980 with Ottawa receiving no compensation. And the Riders lose his negotiating rights should he return to Canada.

Trade?

That might be possible but it is unlikely a team would give up players and — or money for a player who would remain unsigned for the season and then take off.

Traders take lead in series

RICHMOND, B.C. (CP) — John Ewasiuk got two overtime goals, including the winner, to give Fort Saskatchewan Traders a narrow 9-8 win over Richmond Sockeyes in a Centennial Cup hockey quarter-final game Wednesday night before 1,200 fans.

The win gives the Traders a 2-1 lead in the best-of-seven series, which will determine who will meet either Manitoba or Saskatchewan in the Western region final.

The Sockeyes led through the first two periods, with Mickey Chandler opening scoring at the nine second mark of the first period followed by two goals from team-mate Mark Fronyk.

Traders' Mike Ferris notched a single in the first.

Richmond's Jeff Bey helped his club maintain its lead with back-to-back goals in the second period but Fort Saskatchewan answered with singles from Gary Yaremchuk, Joe Engert and Ferris to close the gap to 5-4 for the Sockeyes.

In the third, Bey and Don Davis scored for Richmond but Rick Rippel, Ewasiuk and Egert slammed in singles for the Traders to tie the game 7-7 at the end of regulation time.

Mickey Chandler got a single for the Sockeyes during the 20-minute overtime period but Ewasiuk matched it and then added the winning marker four minutes later.

Traders netminder Clint Malarchuk stopped 44 shots while Randy Larsen blocked 35 in the Richmond nets.

The teams move to Fort Saskatchewan, Alta. to play their fourth and fifth games Friday and Saturday.

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FINAL WEEK OF PLAY

Hawks trounce Stars

The Canadian Press

For the National Hockey League's 12 playoff contenders, the last week of the schedule is a kind of spring training — except that nobody gets to bask in the sun.

NHL STANDINGS

	W	L	T	F	A	P
Wales Conference						
Norris Division						
Montreal	51	16	11	327	200	113
Pittsburgh	35	30	13	275	271	83
Los Angeles	33	34	11	281	281	77
Washington	23	40	15	265	326	61
Detroit	22	40	16	248	291	60
Adams Division						
Boston	42	22	14	307	258	98
Buffalo	35	27	15	264	249	85
Toronto	33	32	13	258	244	79
Minnesota	28	39	11	254	280	67
Campbell Conference						
Patrick Division						
NY Islanders	48	15	14	341	209	110
Philadelphia	39	23	15	274	224	93
Smythe Division						
NY Rangers	40	27	11	312	278	91
Atlanta	40	30	3	316	274	88
Chicago	28	35	15	240	271	71
Vancouver	25	42	12	215	289	62
St. Louis	17	49	12	243	344	46
Colorado	13	53	10	201	322	40

Apart from a bit of jostling in the pecking order to choose partners for the first round of post-season play, the coaches' prime objectives are to shore up weaknesses, give their second-stringers a bit of ice time and gear everyone up for the coming battle for survival.

So Chicago coach Bob Pulford was well satisfied Wednesday night when a couple of relative newcomers, rookie Tim Higgins and much-traveled Mike Walton, scored two goals apiece in a 7-1 romp against Minnesota North Stars and Tom Lysiak, the key man in an eight-player deal with Atlanta Flames, came up with five assists.

NHL TOP TEN

National Hockey League scoring leaders after Wednesday games:

	G	A	P
Trottier, NYI	46	82	128
Dionne, LA	57	67	124
Lafleur, Mtl	50	73	123
Bossy, NYI	63	55	118
Choinard, Atl	49	56	105
MacMillan, Atl	36	68	104
Potvin, NYI	30	66	96
Federko, StL	31	63	94
Taylor, LA	43	47	90
Gillies, NYI	33	56	89
Maruk, Wash	31	58	89

Both the Flames and Black Hawks went into traumatic four-game losing streaks after last month's trade, in which Chicago gave up three front-line players, defenceman Phil Russell, centre Ivan Boldirev and left winger Darcy Rota, in exchange for Lysiak and four youngsters, defencemen Greg Fox, Pat Ribble and Miles Zaharko and left winger Harold Phillipoff.

BOTH IMPROVING

Now both clubs are doing nicely. The Flames, with Boldirev contributing a goal and an assist, tied New York Rangers 3-3 at Madison Square Garden Wednesday, giving them a 4-2-1 record in their last seven games. Chicago is 4-1-2 over the same stretch.

In other games Wednesday night, Montreal Canadiens downed Detroit Red Wings 4-1 and Boston Bruins and Toronto Mapl Leafs played to a 3-3 tie.

Walton, picked up by Chicago after being cut loose by St. Louis and Boston earlier this season, scored two power-play goals for the Hawks and Higgins, used sparingly since he was brought up from the minors in December, ran his total to four in three games as they avenged a 4-3 loss to Minnesota 24 hours earlier.

Atlanta, unbeaten in its last seven visits to the Garden, needed Ken Houston's power-play goal in the third period to keep the streak alive and coach Fred Creighton was displeased with the Flames' performance.

"We came up short in a lot of areas," the coach complained, as Atlanta remained three points behind the third-place Rangers in the Patrick Division. Both clubs have locked up playoff berths.

At Montreal, centre Jacques Lemaire had his second three-goal game since recovering from a shoulder separation that kept him out of the Canadiens' lineup for 30 games.

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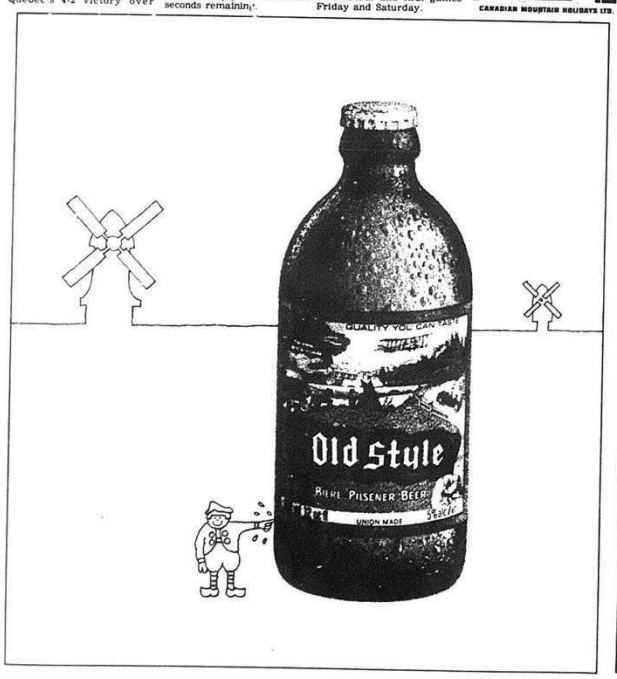

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