

IN BRIEF

BASEBALL

BACKE RETURNS TO ACTION WITH HOOKS

Brandon Backe allowed three runs on five hits in his first rehab stint with the Corpus Christi Hooks in Corpus Christi on Thursday.

The Ball High School grad struck out four and walked two in five innings for the Hooks, who trailed San Antonio, 4-3, when he left the game.

However, Corpus Christi, the Houston Astros' Class AA team, scored two runs in the bottom of the fifth.

Backe, a starter with the Astros, hadn't pitched since Aug. 18 and underwent elbow surgery in September.

DETROIT INFIELDER NEIFI PEREZ SUSPENDED FOR 80 GAMES AFTER 3RD POSITIVE TEST FOR STIMULANT

DETROIT — Tigers infielder Neifi Perez was suspended for 80 games Friday after testing positive for a third time for a banned stimulant, a penalty that finishes his season.

Perez was suspended for 25 games on July 6 when he tested positive for a second time. Under baseball's labor contract, a player who tests positive for the first time is sent for counseling.

Perez has been the only player suspended by baseball for stimulants since they were banned before the 2006 season. His first suspension had been set to end after Friday night's game against the White Sox.

Under baseball's labor contract, a player cannot be disciplined multiple times for a positive test stemming from the same use of a banned substance, meaning Perez had to take a prohibited stimulant more than once.

Another positive test would lead to a suspension to be determined at the discretion of commissioner Bud Selig, with Perez having the right to have an arbitrator review the penalty.

From staff and wire reports

TODAY'S SPORTS ON TV

AUTO RACING

Formula One, qualifying for Hungarian Grand Prix, at Budapest, Hungary
SPEED, 7 a.m.
NASCAR, Nextel Cup, "Happy Hour Series," final practice for Pennsylvania 500, at Long Pond, Pa.
ESPN2, 10 a.m.
NASCAR, Busch Series, pole qualifying for NAPA Auto Parts 200, at Montreal
ESPN2, 11 a.m.
ARCA, Pennsylvania 200, at Long Pond, Pa.
SPEED, noon
NASCAR, Busch Series, NAPA Auto Parts 200, at Montreal
ESPN2, 2:30 p.m.

BASEBALL

Big League World Series, championship game, teams TBA, at Easley, S.C.
ESPN, noon
Regional Coverage — Cleveland at Minnesota, Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim at Oakland or New York Mets at Chicago Cubs
FOX, 2:30 p.m.
Houston Astros at Florida Marlins
FSN, 6 p.m.
San Francisco at San Diego
ESPN2, 9 p.m.

BOXING

Showtime Championship
SHOW, 8 p.m.

EQUESTRIAN

Standardbreds, Hambletonian, at East Rutherford, N.J.
NBC, 2:30 p.m.
NTRA, Darley Test Stakes, at Saratoga Springs, N.Y., and West Virginia Derby, at Chester, W.Va.
ESPN Classic, 4 p.m.

EXTREME

X Games, at Carson, Calif.
ABC, 2 p.m.
X Games, at Carson, Calif.
ESPN2, 6 p.m.
X Games, at Carson, Calif.
ESPN, 8 p.m.
X Games, at Carson, Calif. (delayed tape)
ESPN, 1 a.m.

FOOTBALL

Ceremony, Pro Football Hall of Fame Induction, at Canton, Ohio
ESPN, 5 p.m.

GOLF

European PGA Tour, Russian Open, third round, at Moscow (same-day tape)
TGC, 8:30 a.m.
PGA Tour-WGC, Bridgestone Invitational, third round, at Akron, Ohio
CBS, noon
Women's British Open, third round, at Fife, Scotland (same-day tape)
ABC, 12:30 p.m.
Champions Tour, 3M Championship, second round, at Blaine, Minn. (same-day tape)
TGC, 5:30 p.m.
PGA Tour, Reno-Tahoe Open, third round, at Reno, Nev. (same-day tape)
TGC, 8 p.m.

TENNIS

ATP, Legg Mason Classic, semifinal, at Washington
ESPN, 1 p.m.
WTA Tour, Acura Classic, semifinal, at Carlsbad, Calif.
ESPN, 3 p.m.

VOLLEYBALL

Beach Volleyball AVP Cross Tour — McDonald's Chicago Open — Men's Final
NBC, 3:30 p.m.

GAME TIME

TODAY

INDEPENDENT BASEBALL

Texas Heat at Bay Area Toros (DH), 1 p.m./6 p.m.

ANIMAL ATHLETES



RAPTOROUS WELCOME



COURTESY PHOTOS

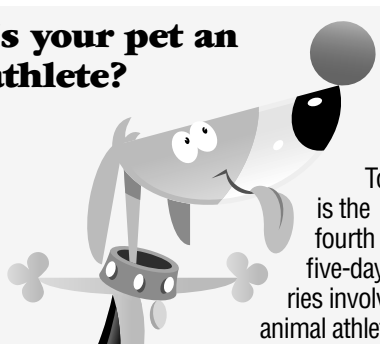
Chuck Redding, 56, of Houston, top, has been involved with falconry since he was a youngster. He trapped Cisco, a red-tailed hawk, in 2005.

Friendly Cisco is the killer king of his field

By JOEY D. RICHARDS

The Daily News

Is your pet an athlete?



Today is the fourth of a five-day series involving animal athletes.

WEDNESDAY: Zoe — Flyball dog
THURSDAY: Honey — Rodeo horse
FRIDAY: Sami — Agility dog
TODAY: Cisco — Hunting hawk
SUNDAY: No. 1462 — Racing pigeon

Tell us about your athletic pet in 150 words or less. What kind of animal is it? What sport does it enjoy, and how long has it been an athlete? Did it need training, or did it pick up the sport on its own? Send your story and a picture to joey.richards@galvnews.com.

Cisco is a fearless hunter. The 2-year-old red-tailed hawk will fly into brush in pursuit of prey. Once, he even dove into a thick rose bush for a kill — a sort of ramble in the bramble.

"(Red-tails) are very aggressive," said Chuck Redding, Cisco's handler. "They'll hit hard. It's almost scary to watch them sometimes. They do it with reckless abandon."

Redding, who has been involved with falconry since he was a youngster, trapped Cisco in December 2005, near Fort Worth. It didn't take him long to train the hawk.

"I could have had him flying loose in two weeks and hunting with him," said the 56-year-old Redding, who lives in west Houston.

But the engineering supervisor at Baker Hughes waited three weeks for a radio transmitter that would allow him to track Cisco in case he strayed.

Redding had lost his three previous birds — two kestrels and a red-tail — the previous year.

Although raptors are caught in the wild, they learn quickly to rely on humans.

"They associate you with food," Redding said. "You start feeding them on the fist. Then they start flying to the fist."

"Harris hawks actually bond to you as a buddy. I think red-tails orient to you because you've been feeding them."

The birds also learn to rely on their trainer for safety. Cisco stays outside, covered and tethered to a perch during the day. At night, he's put inside a covered house, called a mew.

"He relaxes when he's in his mew," Redding said. "You can tell he's in a more comfortable state."

It's not a bad deal for a guy like Cisco. In the wild, Redding said, he

See **FALCONRY/A9**

Netting a big hit

VOLLEYBALL: Pro teaches island youngsters to 'give something back'

By PRINCESS McDOWELL
The Daily News

Lilly Denoon didn't play on club teams as a child.

She wanted to, but her family couldn't afford it.

Now, the professional volleyball player is allowing interested players to attend her camp this summer at Ball High School.

"For me, it's not about money," she said. "I just want to give something back."

Denoon played four years at the University of Houston before going to Puerto Rico to play professionally 11 years ago. She also coached a few seasons at Houston St. Pius X.

She has been playing for Las Gigantes de Carolina and plans to retire in the next few years. She hopes to get into training more than coaching because she likes the one-on-one instruction she can administer.

Denoon started the camp last year after she met former Ball volleyball coach Chandra Smith through fellow player Kristee Porter. Denoon noticed that there wasn't a camp that catered specifically to Galveston kids, so she set up the camp to do so.

Now, it's just for Ball students, but she hopes to expand it for all of Galveston County.

This year's camp has 14 participants — last year's it had nine — and is mostly incoming freshmen. The camp acts as a warm-up to girls who are already on the team. For incomers, it's a pre-tryout workout and allows them to sharpen skills.

Each day, Denoon focuses on a different aspect of the game. Wednesday, the campers worked on passing, serving and hitting. Denoon

See **VB CAMP/A9**



KEVIN M. COX/The Daily News

Junior Elise Mills participates in a hitting drill during a volleyball camp hosted by professional player Lilly Denoon at Ball High School in Galveston on Wednesday. The camp aims to help high school students get ready for tryouts next week.

Willis loses eighth straight as Bruntlett, Oswalt lead Astros over Marlins

The Associated Press

MIAMI — Dontrelle Willis lost his eighth straight decision as Roy Oswalt shut down Florida's offense and led the Houston Astros over the Marlins 8-2 on Friday night.

Willis (7-11), on the longest losing streak of his major league career, hasn't won since May 29 at the Chicago Cubs, a span of 12 starts. He pitched 6½ innings, allowing three runs and six hits.

Oswalt (11-6) allowed a run and four hits over six innings with five strikeouts. He has a four-game winning streak since July 20.

Eric Bruntlett had three hits and a career-high four RBIs. He had been hitless in his previous seven



HOUSTON 8
FLORIDA 2

• Houston at Florida, 6 p.m. today, FSN.

at-bats before getting three straight hits, including two doubles.

Florida is now 10 games under .500 (50-60) for the first time since August 19, 2006.

The Astros trailed 1-0 in the seventh inning

when Carlos Lee led off with a single and Ty Wigginton doubled to put runners on second and third. After Willis struck out Jason Lane, Bruntlett hit a two-run double to center.

After a 30-minute rain delay, Matt Lindstrom relieved Willis.

Orlando Palmeiro pinch-hit for Oswalt and drove in Bruntlett with a single to make it 3-1. It was Palmeiro's 116th career pinch hit, tying him for ninth on the career list with Jerry Lynch.

The Marlins closed to 3-2 in the seventh off Dave Borkowski, who relieved Oswalt. Alfredo Amezaga doubled, then scored when pinch-hitter Todd Linden singled.

Houston stretched its lead to 6-2 in the eighth. Reliever Justin Miller walked in a run with the bases loaded. Bruntlett then doubled in two runs.

Chris Burke made the score 8-2 with a two-run homer, his fourth, off Carlos Martinez in the ninth. Burke had three hits in the game.



Houston Astros pitcher Roy Oswalt throws against the Florida Marlins in the first inning at Dolphin Stadium in Miami on Friday.

The Associated Press