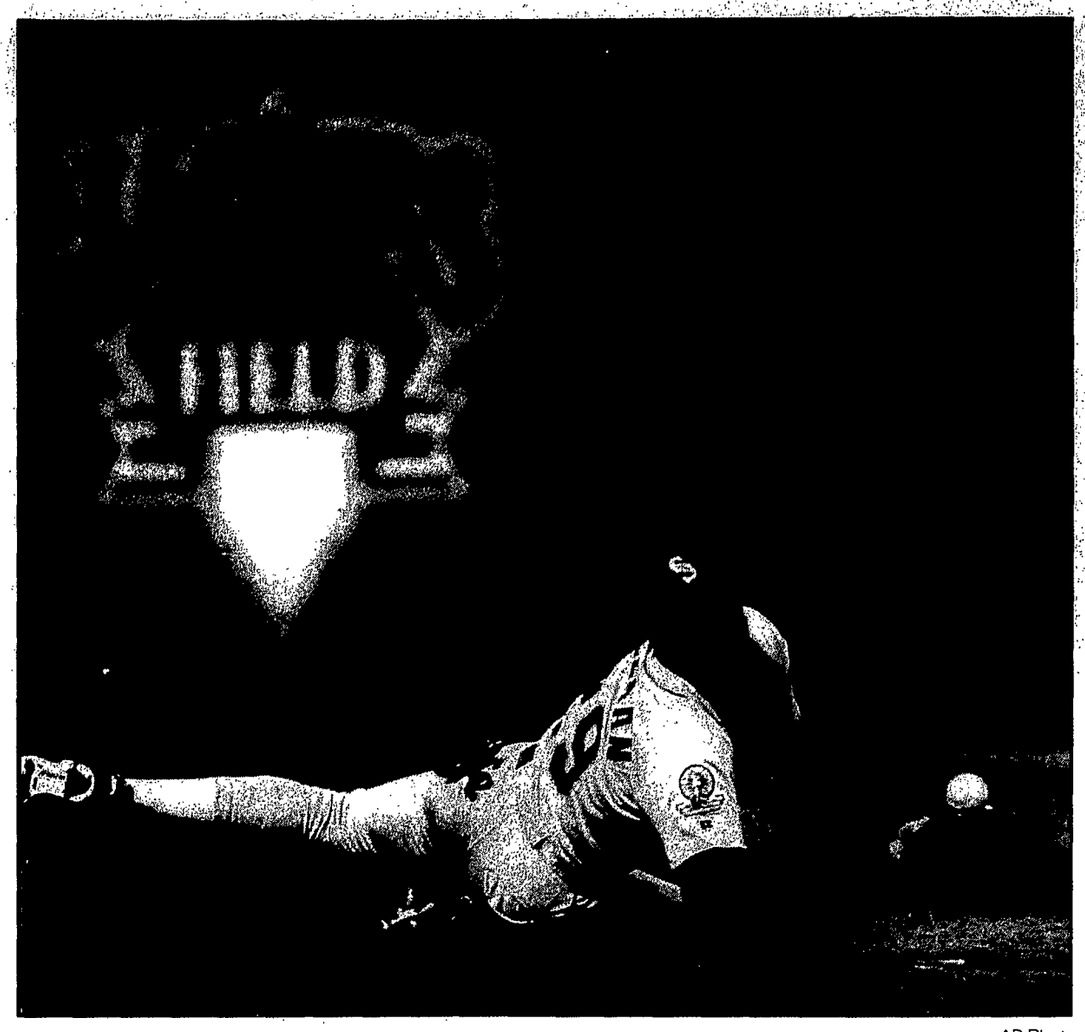

AP Photo

Seattle's Vince Coleman tries for diving grab of Tony Pena's second-inning liner in Game 4 of American League Championship Series Saturday night.

INDIANS ...

Continued from B-1

"I thought they'd probably have to bring a stretcher in for me, along with his crutches," Hargrove said. "Obviously you don't want to lose the guy who led the league in home runs (50) and RBIs (126). Anytime you lose someone with the ability Albert has, you need people to step up."

X-rays were negative, and Belle was listed day to day.

Meantime, the Indians made sure he wasn't missed, jumping on Seattle starter Andy Benes for six runs before the game was three innings old. Murray's two-run home run capped a three-run first inning, Lofton hit a sacrifice fly in the second, and Thome hit a two-run shot with one out in the third.

One hitter later, Benes was gone, having yielded six runs and six hits in 2 1-3 innings.

"We didn't notice anything mechanically wrong," Seattle manager Lou Piniella said. "He got a few pitches up, and they hit 'em. Anytime you get a guy who hits 50 home runs out of their lineup, you feel fortunate. But the story tonight was Hill's pitching a good ballgame and our guy giving up six runs in three innings."

The victory rejuvenated an Indians team that had been deflated one night earlier when Seattle's Jay Buhner hit a game-winning, three-run homer in the 11th inning. Even so, the series is guaranteed of returning to the Kingdome, where the Mariners are 4-1 in the playoffs — and their ace, Randy Johnson, will get one more start.

The Mariners' only good news of the night came when Washington state lawmakers approved financing to build them a $320 million ballpark.

Belle's absence forced Hargrove to move Murray up from the fifth spot to cleanup, while Thome moved up from sixth to fifth.

The moves paid dividends immediately.

Lofton led off the first with a single, stole second and continued to third when catcher Dan Wilson's throw bounced into center field. Vizquel walked, and Baerga's groundout produced a run.

Four pitches later, Murray drove a 435-foot shot into the seats in center, his seventh career homer in the postseason.

Tony Pena, subbing for Alomar, started the second with a single, then scampered all the way to third because he was running on the pitch as Wayne Kirby grounded out to third. Lofton's sacrifice fly scored Pena.

Baerga led off the third with a single, one out before Thome's two-run homer made it 6-0.

The Indians, baseball's best-hitting team during the regular season, had averaged just three runs a game during the first three games of the series.

"I think our offense hasn't really exploded yet in the playoffs like it can," Thome said.

Cleveland added a run on Vizquel's double in the sixth.

Hill, runner-up to Greg Maddux in NL Cy Young voting a year ago, gave the Indians the kind of performance they'd hoped for when they acquired him from St. Louis in July. He struck out six and walked three.

As for Slider? The medical report was not good: torn anterior cruciate and medial collateral ligaments in his right knee. Out for the year.

Notes: Seattle's Edgar Martinez, the AL batting champion at .356 this season, ended his 0-for-11 skid with an infield single in the second inning. His longest hitless streak during the regular season was 0-for-8. ... Orel Hershiser, Cleveland's starter for Sunday's Game 5, will be working on three days rest for the first time since July 9, 1993. That time, he pitched a complete-game nine-hitter for Los Angeles.

No Red-letter day for Davey Johnson

By TRACY RINGOLSBY
Scripps Howard News Service

ATLANTA — Davey Johnson got the last chance he asked for last winter. But he came up short. Johnson, who battled to remain as manager of the Cincinnati Reds despite objections by owner Marge Schott, saw his days in a Reds uniform end Saturday.

Atlanta swept the Braves in four games in the NLCS.

Now Johnson will step aside, and coach Ray Knight, Schott's hand-picked successor, will take over. Johnson is supposed to become an adviser to general manager Jim Bowden, but he would rather manage again and is believed to have become the leading candidate in Baltimore.

Oakland manager Tony La Russa apparently has faded in the Orioles' sweepstakes because club officials felt La Russa wanted too much power.

For now, though, Johnson is going to kick back.

"The first thing I'm going to do is go home," said Johnson, who Schott disliked because he lived with his current wife before getting married. "It has been a trying year for me. It has probably taken as much out of me as any year I've managed, but it also has given me a lot of satisfaction seeing the guys perform the way they have.

" ... I've always felt if our team won a lot of ball games and we put a lot of fans in the stands we'd be OK. In the end it is whatever ownership wants to do."

Knight, who played on the 1986 world championship New York Mets team that Johnson managed, was a commentator for ESPN when Johnson got the Reds managerial job in May of 1993 and asked Knight to be on his coaching staff.

AP Photo

Davey Johnson

"Ray is a good friend of mine," Johnson said. "It was a lot easier than if it was someone the organization put on me."

No Justice — David Justice was a late scratch from Atlanta's lineup, but the Braves didn't miss his bat. Mike Devereaux, who replaced Justice in the lineup, hit the three-run home run that keyed a five-run seventh inning in the Braves 6-0 victory, and led to his being selected the NLCS MVP. He is the first position player to be selected NLCS MVP since Will Clark of San Francisco in 1989.

Devereaux, a native of Casper, Wyo., acquired from the Chicago White Sox in an Aug. 25 trade, appeared in all four games. He also had the game-winning pinch single in the Braves' 2-1 Game 1 victory.

"Playing in the playoffs and the World Series is a personal dream and getting the MVP is far past that," said Devereaux.

Justice was standing off third base during batting practice when a one-hop hot off the bat of Javier Lopez hit Justice on the right knee. He hurt the same knee during the NL division series against the Colorado Rockies, but he had it drained and played the first three games of the NLCS.

"It hit the exact same spot (that Justice hurt against the Rockies)," manager Bobby Cox said. "It's just sore. We're not going to have any x-rays."

Etc: The Reds were the 18th team to be swept in a best-of-seven series, the first since Cincinnati swept Oakland in the 1990 World Series, and the first ever in the NLCS since it was expanded from a best-of-five affair in 1985. ... Cox is second on the all-time victory list in the LCS with 17 — one behind Sparky Anderson. Cox has won 14 NLCS games with Atlanta, and won three in the ALCS with Toronto in 1985 when the Blue Jays lost to Kansas City. ... The Reds were 3-for-29 with runners in scoring position during the four games. ... Cincinnati became only the fourth team to not hit a home run in the NLCS.

BRAVES ...

Continued from B-1

One big change this time will be the presence of Greg Maddux, certain to win his fourth straight Cy Young Award. With Maddux, Steve Avery, John Smoltz and Tom Glavine, the Braves' staff is widely acclaimed as the best in baseball.

Aside from starting pitcher Pete Schourek, the Reds didn't put up much of a fight in their last game under manager Davey Johnson, who will be replaced by Ray Knight next season. Cincinnati struck out 10 more times and hit into another three double plays.

"That's just a fine ballclub they have over there. Their pitching was outstanding. We scored only five runs in four games, and it's remarkable they could do that to an offense like ours," Johnson said.

Perhaps it's because this Braves team is considered the best of the '90s.

Atlanta trailed only once in the four games, won twice in its last at-bat and outscored Cincinnati 19-5. The Reds hit just .103 with runners in scoring position.

"The Reds swept the Dodgers in three games in the first round, and they expected to beat us. But we played great, our pitchers were on and when that happens, its's hard to lose," Cox said.

The only hits starter Avery allowed were a line single to right in the second by Benito Santiago and a grounder to shortstop that Barry Larkin beat out in the sixth. Ed Taubensee also had an infield single in the eighth off Alejandro Pena.

Atlanta got its first run in the third when Rafael Belliard led off with a single up the middle, Avery moved him to second with a line drive off Schourek's left wrist and Mark Lemke hit a two-out RBI single to left.

The Braves loaded the bases with one out in the fifth and failed to score, but broke open the game in the seventh when Marquis Grissom led off with a triple and scored on a passed ball. After a pair of walks by Mike Jackson, Devereaux hit a three-run homer to left — the Braves' third three-run shot of the series.

Luis Polonia added a pinch RBI single down the third-base line later in the seventh for a 6-0 lead. Atlanta sent 10 batters to the plate in the inning.

The fans responded with the loudest chant of the series, yelling "Sweep, Sweep!," while doing their familiar tomahawk chop.

"Playing in the playoffs and World Series is a personal dream, and getting the MVP is far past that," said Devereax, who was acquired from the Chicago White Sox on Aug. 25 to give the Braves a deeper bench and a designated hitter if they made it to the World Series.

Baseball notebook:

Reds to pay price for Schott's shortsightedness

Don't be misled by the success of the **Cincinnati Reds**.

There is trouble in the River City.

And it's not just because of all those empty seats at Riverfront Stadium for the first two games of the National League Championship Series against **Atlanta**.

The Reds, once a franchise built on a solid foundation of strong scouting and player development are paying the price for owner **Marge Schott's** inability to look long-range.

For all the money she has authorized to be spent on big-league payroll, she has refused to make an investment in the future. The Reds' budget for scouting and player development is $4 million — half the average in baseball.

It shows.

Of the 25 players on Cincinnati's postseason roster only three are products of the Reds system — platoon third baseman **Jeff Branson,** a second-round draft in 1988, right fielder **Reggie Sanders,** a seventh-round draft in 1987, and shortstop **Barry Larkin,** a first-round draft in 1985.

No wonder general manager **Jim Bowden** takes a win-it-now approach to his every move. The Reds have a decent team, but not for long. Left fielder **Ron Gant,** first baseman **Hal Morris,** center fielder **Darren Lewis,** right fielder **Eric Anthony,** infielder **Mariano Duncan,** catcher **Benito Santiago,** and right-handed pitchers **Dave Burba** and **Mike Jackson** are all potential free agents. And there are no indications that any home-grown replacements are on the way.

So what does Bowden, after back-to-back seasons of finishing first in the NL Central, see for the Reds in 1996?

"We don't know," he said. "If you can tell me what's going to happen with the labor situation; what's going to happen with the national television deal and local television, and how far this team is going to go in the postseason, I might be able to give you an idea.

"But I can't worry about that. We are trying to win right now."

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PERSONNEL MATTERS: Busy week for **Randy Smith**. He was finally released from his contract as general manager in **San Diego** — meaning he is free to talk to any team and can be hired wihout requiring compensation to the Padres or an agreement from his new team not to hire anybody else from San Diego. He also had interviews for the vacant general manager job in **Montreal,** and the expected vacant job in **Baltimore** ... **Kevin Malone** also interviewed for the Orioles job. Malone is saying he quit the **Expos** because of philosophical differences. Not quite. True the Expos did initially offer Malone a two-year deal to stay, but word is Expos president **Claude Brochu** became indignant when Malone showed up with a lawyer — a.k.a. an agent — to talk contract, and not only demanded double the offered salary, but double the payroll budgets ... Malone has done some quick backtracking from the spring when he blasted Orioles owner **Peter Angelos** for refusing to field a replacement team. "I was totally off-base," said Malone. "I believe he's got vision. I think he knows what's needed to get a new Basic Agreement. I believe he really cares about this game ... I wish there were more owners like him." Of course Malone's perspective of Angelos

Tracy Ringolsby
Rocky Mountain News

isn't tainted at all by the fact Malone is out of work, and trying to get a job from Angelos ... Baltimore assistant general manager **Frank Robinson** is no longer a serious candidate for the GM job in San Diego, but is expected to rejoin former Oriole boss **Larry Lucchino,** now the president of the Padres, as an adviser ... Latest names to pop up in San Diego as possible replacements to Smith are **Dan Evans,** Chicago White Sox director of baseball operations, and Boston assistant general manager **Mike Port**. Port, a former Padre minor-league director and player, interviewed last week ... The new hot name on the general manager candidate list is **New York Mets** assistant vice president baseball operations **Jerry Hunsicker,** who has the backing of **Tal Smith,** a long-time consultant to many major-league teams who has kept in touch even though he is now president of the Houston Astros. Hunsicker worked for Smith, including serving as the scout who drafted **Glenn Davis** for the Astros. He later became an agent, representing Davis among others, and then went into the investment banker business before resurfacing with the Mets. Hunsicker is being mentioned in Detroit and San Diego.

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DECISION TIME: After back-to-back first-place finishes in the **NL West,** the **Dodgers** decided to put questions about **Tommy Lasorda's** future to rest, signing him to manage for a 20th season in 1996. "You never know what will be said, but we finished first in the division, we were second in attendance and most of all I wanted to come back," Lasorda said. "I feel good physically and mentally. I love what I'm doing. I've never lost any enthusiasm and zest." Lasorda can relax, but general manager **Fred Claire** can't. He has to figure out who will be the Dodgers' shortstop, third baseman, fifth starter, center fielder and second baseman. The priorities are re-signing free-agent-to-be pitcher **Ramon Martinez,** and avoiding a nasty contract dispute with Japanese righthander **Hideo Nomo**. One of the more intriguing decisions will involve second baseman **Delino DeShields**. A major disappointment his first year and a half with the Dodgers, he did hit .308 with 20 RBIs and 19 stolen bases the final five weeks of 1995, and has told Claire he will take a substantial cut from his $3 million salary. But if DeShields returns, what about lineup sparkplug **Chad Fonville,** who is playing second base in the Arizona Fall League? He doesn't have the arm to be an everyday shortstop for the long run. There is some feeling he could handle center field if prospects **Roger Cedeno** and **Karim Garcia** are not ready ... Baltimore manager **Phil Regan** is set to return to the Los Angeles Dodgers as a special assistant to general manager Fred Claire if the Orioles decide not to honor the second year of his contract ... Oakland's new ownership has given manager **Tony La Russa** an extra week to decide whether he wants to opt out of the remaining two years on his contract, and owner Steve Schott says it could be extended again. "The ball's in Tony's court," he said. "(General manager) Sandy (Alderson) gave him the extension. Basically, it's another week, but we'll let him have until the end of the month if he needs it. I want Tony back if he's happy. I don't want Tony back is this is not his first choice." La Russa is talking with Baltimore and St. Louis. Money is not as big a factor as it may seem. While La Russa will make $1.5 million if he returns in 1996 the former ownership group is committed to pay half La Russa's salary if he remains with the A's. The Orioles aren't in a hurry, though. They want to see if **Buck Showalter** is rehired by the New York **Yankees,** and are curious about the lameduck status of Cincinnati manager **Davey Johnson,** a former Oriole second baseman.

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The Major League Baseball Players Association has reversed its field on allowing agents to represent players who appeared in spring training games during the strike. After taking a hard line to freeze out "scabs," common sense prevailed. The union leaders realized that if the so-called replacement players were left to negotiate on their own they could sign contracts that would have a negative impact on the salary structure, and is now encouraging agents to handle the negotiations ... Last spring there was a big announcement that **Jose Canseco** was diversifying and would start up an agent business — with **Bo McGinnis** his main negotiatior — designed to help Latin players. Not so fast. Seems that was considered a conflict of interest and baseball didn't care much for the idea of Canseco hitting against a pitcher he represents so the idea was put on hold. Canseco, however, says he will represent himself on the free-agent market this offseason. He better be prepared for financial shock. It's not likely Canseco will find anything close to the five-year, $26.5 million deal he just completed. Boston manager **Kevin Kennedy** does, however, expect Canseco back with the **Red Sox** and says Canseco will get some playing time in right field next year ... **Mike Easler,** fired as Boston's hitting coach when he refused to work with replacement players last week, has resurfaced as the roving minor-league hitting instructor with Baltimore ... Kennedy is seeking a contract extension. His current deal runs through 1996 with a $350,000 salary ... Milwaukee fired third base coach **Duffy Dyer** and first-base coach **Tim Foli,** creating openings for a couple of familiar names. Former **Brewers** second baseman **Jim Gantner** is expected to replace Foli, and Class AAA New Orleans manager **Chris Bando,** brother of Brewers general manager **Sal Bando,** is in line for the third base coaching job. Cincinnati manager-to-be **Ray Knight** has contacted the younger Bando about a possible job on the Reds' big-league staff, and the Brewers want to make sure they don't lose Bando, who has gotten strong reviews for his work as a minor-league manager.

(Tracy Ringolsby is a sportswriter for the Rocky Mountain News in Denver.)