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SPORTS

■ Business 5-8

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Toby Smith
OF THE JOURNAL

The Kid Brother Moves Into The Tennis Spotlight

WHEN MARK KEIL was a teen-age tennis player, he wondered if he'd ever be able to beat his sister.

Keil has since beaten Pete Sampras, Boris Becker, Stefan Edberg and the best doubles team in the United States.

When Keil competed for Albuquerque's Highland High School, he couldn't find a college that would give him the time of day.

Eight years later he ranks 26th in the world.

When Keil was a senior at Highland High, the University of New Mexico's tennis coach told him he didn't have any scholarship money left to give him.

This year Keil is on a course to earn $200,000 in prize money.

How does one explain the state's most successful professional tennis player?

"If you want something in life," Keil said the other day by telephone from his home in Tampa, Fla., "you can do it. I did the extra work. Nobody practiced harder than me."

Keil, 25, grew up in Albuquerque, in the shadow of his sister, Kathrin, a celebrated junior star five years his senior. Like Kathrin, Mark learned the game at Four Hills Country Club from Mary Beth Kessler. But unlike Kathrin, he lacked commitment. "I had a temper as a kid," he said. "I was a nut case." He also was mediocre. When Kathrin was 12, she was winning national tournaments. Her kid brother at the same age couldn't get ranked higher than third in the Southwest.

Only when he reached 14 or 15 did he get serious about the sport, and much of the reason, his mother, Rosemarie, admits, was because Kathrin had left New Mexico and had taken her somewhat intimidating shadow with her.

Thanks But No Thanks

During his last year at Highland, Keil was 27-0 in singles and won the New Mexico high school AAAA championship. Still, after he wrote to 125 Division I colleges only three or four responded.

When University of New Mexico coach David Geatz told Keil that he couldn't help him, Keil went off to look at the University of South Florida, one of the few schools to reply to his letters. When Keil returned, Geatz said a scholarship had opened. But Keil by now had already signed with South Florida. "Worst recruiting mistake I ever made," Geatz would later say.

The best thing Keil ever did was to leave New Mexico. "Players who grow up in Albuquerque, they don't learn groundstrokes. The altitude forces them to just serve and volley. And there's not a lot of competition."

In Florida, at sea level, Keil worked on his groundstrokes, especially his return of service, which has since become the signature of his doubles play.

In his junior year, with the support of a Japanese businessman, Keil turned professional. He spent two years playing satellite events in countries like Nigeria and Malaysia. In 1991, at a grass tune-up tournament for Wimbledon, Keil beat Sampras, the reigning U.S. Open champion. "Best day of my life," he said. Last year, Keil teamed with Dave Randall of Birmingham, Ala., to win the doubles at the $300,000 Purex Championships in Scottsdale, Ariz.

Doubling His Pleasure

Earlier this year Keil and Randall successfully defended their Scottsdale title, and in the semifinals beat Edberg and Richey Reneberg. At The Lipton Championships, they beat the German Davis Cup duo of Becker and Patrick Kuhnen. At the Newsweek Champions Cup, Keil and Stefan Kruger of South Africa beat Reneberg and Jim Grabb, America's top Davis Cup tandem.

Then, playing with still another partner, Christo Van Rensburg of South Africa, Keil won the doubles at the $500,000 Salem Open in Osaka, Japan.

Individually in doubles Keil ranks 42nd in the world. He and Randall are the 26th best team.

"I think I've shown that I can do some damage no matter who my partner is."

As a pro, Keil's pretty much given up singles to concentrate on doubles. At the French Open and at Wimbledon he'll be paired in the mixed with Pam Shriver.

"Nobody ever thought I could do this well," Keil said. "To be honest, as a kid, I didn't either. Physically, I always knew I had it. Mentally it was harder. When I go out on the court now, no matter who I'm playing, I expect to win."

Once upon a time Keil looked at his sister, Kathrin, now a teaching pro in Houston, and dreamed. These days she stands in his shadow.

Those Dodger Blues

The Slide Continues

Erosion Worst On Lasorda

By Jim Donaghy
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Tommy Lasorda and his Dodgers have lost a lot of games lately. What he hasn't given up is his loyalty and love for the organization.

Those close to Lasorda are becoming increasingly concerned, however, that he might tarnish his image by staying around too long in the dugout.

"I've known Tommy for 40 years as a scout, coach and manager," Dodgers Hall of Fame broadcaster Vin Scully said. "We sit together on the bus everyday during a road trip. Off the air, I really feel bad for what he's going through. But I can't convey that on the air."

Despite the Dodgers' decline, Lasorda still makes the time to talk baseball with the fans. But those who have covered the team a long time have had their differences with him, sometimes heated and even personal.

"What you can do to show your appreciation to the the fans is give it everything you got," Lasorda said. "When they want to take a picture of you let them, when they want an autograph give it to them. Keep the people happy."

What happened in 1992, however, did not make LA fans at all happy. The Dodgers finished in last place for the first time since 1905 with a 63-99 record. The Dodgers made 174 errors, including 42 by shortstop Jose Offerman.

"Last year was the worst I've had as a player and a manager," said Lasorda, now in his 17th year as the Dodgers manager. "If you look back on the history of the major leagues, every manager in baseball has had a bad year if he's been around."

If the start of this season is any indication, it might be another bad season for Lasorda's Dodgers. Los Angeles lost 13 of its first 21 games, and headed home this week after a 1-6 road trip.

In their first 21 games, the Dodgers hit .226 as a team. On the trip to Montreal, Philadelphia and New York, Eric Davis was 2-for-27, Tim Wallach, 4-for-23, Offerman, 1-for-21, Jody Reed, 3-for-21, and Eric Karros, 5-for-27.

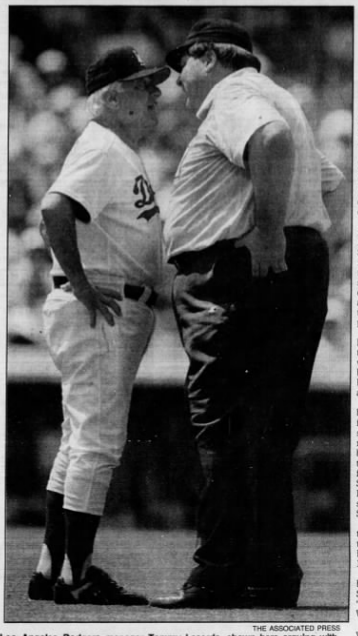
"We're not scoring runs. Every time we hit a ball real good it's right at someone. The frustration has begun to set in because these guys are really trying hard," Lasorda said.

In the big leagues, though, trying isn't always enough.

"They probably look at me sometimes and feel sorry. It's a sad situation. We came out of spring training with high hopes, self-confidence and a lot of optimism. But I'm still confident these guys will reach their level."

Lasorda has been around long enough to know there's still plenty of time left in the season. But as Yogi once said, it's getting late early.

"Every team in baseball, no matter how good they are, is going to win 54 games and every team, no matter how bad they are, is going to lose 54 games," Lasorda said.



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Los Angeles Dodgers manager Tommy Lasorda, shown here arguing with umpire John McSherry, has tried to remain upbeat during his team's decline.

Strawberry's Still Dodging March of Time

By Bob Klapisch
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

NEW YORK — Morning arrives, the eyes open and negotiations begin for Darryl Strawberry. Before he even leaves the bed, Strawberry asks a surgically repaired back if it's going to be one of Those Days — a term, the outfielder says, that needs no translation.

Depending on whether it's cold out, or if his last plane ride was more than an hour or two, or even if he's slept wrong, Strawberry will discover how difficult it is to swing a bat. He calls it "a tight feeling, all over," and while the pain isn't severe enough to require more surgery, or even another trip to the DL, a .185 average makes Strawberry remember the '80s, when he was in his 20s, when a perfect body needed no exercise.

"Man, when you're 24, 25, you never have to do anything. Nothing. Just go up there and swing," he said. "Back then, when I didn't hit, it's because I stunk, because I was in a slump. Now I spend half my time just trying to get comfortable."

He's 31 now, still perfectly sculpted but learning that time never loses its fight with the body. Now Strawberry spends an hour a day in the trainer's room, looking for ways to loosen his back, compensating for the two discs that were removed last September. So far, it's been a bad month — not only for Strawberry, but for the Los Angeles Dodgers, who brought a six-game losing streak and a .220 team average into Shea Stadium.

One Dodgers official was grateful for the hostile reception Strawberry is sure to get in New York this week. "It'll get him going," the exec said. "That's what Darryl needs."

Mostly, he needed attention — good or bad, it never mattered much. What Strawberry relished was, in his words, "the challenge of playing in New York. We were all like that."

Darryl has lost the arrogant edge of his youth. He's distanced himself from his born-again Christianity. These days, Strawberry is just a regular guy who realizes 1993 could determine how he'll be remembered.

Strawberry concedes, "I'm at a turning point right now."

Strawberry calls his seven-month rehab "a miracle, really." He points to Dave Winfield, who missed an entire season with identical surgery.

Dukes Apply Bandages After 14-Hit Beating

By Barbara Chavez
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Vancouver's Eduardo Perez went 4-for-5 and made a mess of the Albuquerque Dukes'homecoming Monday night at the Sports Stadium.

Perez's six RBI, including a three-run homer, helped the Canadians defeat the Dukes 15-4 in Pacific Coast League baseball. He was only part of the onslaught, however.

Vancouver hitters drubbed Albuquerque's four pitchers for 14 hits. Starter Greg Hansell (2-2) was the loser allowing five runs — three earned — on seven hits in 4⅓ innings.

Kip Gross, Ken Dayley and even Brian Traxler — normally a first baseman — came into the game as relievers to no avail.

Perez and his teammates took advantage of each and every one.

"The rest of the team has been hitting well," said Perez. "I'm just hoping to join them."

If Monday night's performance was any indication, Perez is well on his way. His RBI single in the fourth tied the game 3-3. Teammate Chris Turner's ground out in the same inning scored Perez and gave the Canadians the lead 4-3.

Thanks to a two-out rally by Vancouver in the fifth, Perez got to bat again. His RBI double made it 5-3.

The Dukes added a run in the fifth on Jose Muñoz's single to right that drove in Ron Maurer, who had doubled to lead off the inning. Maurer replaced Rafael Bournigal at shortstop Monday. Bournigal had flown to Los Angeles to have his right shoulder checked out.

Albuquerque was scoreless the rest of the way, but Vancouver had plenty more.

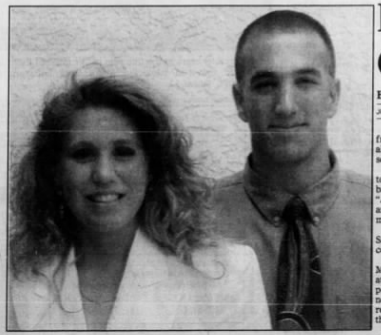
The Canadians' Hilly Hathoway (2-0) earned the win after allowing four earned runs on eight hits in seven innings.

Vancouver iced the game with a five-run eighth inning.

DUKES TODAY

■ Vancouver, 7 p.m., Sports Stadium

DUKES NOTES: Knuckleballer Dennis Springer (0-1, 5.60 earned run average) will face Vancouver's Paul Swingle (0-3, 12.75).



La Cueva's Nicole Knutson and Del Norte's Eric Plummer were this year's winners of the annual George Maloof Memorial Award.

Knutson and Plummer Given Maloof Awards

By Brian Rickerd
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

When Nicole Knutson was a high school freshman, coaches at La Cueva High were all but lining up seeking her athletic services.

"After soccer that year someone came up to me and said, 'Well, you're coming out for basketball, aren't you?'" Knutson recalls. "And I said, 'I don't know ... I don't know anything about basketball.' And she told me, 'I'll teach you what you need to know.'"

The person influencing Knutson was Sally Marquez, then the girls basketball coach at La Cueva.

Marquez won the first George Maloof Memorial Award in 1978-79 while a senior at Manzano High. Marquez was the first person Knutson mentioned Monday afternoon after she became the 1992-93 female recipient of the prestigous Maloof award at the Ramada Classic.

The award has traditionally been presented to Albuquerque's most outstanding high school student-athlete. This year, for the first time, both a male and female student-athlete were honored.

Del Norte High School senior Eric Plummer won the male division.

Both Plummer and Knutson represent a Who's Who of prep student-athletes, and both are planning to take their $2,500 Maloof scholarship award money to the University of New Mexico this fall.

Plummer plans to major in electrical or mechanical engineering, and Knutson plans to major in biology, possibly minor in Italian, and play soccer.

Plummer has a 4.218 grade point average at Del Norte, ranks third in his class and scored a 31 on his ACT. The son of Bill and Fran Plummer started at offensive guard on the Knights' football squad this fall and was a backup at defensive end. He also participates in track this spring and has competed in wrestling.

Both Plummer and Knutson have earned numerous awards for academics and other extra-curricular activities.

Knutson is a standout soccer player, and also very capable in both basketball (yes,

MORE: See KNUTSON on PAGE C4

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