

U.S. shows no mercy

Team USA blanks South Africa; prepares for Japan

By BOB BAUM
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz.

There was no classic embarrassment for the United States on Friday.

Just the blowout everyone expected.

A pair of the squad's senior citizens — Ken Griffey Jr. and Roger Clemens — led the way in a 17-0 rout of South Africa that advanced the Americans to the second round of the inaugural World Baseball Classic.

Griffey went 4 for 4 with two home runs and seven RBIs in a game shortened to five innings because of the tournament's mercy rule.

Clemens allowed one hit in 4½ innings, striking out six and walking none before leaving to a standing ovation from the capacity crowd of 11,975 at Scottsdale Stadium, spring training home to the San Francisco Giants. He threw 58 pitches, seven shy of the limit allowed in the first round.

"I was pitching 100 percent, at this time of year regardless," the 43-year-old right-hander said. "You know, it was my job after the guys came out and put the numbers on the board, throw strikes, not walk anybody, get them back in and swinging the bat a little bit."

The United States opens the second round against Japan on Sunday in Anaheim, Calif., and Mexico plays South Korea in the second game there.

Coming off a stunning 8-6 loss to Canada on Wednesday night, the United States had to get a win Friday to make it to the second round of the inaugural 16-team event.

That became a non-issue in a hurry against the overmatched



Team USA's Ken Griffey Jr., right, is greeted by teammates Johnny Damon, left, and Derek Jeter, center, after hitting a three-run home run against South Africa during the third inning of their World Baseball Classic game in Scottsdale, Ariz., on Friday. Team USA shut out the South African team 17-0.

South Africans, who finished 0-3.

"We were like, 'OK, if we can get out to an early lead, put some pressure on and let Roger relax and have some fun,'" Griffey said.

Derek Lee drove in four runs with a home run and double. The homer, aided by a brisk wind blowing to right field, was Lee's second of the tournament.

The United States outthit South Africa 18-2.

"If we can swing the bat and

be particular about what pitches to swing at, and be patient and stuff like that, I think we can put some pressure on some people," Griffey said.

"You look at the numbers these guys put over through the course of the year, there's no easy out in there. That makes it tough on everybody."

The U.S. squad finished in a three-way tie with Mexico and Canada at 2-1, with Mexico finishing first and the Americans

second based on the tiebreaker, which is runs allowed in games involving the three tied teams.

The Americans essentially took batting practice against right-hander Carl Michaels, who pitched for South Africa in the 2000 Olympics and 2005 World Cup.

Derek Jeter and Griffey singled in the first, then scored when Alex Rodriguez's hit got past right fielder Ian Butcher for a triple. Lee's three-run homer made it 4-0.



Dale Earnhardt Jr., left, signs autographs as he gets ready for practice at Las Vegas Motor Speedway in North Las Vegas on Friday.

Biffle nabs top spot in Las Vegas

By TOM GARDNER
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LAS VEGAS

Greg Biffle won the pole Friday for the UAW-Daimler-Chrysler 400 with a speed of 172.403 mph around Las Vegas Motor Speedway's 1.5-mile tri-oval.

It was just the second pole of Biffle's career and first in two years.

"I've qualified second I don't know how many times. Qualifying isn't my strong suit," he said.

The only other pole of his career came at the first Daytona race in 2004.

He qualified second two weeks ago at California.

Tony Stewart qualified second at 172.068, followed by Jimmie Johnson at 171.597.

Kyle Busch and Kasey Kahne rounded out the top five for Sunday's race, followed by Busch's brother Kurt, Joe Nemecheck, Jeff Burton, Biffle's Roush Racing teammate Matt Kenseth and Brian Vickers.

Roush cars have won five of the eight Cup races at Las Vegas.

Jeff Gordon will start from the 13th spot.

Johnson, who was 33rd in the qualifying order, said rapidly cooling track temperatures helped drivers who qualified later.

"The wind was really swirling. It was tough at times," Johnson said.

The fastest speeds were well short of the qualifying record of 174.904 mph set by Kahne two years ago.

Perennial fast qualifier Ryan Newman will be 11th on the grid, beside J.J. Yeley, the top rookie.

Dale Earnhardt Jr. barely made the cut, starting in the 42nd position.

Biffle and Kenseth have the only two Fords in the top 10. There are six Chevrolets and two Dodges.



BIFFLE



STEWART

Free agency starts with bigger cap

By DAVE GOLDBERG
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

After being delayed twice by protracted labor talks, free agency begins Saturday with all 32 teams having \$7.5 million more in cap room now that the deal is finally done.

But many teams may use the extra money to re-sign their own players before going on a major shopping spree.

Indianapolis, for example, has more room to sign running back Edgerrin James. He is likely to get more money from the Colts than other teams unwilling to risk a lot on a running back with a history of knee injuries and almost 2,200 carries in his career.

St. Louis, with more money available, re-signed four-time Pro Bowl wide receiver Isaac Bruce on Friday, five days after releasing him. The 33-year-old is their longest tenured player, going back to the days when they were in Los Angeles.

"We have a really good relationship, and he belongs here," said Jay Zygmont, the team's director of football operations. "He clearly knew that we wanted him to be here."

The same is likely true of Willie McGinest, cut by New England on Thursday. He seems most likely to re-sign with the team that he's played for since 1994.

In fact, there aren't a lot of players available who will merit huge salaries because even the most attractive come with "buyer beware" tags.

San Diego's Drew Brees, for example, is a proven commodity and comes at the high price a good quarterback demands. But he is coming off surgery to his throwing shoulder, making him something of a risk to teams like Miami and New Orleans, who seem interested.

Linebacker LaVar Arrington, who bought his way out of his contract with Washington for \$4.4 million, would like to stay in the NFC East to get back at the Redskins.

But the only team in that division even remotely interested seems to be the New York Giants. Although Antonio Pierce, Arring-



Minnesota Vikings coach Mike Tice, left, quarterback Gus Frerotte, center, and quarterback Daunte Culpepper talk during the game against the Washington Redskins on Jan. 2, 2005. Culpepper is seeking to be released from the Vikings if the team fails to trade him.

ton's former teammate in Washington, reportedly is lobbying for him, New York has about \$10 million in cap space and would prefer several cheaper players than spending a lot on one who might not fit their defensive schemes.

They agreed to terms with one of them Friday, veteran cornerback Sam Madison, cut by Miami in a cap move.

Daunte Culpepper looks like he'll be on the market as well. The quarterback and the Minnesota Vikings appear headed for a breakup.

Culpepper, once a franchise player, provided pointed commentary on the subject in an e-mail sent to several media outlets Wednesday. He didn't respond to interview requests.

The team wasn't talking about it either, with the league's free agency and trading period officially scheduled to begin at the stroke of midnight.

But the NFL's speculation factory was spitting out plenty of reports, citing anonymous league sources, that Culpepper would soon be dealt.

Jamal Lewis, who ran for 2,066 yards for Baltimore in 2003, also will be available. But he had a subpar 2005 due to injuries and off-field problems and his value has diminished.

And finally, there's Terrell Owens, who carries the most baggage of all after being suspended by Philadelphia, then deactivated last season following continuing discipline problems.

He is the most talented wide receiver available and once he is officially released will most likely sign an incentive-laden contract.

DIXIE CHOPPER

The World's Fastest Lawn Mower

**Indiana Top Gun Dealer
Factory Outlet
All mowers in stock**



Provides Ground Speeds Up to 15mph
14 Gallon Fuel Capacity
Up to 9.1 acres of mowing per hour
Beverage cooler
60" & 72" Decks available
LIFETIME WARRANTY on frame, front
caster bearings & front forks

**PRICE'S
Dixie Chopper**

**0 Payments, 0 interest
for 6 months (W.A.C.)
Certain credit restrictions apply**

**1090 Yandes St.
Franklin, IN 46131
317-738-0618
or 736-6091**

WWW.DIXIECHOPPER.COM

W

e've got great plans for you

...if you are planning to expand or add to your home

Need to make more room for your growing family? Make plans to call us for your building needs.



Custom Decks

Room Additions



FREEDOM
CONSTRUCTORS
INC.

317-535-9048
Whiteland

812-372-3551
Columbus

**Room Additions and Renovations
3-D Design**

Remodels • Garages • Porches • Gazebos • Docks
• Retaining Walls • Windows • Kitchens • Baths

Call Monday - Friday, 8-5
Custom Designed To Fit You & Your Home

www.freedomconst.com

4 WHEEL
ALIGNMENT

\$59.95

GM Vehicles Only.
Please call for an appointment.
Must present coupon.
Not valid with any other offer.

Reeves

EXPIRES 3/31/06 018U2D

ROTATE & BALANCE
BRAKE INSPECTION

\$29.95

Please call for an appointment.
Must present coupon.
Not valid with any other offer.

Reeves

EXPIRES 3/31/06 348U2D



The best service department in Johnson County!!

BUICK® SERVICE, PARTS & BODY SHOP

Mon.-Fri. 7:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m. Parts Department: Open Sat. 9 a.m.-Noon
PRO SHOP DEPARTMENT Mon.-Fri. 7:30 a.m.-6:00 p.m., Sat. 9 a.m.-Noon

Service Before and After the Sale!

Goodwrench

Reeves

BUICK - PONTIAC
www.reevesauto.com
1250 U.S. 31 South, Greenwood

882-8425

PONTIAC

10% OFF

ANY SERVICE
WORK
OVER \$100

Please call for an appointment.
Must present coupon.
Not valid with any other offer.

Reeves

EXPIRES 3/31/06 188U2D

\$24.95

Oil Change & Car Wash

Up to 5 Quarts

Please call for an appointment.
Must present coupon.
Not valid with any other offer.

Reeves

EXPIRES 3/31/06 358U2D

All brick.
Single story.
Quality craftsmanship.
Convenient location.
Low maintenance.

Indiana's Premier
Builder of Restricted
55 and Above
Communities



Quiet. Secure.



White Oak Farms
(317) 786-6533
Thompson & Gray

Glen Ridge Commons
(317) 862-1931
Edgewood & Five Points

Southern Green
(317) 859-1269
US31 east on Stop 18

Summer Gardens
(317) 422-8953
CR144 southwest of SR135

**The Commons
at University Park**
(317) 888-9713
On Main St. east of I-65

Coventry Park
(317) 786-6533
Emerson .25mi north
of Edgewood



COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT,
INC.

A Family Tradition
for 3 Generations

Winner of the prestigious
2-10 DIAMOND BUILDER
AWARD for excellence in
consumer satisfaction.

communitydevelopment.com