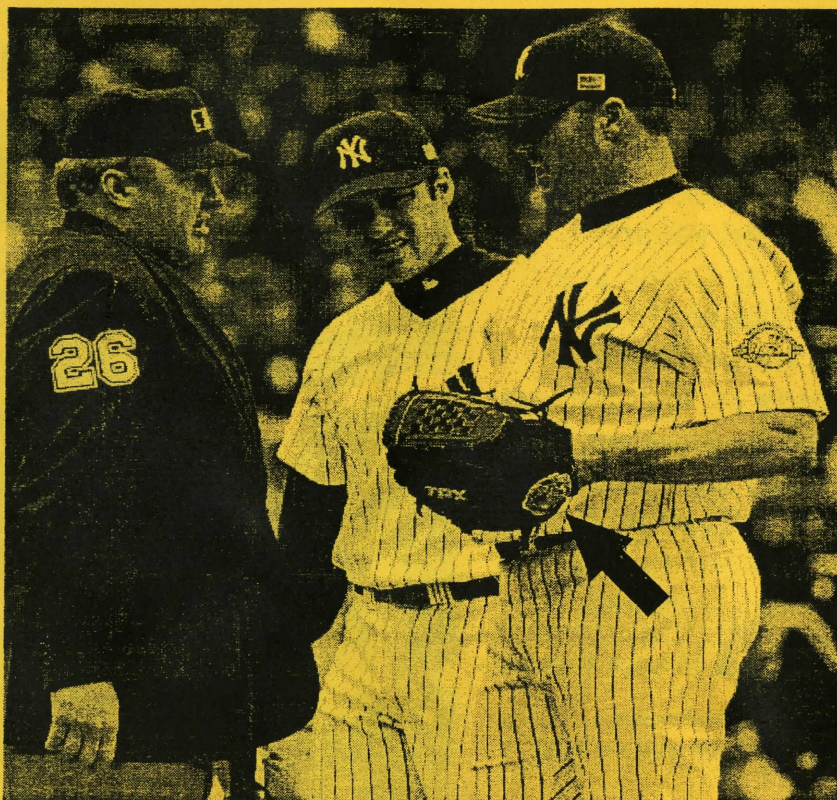


A Magazine by and for Baseball Fans

Z I S K

Fall 2003



#7

A WEENIE & HIS PATCH: CLEMENS TAKES A WIN FOR GRANTED

*Stalking Steve Phillips
The Founding of the American League
2003 All Star Game: Behind the Music
Plus, Hank Aaron, Ryne Duren, and more!*

Welcome to the Thanksgiving Issue!

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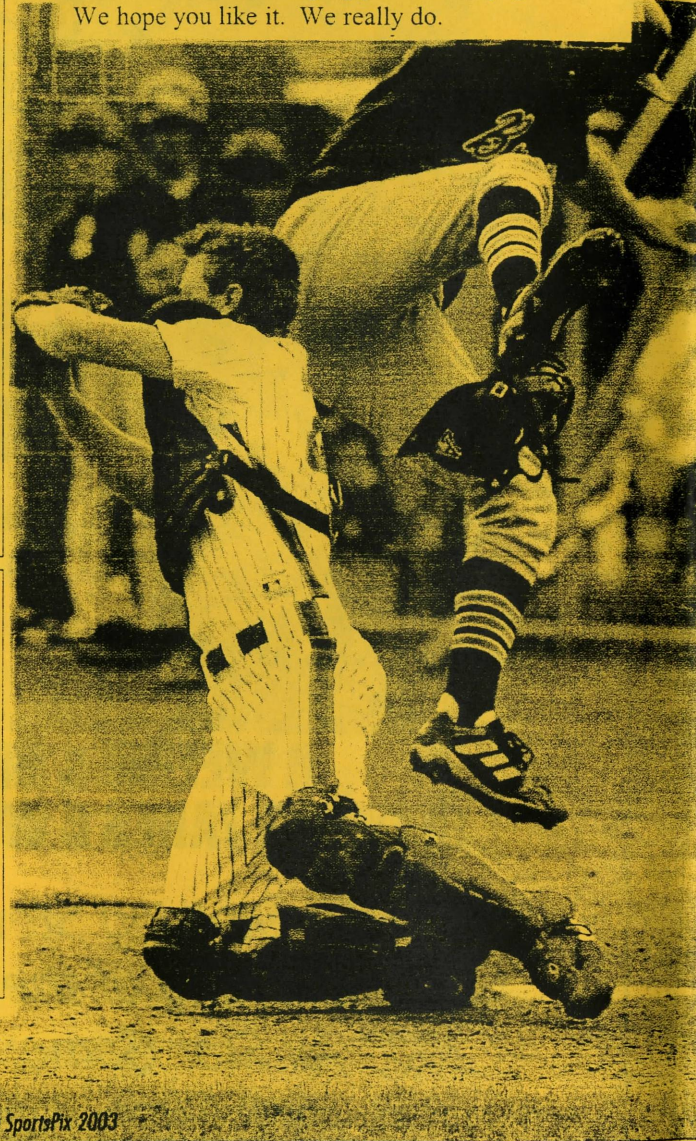
Zisk

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(Note: We're not moving next summer! The address above should be good for about five years.)

You can also reach us at:
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A few years back, Phil Garner, then managing the Brewers and apparently not too concerned with helping them win games, hatched the idea of using three pitchers per game, each pitching three innings, thus, removing the distinctions between starters, middle relievers, and closers. Phil was laughed out of a job, but we here at *Zisk*, equally unconcerned with helping the Brewers win (aside from Norb), have decided to put Phil's concept into action. Only in place of pitchers we have writers. Twenty of them, to be exact, bringing you this 44-page issue. We hope you like it. We really do.



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Stalking Steve Phillips by Brian Cogan

I was going to deliver a spell-binding and heart-pounding account of my successful pursuit of **Steve Phillips** when I accidentally learned how much the other writers at *Zisk* were being paid. **Steve Reynolds** alone gets five hundred dollar a word!

Clearly this cannot go on. As of this moment I am engaging in "Operation Shutdown" which will commence now and end when a large packet of cash reaches me on my boat.

Please remember that I am only in this for the kids and the love of the game.

Brian Cogan, Ph.D. has probably suffered more for the Mets than anyone else in his household this year alone. He teaches for Molloy College and New York University, writes for anyone who will meet his outrageous salary demands and bemoans the salary cap recently instituted for Go Metric writers. In Little League he once hit a double. He can be reached for endorsement deals at bac1@nyu.edu.

The Year in Baseball: 2003 As Seen by the Faloon Family

By Mike Faloon

Me: What do you think of this article?

My wife, Allie: I like it, but I wonder if other people will get it.

Me: Good point. I hope they do. But, to paraphrase the Dictators, screw 'em if they can't enjoy a sentimental, if somewhat indulgent, look back at the 2003 baseball season through the observations, emails, and conversations of the Faloon clan, a poor man's This American Life, if you will. Enjoy!

Part 1

While on vacation in July, I got wind of the annual Cape Cod League All Star game. The Cape League is comprised of college players from around the country. I made a compromise with my wife, trading an afternoon of shopping for attending the Cape's All Star game. My brother Pat joined us, and I was indulged in a full nine innings.

I try to soak up as much of the atmosphere as possible. My first impression is that this tiny amateur league has developed the "hey, we're your buddies" aura that MLB wants to project. And then some.

The game is held at a local high school field. As we pull into the parking lot, we're greeted by a sea of hand painted parking signs. Admission is a mere three dollars, and even that is but a "suggested donation." Making our way to the third base bleachers, I notice smoke billowing from the nearby snack shack. Apparently, the food is cooked on site. What a quaint notion.

The home run contest gets underway while I scan the program, reading over the list of former Cape League players now in the big leagues (there are dozens, including Nomar, Jeff Bagwell, and Barry Zito). Glancing up at the dinger derby, I'm struck by the sight of a patch of AstroTurf covering home plate, giving off the putt-putt golf atmosphere that home run derbies so richly deserve.

When the game gets underway, the setting seems too old fashioned to be true. It's the sort of place that would have Kevin Costner reaching for one of his cell phones and begging someone, *anyone*, to get "Blitzkrieg Bop" blasting out of the stadium's p.a. system asap. A hush falls over the stadium with each pitch as everyone tunes into the game. There are nearly 6,000 people in attendance, yet it's so quiet that not only can you hear the ball smack into the catcher's mitt, but you can also hear the sizzle of the grass as a foul ball burns down the third base line. And each ball fouled out of play sends a pack of kids

off in pursuit, even though they know all balls have to be returned. A row in front of us, two grandparents try to coax their grandson into becoming a catcher. (Grandmother: "Physically, it's the toughest position. Grandfather: "Mentally, too.") Scanning the crowd I conduct an unofficial poll with the following results: 50% of the fans have white hair and 67% of the fans have Thoreau on their bookshelves.

By the third inning, however, reality has returned. Aerosmith plays between hitters, people are talking during the action, and the grandfather is more *Grumpy Old Men* than *Field of Dreams* ("If I was the dictator of baseball, there'd be no long pants. They look like pajamas!"). At this point, I consider reconducting my poll.

Still, most of the evening is a time dash. The stat sheet is littered with pre-Ruthian ERA's, the highest being Garrett Mock's 2.42. The West goes up 1-0 in the bottom of the first. The East waits until the top of the ninth before responding, taking a 3-1 lead. No one scores for seven innings and aside from Joey Metropoulos' RBI double in the first, there are no extra base hits.

While warming up, Mock waves over a pair of 10-year-old boys. Their faces light up with "who, me?" and then Mock hands each of them a ball. A grand gesture by any measure, all the cooler when you realize that Mock probably has to pay for the balls.

But none of that compares to my favorite part of the game, perhaps of the entire season, which happens shortly after the last out is recorded. The stadium announcer comes over the p.a. with the following: "Players and coaches, there's burgers, chips, and soda at the concession stand for you."

Part 2

In early August a large part of my family finally gathered for a long-discussed trip to Fenway. The Red Sox beat the Orioles 6-4 that night and the trek renewed our collective desire to see the Sox stick it to the Yankees.

Through the rest of the summer and into the fall, we kept in close contact as Boston alternately surged and weezed their way into and through the playoffs, but there were no phone calls or emails following Aaron Boone's devastating game 7 home run in the ALCS; nothing needed to be said on the subject. That is until my uncle Steve broke the silence with the following email, sent out to the family in the midst of the World Series. (Note: Steve and his family reside in Lowell, Maine. The other character with whom you should be familiar is my 14-year-old cousin Dustin.)

"For as long as I can remember, a fellow named Ned Martin announced Red Sox games on radio. He retired a few years back, and actually passed away

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The Devil Bleeds Dodger Blue by Ken Derr

Tommy Lasorda is the devil incarnate.

Don't buy it? Let's check the facts.



Remember that waddle as he ran on to the field to protest a call or hug (and all those hugs—come on, those be reminders to his trading partners that their souls were his) one of his players? Have you ever seen a human move in quite that fashion? All that flesh undulating about, reeking of physical

indulgence and defiance of the spirit, wallowing in that ugliest of the seven deadly sins—gluttony. And while we're defying God, how about pride? I seem to remember a certain commercial in which our malevolent hero sang loudly and often about his reduced pounds via some money-making (can you say greed?) but fraudulent diet. Despite the PR spin his agency liked to play on us, Lasorda was full of anger, often spitting and screaming at umpires in ways that embarrassed children and horrified first row fans. Of course, he was always wrong, because the Dodgers were never safe and they never got anybody out legitimately, but there was Tommy, humiliating his family with unjustified indignance.

His body was also a waddling testament to sloth. No man can eat enough to produce that much gravity. It takes a lifetime of couchdom, in addition to the aforementioned face-stuffing, to generate that much unsightly girth. For the purposes of public decency, I will refrain from illustrating lust, and you, dear readers, can breath a collective sigh of relief.

Now we come to the heart of this man's diabolical makeup—his envy. Let us go back in time, to that glorious year of 1993, when **Barry Bonds** first joined the **San Francisco Giants** and led them to 103 victories. Sadly, in those days, the **Atlanta Braves** were also in the West Division, and they too had that many victories heading into the final game of the season. Of course, the Giants were playing their dreaded rival, the Los Angeles Dodgers, led by Beelzebub himself. Jump forward to the game, and for just a jot of context, the Dodgers, as always, were hopelessly out of the race. But for Mephistopheles, this game became the season. He did not watch idly as the good and the strong triumph and move

forward. Oh no. He used every man on his roster and every pitcher in his pen. To cut a nightmare short, as the Dodgers won the game and prepared to head into the dugout to rightfully mourn yet another losing season, sending the noble and worthy Giants home for the winter (just look at the nicknames—one signifying the great Greek gods of old, and another the sleazy, shifty hustlers of the underworld) El Diablo stormed onto the field in full waddle, short, fat arms doing rings that looked mysteriously like Dante's circles of hell, speaking in tongues, at least according to eyewitnesses near the spectacle, and radiated a pungent heat that left everyone within a four hundred foot radius suffering from colon trouble within a year.

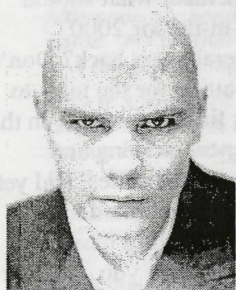
Think I'm just a bitter homie? Remember what should have been that heart-pumping, fist-in-the-air 2000 Olympic baseball victory from several years back? Don't you recall sitting on your couch, waiting for the tears to flow that never did? Here were our finest amateurs, in the purest tradition of Olympic excellence, tackling and conquering the pros of the former commie states, and yet there you sat, wondering why it didn't feel like Lake Placid. And there was Dodger Blue, spouting more nonsense and homilies and tripe, and while you couldn't digest what was happening within, you simply knew that the appropriate emotional response did not occur. Why? Well, you know why. Because a victory led by the devil is not a victory at all. The fallen angel who rules over the earth can change the laws of physics and push balls further than they ever had a right to go. How else could we ever explain **Steve Garvey**? That gold medal is beyond tarnished—it is literally dripping with wicked blue iniquity. It has the same credibility as that 1972 Russian basketball Cold War "win" when they put the time back on the clock.

Look, Italians have always been just a little bit closer to sin and salvation than the rest of us. It's time for somebody to recognize that Jesus may not have come back, but his adversary has. Don't put Tommy Lasorda in the Hall of Fame. Put him back where he belongs—in hell.

Ken Derr wishes he were Ken Stabler, or Kevin Mitchell, or Jeffrey Leonard, but since he's not, he says: "Let's put these fuckers in the Hall of Fame. Right fucking now." Amen. Good night.

2003 All Star Game...Behind the Music by Jake Austen

Chicago is synonymous with "machine politics" (we used to be synonymous with the broader concepts of political corruption and election fraud...thanks Florida for letting us off the hook!) and the way the machine works is an elaborate system of favors and "hook-ups." With that in mind I was absolutely shocked when I found myself with 2003 All Star Game tickets in hand acquired through completely legit means. Though I was prepared to work whatever meager connections and "people" I have to get in, somehow the postcard I sent in to the tickets sweepstakes yielded me four seats in the far corner of the towering upper deck. Though they cost in excess of \$200 each for the worst seats I've ever had in the excess of 300 Comiskey Park I & II games I've attended, I was thrilled. In the end not having to rely on hook-ups served me well,



as I likely would have broke my bank more severely to attend an exhibition game (for example, I ended up sitting next to the **Smashing Pumpkins'** audio tech because my buddy who was going to sit with us got a "hook-up" that rewarded him with a lodge seat next to **Billy Corgan** that cost him half a grand and was within a high school quarterback's throw of our seat).

But that aside, my point in describing the remoteness of my seat is to make it clear that if you watched the game on TV you know what happened better than I. However, I'd love to tell you of some stuff you likely missed on TV...the 2003 All Star Game...Behind the Music!

There were a number of magical musical moments during the All Star Weekend, but the first was definitely the most amazing and I believe the highlight of the entire dozen hours spent at the stadium that weekend. The first night of activities was All Star Sunday, where two exhibition games were scheduled, one between USA born minor leaguers and non-US pre-rookies ("The Futures Game," which replaced the more engaging and sentimental and superior Old-Timers Game) and one a softball game with celebrities and old-timers teaming up. Though it wasn't too exciting to watch a pitcher's duel between young players we never heard of, the late afternoon was far from unentertaining thanks to presence of nearly EVERY MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL MASCOT! That's right, a couple of dozen giant puppet-headed clowns were

gleefully entertaining the fans to the fullest. Some of the puppets were a bit less talented and courser in their humor (the **Rockies' Dinger the Dinosaur** and the **Expos' Youppi**, for example)

than some of the greats (the **Pittsburgh Parrot** and the classic **Mr. Met**). And some of the newer, hulking, generic "monster"

characters seemed to have been built with pelvic thrusts as their main comedic activity (for example, Cleveland's **Slider**, replacing the more offensive **Chief Wahoo**). But overall these were some entertaining dudes.

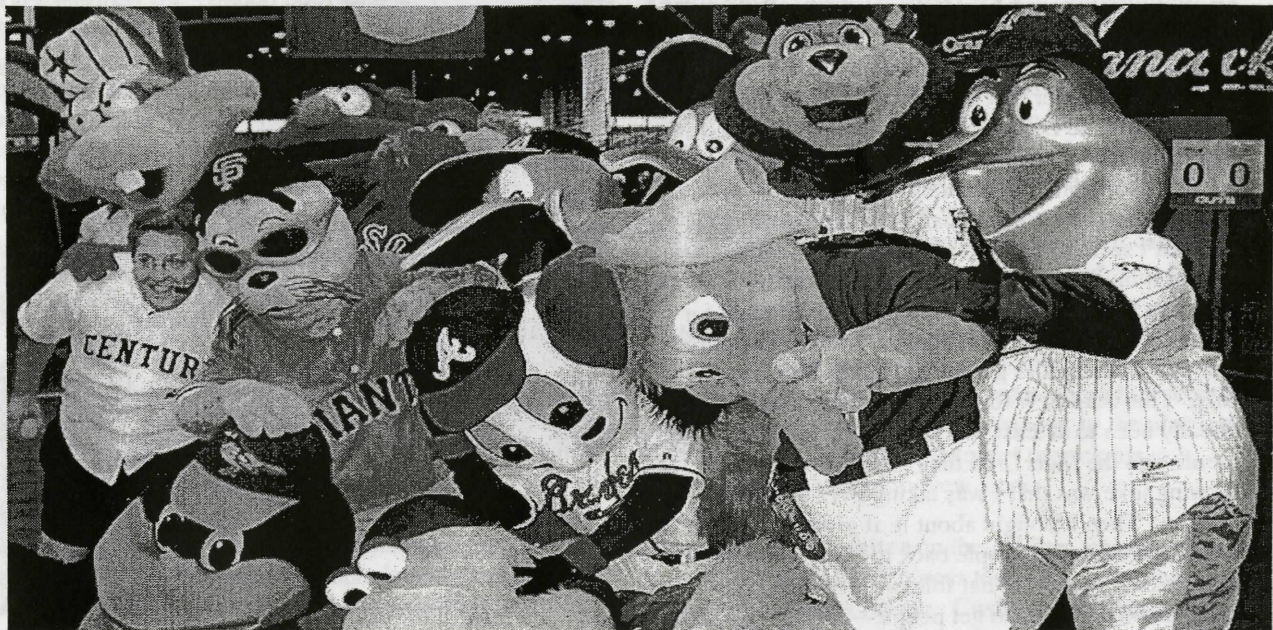


Between the baseball and softball games the mascots were introduced and danced on the dugouts while a couple of mini-trucks drove out, each pulling huge trailers with rows of giant amplifiers on them. Following was a large trailer with a rock band setup on it. After the mascots did their dances the band **Live** was introduced, and from behind the infield they played a couple of their '90s hits on the rock float. I must say, the band seemed a bit out of place, with shaved heads and mohawks...only the burly, bearded regular-guy bass player looked like he belonged at the ballpark.

Not particularly interested in Alternative Rock as a concept, I spent the band's first song ignoring them and using my binoculars to get good ganders at my favorite mascots. I watched some general goofing, but then I was shocked to see my all time fave, the **Padres' Swingin' Friar** gathering in a couple of his fellow puppets (I believe Boston's **Green Monster** and **Bernie Brewer**) and putting their big heads together engaging in what seemed like a serious conversation. When I pointed this out to my wife she conjectured that these guys never see each other, it was like a convention, they were likely happy to see each other and discuss mascot issues. That seemed odd to me considering they were on the big stage, and luckily it turned out to be a bunk theory. For a ripple of a plan was now disseminating from mascot to mascot.

And when Live went into their second song the plan went into action.

Twenty-four giant puppet-headed mascots rushed the stage and formed a sprawling, chaotic, HILARIOUS mascot mosh pit! They were skanking, slamming, pogoing and shaking loosely hinged pelvises. Though there were no gorillas (only a lion, a cardinal, a bear and Billy the Marlin), they went APESHIT! It was one of the funniest gags I'd ever seen. They were going nuts, and when the Friar did the **Curly/Angus Young** lie-on-the-ground-run-in-a-circle move I was sold! This was the most hilarious ballpark rock & roll moment ever.



Notable is the fact that the band didn't seem to appreciate this spontaneous show of support. The lead singer completely ignored the moshers, pretending not to see them and the rockers didn't play to the pit at all. When their dreary song was over they left the stage without even a gesture towards the brilliant physical comics who made their brief set worthwhile. That is, all of them except Beady, the best Live of them all, who jumped down and hugged the Pittsburgh Parrot.

If anyone doubts that the moshpit was spontaneous, note that when the pop punk band the **Ataris** played their cover of the hokey baseball hit "Boys of Summer" [Ed note: Penned by *satan himself*, **Don Henley**] before Mondays home run contest no such pit was enacted...those mascots

had been taken to the woodshed.

There were several other good musical moments All Star Weekend. **Brian McKnight** matched **Dave Winfield** for longest softball dinger. **Koko Taylor** sang the tourist Blues chestnut "Sweet Home Chicago." Sox legendary organist **Nancy Faust** rocked a few of her famous rock puns ("Proud Mary" for **Scott Rolen**...get it, "Rolen on the river...").

And **Amy Grant** bizarrely signaled for her band to pick up the tempo during "America the Beautiful"...and she was singing to a recording!

But all those paled compared to the punk puppet pandemonium. That marvelous moment proved that those mascots were truly All Stars!

***Jake Austen** edits **Roctober Comics and Music** magazine the journal of popular music's dynamic obscurities, and (with his wife **Jacqueline**) produces the cable access children's dance show **Chic-A-Go-Go**. His new book **A Friendly Game of Poker** is out from **Chicago Review Press** this Fall. His work has appeared in **The Cartoon Music Book**, **Nickelodeon Magazine**, **Playboy**, **Spice Capades: The Spice Girls Comic Book** and **Bubblegum Music Is The Naked Truth**. He has attended over 400 **White Sox** games, even when **Gary Redus** was the best player.*

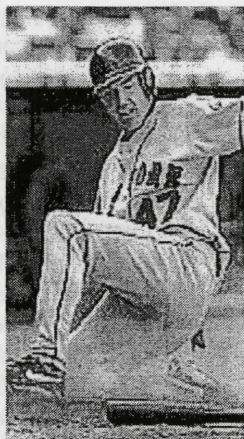
The New York Mess...I Mean Mets: A Special Zisk Report

Editor's Note: The past two seasons have not been kind to Mets fans. With many Zisk's staff of writers based in and around New York, it's inevitable that the topic of this team's downfall would be top of mind. So here are three views on the horror reality show that is the New York Metropolitans.

If I were the Mets' GM....by Lisa Alcock

Usually, from April to June of every year I take great pride in watching my hometown team, the **Detroit Red Wings**, play for the Stanley Cup. Unfortunately, that wasn't the case this year. No, I'm not bitter about that, not at all. I'm not bitter that my team lost to a team named after some lame Disney movie starring **Emilio Estevez**. Not me, nope.... So now that hockey has ended with the **NJ Devils** winning the Stanley Cup I feel I can put my full attention towards baseball. My only problem is that I just can't seem to get into watching the **Mets** this year. To put it mildly, they suck. They're in last place in their division. Hell, they're not even playing .500 ball for crying out loud. As I write this they've won 36 games and lost 46. I have yet to get my ass out to Shea yet and it's July. This is all new for me. Usually by this time I've already been to at least four to five games. A little over a month ago the Mets fired their GM, **Steve Phillips**. My running joke was that I was taking over as the head honcho. Then I thought about it: if given the chance what would I do to bring people back to Shea and how would I make a better team? What follows are some promotional ideas and trade ideas to get people—mainly me—back into the stadium...some of which might be a little unrealistic...but I mean, c'mon, so is my idea of being the new GM.

1) Win a Date with Joe McEwing Night. Ok, I admit, I'm being a total girl with this one. (And why is it my number one idea here? Who knows, maybe it's my wishful thinking.) But please, he's such an awesome utility player... and he's pretty damn cute too. Why wouldn't a girl want to go out with him? This promotional night

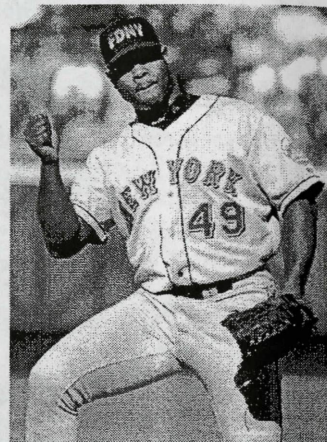


is definitely aimed at the 20-37 female age bracket.

2) Bring back RC Cola to Shea Stadium. The appropriate beverages are crucial to any baseball game. I can't recall when I was introduced to RC Cola, but I love it. I'd heard that it was offered at Shea up until the 1980's, though, **Evan**—who claims he's a life-long Mets fan—can't give me a definitive answer as to when they stopped selling it at Shea.

3) Let's get some vegetarian fare at the ballpark. How about a few veggie only food booths? I'd really like it if they had tofu dogs, veggie chik'n sandwiches and veggie burgers. Hey, vegetarians are baseball fans too. Don't get me wrong, I love the overpriced beer, but that's not a meal...well, maybe after three or four...*hiccup*.

4) Trade Armando Benitez¹...PLEASE! And what the hell is he doing at the All Star game?? I'm so tired of screaming at the TV whenever they bring him in. He's can't strike anyone out to save his life. Some might ask me, 'Was he ever any good?' I think my grandma can pitch better than Armando. Wait a minute, maybe I should call my grandma...



5) Trade Alomar², Burnitz³ and yes, Piazza. I like Robbie, but I think it was a bad move to obtain him in the first place. He probably misses Omar in Cleveland. I tell you, those times I did see the Indians, there was nothing more perfect than the Vizquel-Alomar-Thome double play.

6) Fans will get the chance to guess the number of errors committed by a certain position player in a particular inning of the game. Ballots will be available prior to the game and must be submitted before the National Anthem is sung. Fans who guess correctly will win that amount times \$100! Example, three errors on the 1st baseman will get one lucky fan \$300! The Mets have already proven they have money to throw away by acquiring players who don't perform, so why not spend a

few more dollars on this promotional night?

7) Be the Lead Off Hitter Night! (Right-handers only.). You think you can do a better job? Well, step right up! Arrive at batting practice and a panel of judges will decide who's the best from a pool of potential hitters. (Note: only the first 100 will be allowed to "try out.")

8) Be the new 2nd baseman!! Actually, I wouldn't mind trying out for this position. I need a better job anyhow. And, I feel that my two years' experience on my company softball team qualifies me to try out for the Mets.

9) Annihilate the "Up with Pepsi" people. (A.k.a. the "Pepsi party patrol", those annoying, overly-excitable people who shoot crappy t-shirts into the stands directly at peoples' heads.) One lucky winner will be able to turn the T-shirt guns on the Pepsi people. Kind of reminiscent of a firing line....



If the Mets lose—which they seem to be doing quite often lately—one lucky winner will get to pelt as many rocks as she/he can at the incredibly creepy, giant-headed Mr. Met. This will be a sponsored event... nothing like "Sausage-gate" in Milwaukee.

So, rather than the Mets just throwing in the towel for the remainder of the season I am sending this list to them. Hopefully they'll take the rest of my ideas into consideration. If not, well, I guess I can concentrate on college football season, which begins before Labor Day. And I think I can get some **Red Wings** pre-season games on that pay-per-view hockey channel...

¹ **Author's note:** prior to publication...the Mets did trade Armando to who else? The Yankees. Man, that'll be quite interesting. [Editor's note: Benitez lasted less than a month in the Bronx—he was banished to Seattle for former Yankee bullpen mainstay **Jeff Nelson**.]

² **Author's note:** Also prior to publication of this fine zine

yet another wish of the writer of this article came true: the Mets did indeed unload Robbie to the White Sox for three minor league players, an infielder and two pitchers.

³ **Author's note:** Yet another trade! Burnitz went to the Dodgers on July 14th. In unrelated news, also going to the Dodgers that day from the Newark Bears: **Rickey Henderson**. Woo hoo, Rickey!

Mets Thoughts by Mike Bonomo

The Mets finally got the food court that is **Mo Vaughn** to waddle out of Shea. The Mets get \$25 million from insurance for this because he has spent 90 days on the DL. Apparently the only one stupider than the Mets, who signed Vaughn, is the guy who wrote up the policy. I'd love to be his boss just so I could fire him. I guess Mo's knees just couldn't hold up his weight plus the extra pounds in his wallet from the money they gave him. The Mets negotiation: "Oh, you've been out of baseball for a year and weigh over 300 pounds? How much can we give you?" Of course this is the team that traded **Nolan Ryan**.

On top of Vaughn leaving, whatever it was that had been playing 2nd base went to the With Sox. Watching **Roberto Alomar** play was the closest thing I've seen to a player taking a recliner and a newspaper to the plate since **Bobby Bonilla**. Alomar also forgot to pack his gold gloves when he moved to New York.

I was glad to see **Benitez** on the All Star team because it prepared me for his trip across town. After he blows a few games in tight spots I'm sure **Cashman** will be looking for a new job.

I would love or the Mets to trade the apple that comes out of the hat, the airplane race, and the three card monte for kids to the Brewers in exchange for the sausage race. When Pittsburgh comes to the Mets again maybe we could get **Randall Simon** to hit Mr. Met on the head. It would make me happy if Mr. Met would ask **Mike Tyson** for an autograph if you know what I mean. It's hard enough enduring the team, never mind the constant embarrassment of having such a dumb ass mascot.

I still feel better about this Met team than I have in over a year. **Reyes, Wiggington, Phillips** and **Duncan** are showing some guts out there. With **Piazza** at first and **Wilson/Phillips** behind the plate, the Mets are much

better. The young players on the team are giving me the toughest gift you can give a fan of a last place team, hope for next year. (Or the year after, or the year after that...) All the Mets need is some starting pitching, middle relief and a closer, and they're set.

I have mixed emotions about Detroit beating the Mets '62 won-loss record. Maybe we could loan them Mr. Met for inspiration.

Mike Bonomo is currently playing guitar with his band The Miscreants. He has written for The Teen Scene and PC Magazine. He likes bowling and softball and has been a lifelong Met fan, which may explain his drinking problem.

You Gotta Believe...that It Can't Sound Any Worse by Steve Reynolds

The past two seasons have been painful to be a Mets fan, with botched front office moves, odd injuries, rumors and



haircuts stirring up more news than the team's shoddy play. But what makes watching this team even worse is one single factor—Fox Sports New York and MSG announcer **Fran Healy**. After many years of watching Mets games, nothing makes me cringe more than the sound of Healy pontificating.

Healy has the amazing ability to take the most glaringly obvious play and somehow repeat exactly what happened and make it sound like sturdy, in-depth analysis. For example, one evening I'm pretty sure I heard Healy talking about the Mets lack of hitting this way: "If you're not hitting as a team, you can't score any runs."

[Pause to let it sink in.]

Really, Mr. Healy? And here I thought the Mets could just buy runs by paying off the umpires and not even bother with that pesky thing we call going up to bat.

Healy has ruined more games for me this season more than any other because he's been paired with **Ted Robinson**, perhaps best known as the tennis voice of NBC. Robinson is a fine play by play man, and does a great job with the Mets radio broadcasts. But he's content to let Healy and his hair-brained comments dominate most



telecasts. **Howie Rose**, Healy's partner since 1996, has been moved over to the radio side of things for much of the season. The few times Rose has worked with Healy I have let out an audible sigh of relief because I know Rose won't allow Healy to say something insane like, "**Tony Clark** is swinging a really hot bat" when the first baseman is batting under .200.

Let me put my Healy hatred another way—I'd rather hear **Tom Seaver** and **Keith Hernandez** (two of the biggest egos in baseball) call a game together than suffer through Healy. While Seaver and Hernandez might spend much of their time behind the mic saying how much better they were than today's players, I'm sure you'd never hear one of them say, "Benitez has really turned it around" when it was obvious to anyone that he hadn't.

On a non-Healy note, I do miss **Gary Thorne** on the WB 11 telecasts. He made **Tom Seaver** bearable (which is a tall order in itself), he made fun of Seaver's pomposity, he always sounded like he was excited to be at the ballpark and most importantly, he was consistently funny. Thorne's replacement, **Dave O'Brien**, is good, but he doesn't put Seaver in his place enough.



I know many people have suggestions about what free agents to bring in next season to make the Mets winners—personally I think the team should stick with the kids and let them grow another season. Who cares if having a young team robs **Tom Glavine** of his chance to get 300 wins? If he wanted that chance, he should have stayed in Atlanta. My suggestion for the **Wilpon** family is to bring in some free agents on the broadcast side of things. Bring back Thorne and **Tim McCarver** to do the WB 11 games. Many folks hate McCarver, but he's miles better than anyone else out there. Dump Healy, and rotate Rose, Robinson and Hernandez on Fox Sports and MSG. And then when **Al Leiter** retires after next season, grab him as your color guy and let Hernandez do **Brooklyn Cyclones** games instead. Leiter has shown during his brief stints on ESPN in 1998 and 1999 and being miked during games by Fox that he has no problem speaking his mind and has a great ability to analyze baseball in simple terms.

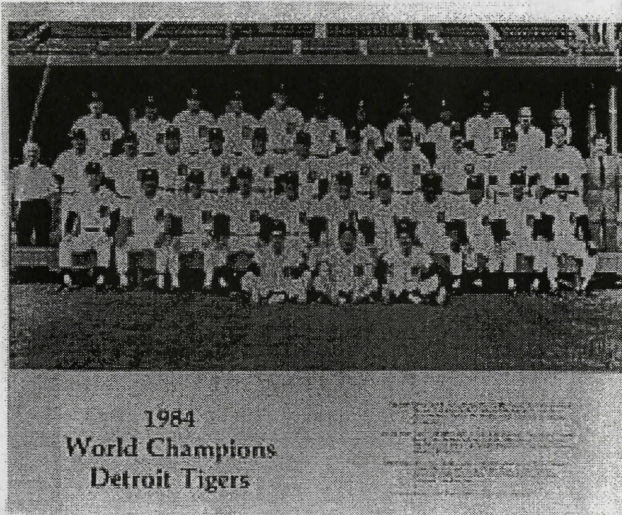
Lastly, thank you **Bob Murphy** for a lifetime's worth memories in the radio booth. Listening in the car to a Mets game will never be the same.

The Trail of Tears: Every City I Move to Has a Shitty Baseball Team by Lisa Alcock

To my utter and complete horror, it was recently brought to my attention by a friend of mine that every city in which I've chosen to live has had a baseball team with a shitty record: Detroit, Milwaukee and NYC (actually, I live in Queens and am a **Mets** fan). I can't believe I've had such an impact, but let's look at the facts.

Exhibit A:

I grew up in Canton, Michigan and the baseball team of my youth was the **Detroit Tigers**. I loved going to the



corner of Michigan and Trumbull in Detroit to watch **Sweet Lou (Whitaker)** and **Alan Trammell** play. And who could forget the 1984 World Series? I couldn't have been happier. But, every year after that the Tigers have yet to reclaim any sort of similar record. I got a little excited before this season began because the heroes from my youth: **Alan, Lance (Parish)** and **Gibby (Kirk Gibson)** were coming back to manage and coach the Tigers. I moved from Michigan to Wisconsin in 1994, so I cannot be held responsible for their record from 1995 to the present. Though, my parents still live in Michigan. Perhaps it's *their* doing that the Tigers have only won 25 games this year and are on track to be worse than the 1962 Mets.

Exhibit B:

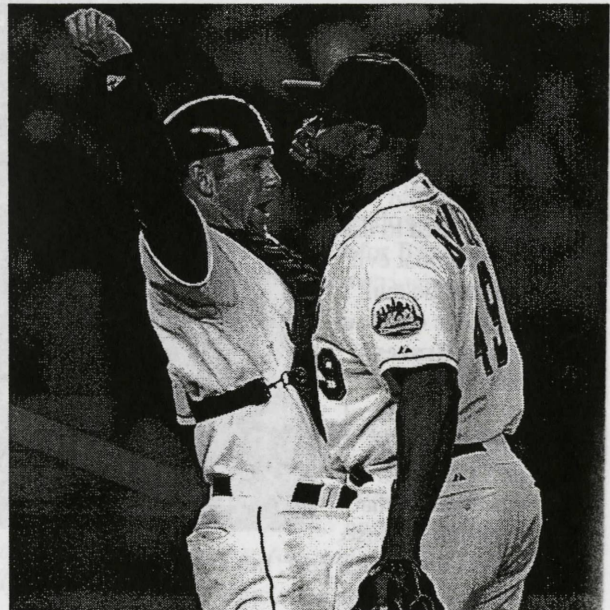
In 1994 I moved to Milwaukee, Wisconsin to attend grad school. I'm not sure I can be held responsible for the abysmal **Brewers** record though. I never attended a game at County Stadium and I was on hiatus from baseball.

There was a period in my life that I didn't pay attention to baseball [gasp!] on account of being disgusted with the sport. So my friend just might be wrong about my influence on Milwaukee's horrid record. Though, wait a minute...I was following **Cal Ripken's** consecutive game record...which I did watch, on TV. I am not sure if this actually counts as my re-introduction to baseball. Maybe I am responsible for their terrible record. Hmmm...

Exhibit C:

In 1999 I moved to NYC. Let's see how the Mets have done since I've lived here: 1999: NLCS champs, not bad...but they could have gone farther. 2000: Heartbreaking loss to the Yankees in the World Series. 2001: They didn't make the playoffs. 2002: Acquired very expensive players who didn't produce, fired **Bobby V.** and hired **Art Howe**. 2003: I don't think I need to comment on their current last place status.

So there you have it. Apparently I really do possess the power to influence a baseball team solely on where I choose to live. Now I think I can put my supernatural powers to work in a more positive fashion. So, I've decided to move. Hand me the *Village Voice* classifieds. You can reach me at my new address in the Bronx...

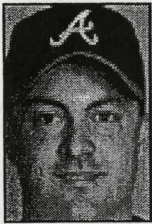


The Year of the Braves by Josh Rutledge

It's my belief that every person on this Earth is endowed with at least one special gift. Some are born with the gift of music. Others are natural athletes. A few are great orators. Many are brilliant artists. A handful can breathe fire. Several can open cans of tuna with their teeth.

And then there's me.

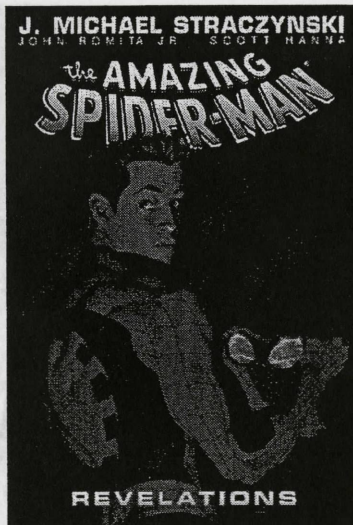
I, **Joshua Blake Rutledge**, possess one special gift: the ability to ruin people's lives. At least in the case of baseball. My endorsement is more like a career death sentence. Go take a look at your *Zisk* back issues. Read my contributions. Remember my piece on **Rico Brogna** and how he was so underrated? He retired mere months after I wrote that article. I did him in. I single-handedly destroyed the career of a two-time 100 RBI man. He's now forgotten, and it's all my fault. Another time, I similarly cursed **Andy Ashby**.



Most recently, I jinxed the 2002 **Phillies**. And then there were my oh-so-brilliant pre-season predictions last year. I probably doomed the **Detroit Tigers** to 100 years in the cellar.

It's obvious that there's a Josh Rutledge *Zisk* jinx. Just ask **Pete Rose**.

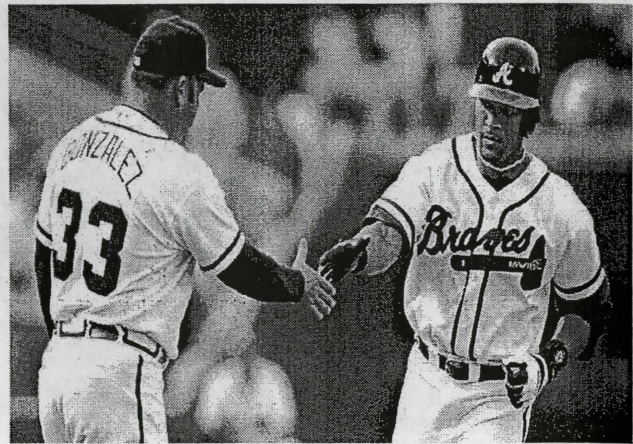
Spider-Man learned that great power brings great responsibility. I've learned that too, and that's why I've decided to write this piece. Like **Spider-Man**, I find myself obligated to use my gift to combat evil. And what single evil could be more evil than the **Atlanta Braves**? The heinous Atlanta Braves! The diabolical Atlanta Braves! **Ted Turner**'s pact with the devil has ensured that the Braves cannot lose. Key players leave each year, but new recruits always arrive and blossom into stars once they've tasted the



mandatory demonic juices. Several Braves, I've heard, are actually robots programmed for baseball supremacy. It's just not fair.

Therefore, I now present my predictions for the remainder of the Braves' 2003 campaign. As I write this, it's July 16th, 2003. The Braves are 61-32, which puts them wight-and-a-half games ahead of second place Philadelphia. They've got the division locked up, right? Of course.

(You're reading this in the fall. So by now, you'll know whether I really possess the "gift of jinx" or am just a baseball ignoramus)



August 1

Polygamy is legalized in the United States. **Chipper Jones** immediately marries the 33 Hooters girls that have mothered his children. He celebrates by going four-for-four with two home runs in a 7-1 win over the **Dodgers**.

August 5

In a shocking move, **Gary Sheffield** holds a press conference and announces that he's a spoiled, bigheaded jerk. That night in Milwaukee, he homers four times to lead the Braves to a 31-7 victory over the **Brewers**. Pitcher **Russ Ortiz** shocks the fans by hitting a pair of home runs and a standup triple. The Braves now find themselves leading second-place Montreal by a full 12 games.

August 12

Javy Lopez's 35th home run of the season gives the Braves a 1-0 win over San Diego. **Horacio Ramirez**

picks up his 13th win of the year. **Jung Bong** levitates out of the bullpen, and the crowd goes wild.

August 13

The video for **Rafael Furcal's** new rap single, "Sweet Swingin' Stick", debuts at #1 on MTV's *Total Request Live*.

August 21

The Braves complete a four-game sweep of the **Giants** with a dominating 7-0 victory. **Andruw Jones** hits his 43rd home run of the year, and **Greg Maddux** tosses his second consecutive perfect game. The Braves now lead second-place Florida by 18 games.

August 27

Marcus Giles cures cancer and parts the Red Sea. Later he doubles twice and leads the Braves to a 17-2 win over the hapless **Mets**.



September 5

Chipper Jones flies to Switzerland so that a team of renowned brain surgeons can remove his massive ego. **Darren Bragg** takes Chipper's place in the lineup that night and hits for the cycle. The Braves beat the **Pirates** 3-1.

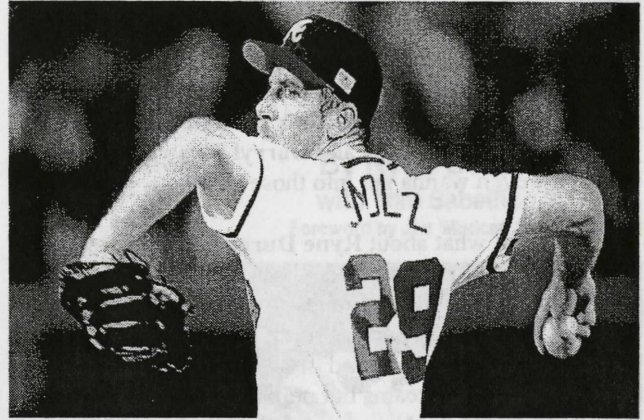
September 11

Julio Franco hits two inside-the-park home runs, and the Braves complete a four-game sweep of the last place

Phillies with a 5-2 victory. **Vinny Castilla** tries his hand at pitching and strikes out **Pat Burrell** twice.

September 13

Gary Sheffield comes down with a terrible case of humility and is immediately placed on the disabled list. Still, the Braves top Florida 8-3. **John Smoltz** picks up his 62nd save.



September 23

The Braves slam the **Expos** 12-1 as **Russ Ortiz** wins his 29th game of the season. After the game, **Henry Blanco** flies to Iowa and heals seven blind mutes.

September 26

Roberto Hernandez finds out that he's been cast to play **Professor Dumbledore** in the next *Harry Potter* film.

September 28

The Braves wrap up their regular season with a 10-0 win over the **Phillies**. In order to ensure that the Braves don't choke in the playoffs, God himself endows every Brave with superpowers. He also arranges for **Barry Bonds** and **Jason Giambi** to go down with hamstring injuries.

October

No jinxing necessary here. The Braves will still choke.

Josh Rutledge lives in southeastern Pennsylvania and edits the on-line rock magazine NOW WAVE. He likes full-figured women, '70s punk rock, and 20-ounce bottles of Coca-Cola Classic. Contrary to popular belief, he is neither a drug addict nor a Journey fan. His favorite ballplayer is Bobby Abreu.

Ryne Duren: One Day at a Time by Tim Hinely

Baseball and alcohol have always seemed to go hand in hand (at least as much as football and alcohol) and baseball has always had its share of drunks, guys who liked to tip more than a few back during their careers.

Mickey Mantle was said to be sloshed on many an occasion while wearing the Yankee's pinstripes. Old-time slugger **Hack Wilson** was said to be someone you wouldn't wanna be around while he was hoisting a brewski and the same with **Albert "Mr. Happy" Belle**. In 1985 **Sam McDowell** called himself "the biggest, most hopeless, and most violent drunk in all of baseball." Then there's **Bob Welch** and **Darryl Strawberry**...well, we don't even wanna get into those guys.

But what about **Ryne Duren**? Rinold George Duren Jr.? Who's Ryne Duren, you say? Well, ol' Ryne was probably baseball's biggest AND most hopeless drunk (no, fuck you Sam). Duren's career last for 11 years (from 1954-1965) and in that time span he played for seven different teams but perhaps his most prominent years were with the **New York Yankees** from 1958-1961.

For starters, the few photos I've seen of Duren made him look like nothing more than a reject from *Revenge of the Nerds* on a truly bad bender. He didn't

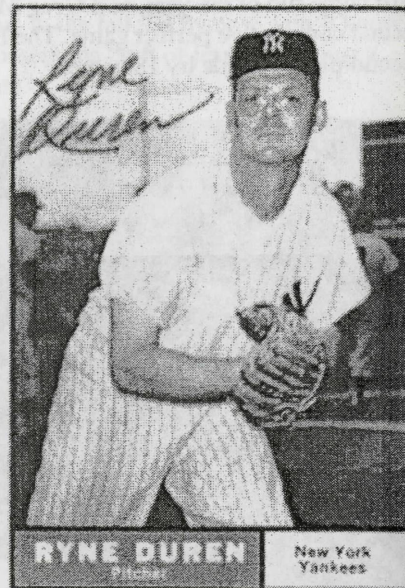


have the brash good looks of a **Mantle** or a **Yogi Berra** (snick snick) but what Duren lacked in **Mel Gibson**-ish looks he more than made up for in his fastball. Duren was known as baseball's first "truly frightening power reliever." He wore these thick coke-bottle glasses,

probably couldn't see a damn thing when he was straight, much less schnockered and this guy threw wall to wall heat. Rumor has it Mantle told him he was the fastest ever and even an authority as uh, knowledgeable as **Tony**

Kubek said Duren tossed the ball faster than the Texas Tornado, **Nolan Ryan** (and Duren's 87 strikeouts in 76 innings in 1958 and 96 strikeouts in 77 innings in 1959 is no small feat).

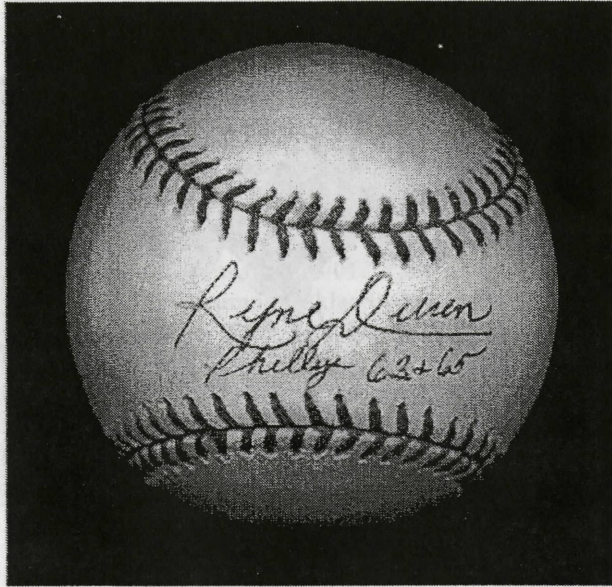
But alas, the powers that be in the office of the Yankees decided it was time to get rid of ol' Ryne after the 1961 season. His game was falling off, his arm seemed to be losing strength, and, as Duren himself puts it, "By that time I was boozing quite a bit and my body was beginning to deteriorate. That's why the Yankees got rid of me in 1961." Well, there you have it. But this is no case of a guy quietly exiting the majors for comfy/pickled retirement years of lazing in the **Lazy Boy**. The life of hell was just beginning for Ryne Duren.



It all came down to self-esteem and Duren had none of it. "All I wanted out of life was for people to like me," he once said. One time, while trying to impress **Mickey Mantle** and **Whitey Ford**, Duren got so loaded that both Mick and Ford came over to him and told him he couldn't handle his liquor and to stop it. So completely hurt and embarrassed by this episode, Duren began to drink all by himself. Back in those days the apparent method of alcohol "rehab" was to trade the lush to another team. And this happened to Duren five more times from 1961-1965.

After hearing how hopeless of a drunk Duren was no team in baseball wanted him and a week after he tried to jump off a bridge he was out of baseball for good.

From this point on Duren tried too many self-destructive acts to mention. He passed out with a cigarette and burned his house down. He zonked out while driving and slammed into another car. He blacked out one time and awoke face down in a swimming pool. He eventually was arrested for drunk driving and then, his wife left him.



On New Year's Eve in 1965 he tried to cash in his own chips once again by parking his car on a railroad track in San Antonio, Texas. He sat there hoping to get creamed by the locomotive but instead the cops came and arrested him before the train could plow him down. If it wasn't for bad luck, Duren would have had no luck at all. After that incident he hung around with the bums for a while before checking himself into the San Antonio State Mental Hospital. After 82 days there drying out with tranquilizers he went on the wagon for nearly a year, but didn't have the strength to stay sober.

After a stint at the DePaul Rehabilitation Hospital he tried to kill himself a third time by sitting in a Milwaukee motel room for ten days and attempting to drink himself to death. After lapsing in and out of consciousness for a week, a stroke of better judgment came to him. As Duren puts it, "As a human being I was one big mess," he said, "But I felt helpless to do anything about it."

After a few more false starts at sobriety Duren was finally able to make it work with his third try at rehab.

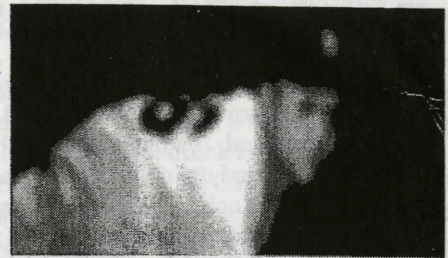
Duren finally stopped drinking in May of 1968 and since then he has devoted his life to helping professional and college athletes deal with alcohol and drug problems. In 1972 he became director of the alcohol rehab program at the Stoughton Community Hospital in Wisconsin and he even married a nurse he met there. He worked at that program until

1980. Since then he has written three books about his life, career and comeback from alcoholism (the same disease that apparently killed Mantle).

Today Duren, 73, still lives in his native Wisconsin and still works as an alcohol and drug abuse counselor. He works with a group called *Winning Beyond Winning* which is a group of ex-athletes helping people prevent the kind of life he (and many others in pro sports) have experienced.

Author's note: Some of the information from this article came from a book called *Baseball Babylon* by **Dan Gutman** and two Internet articles on baseball; one by **Chris Olds** (entitled "One Baseball Card Can Reveal a lot From the Past") and one by ESPN's **Rob Neyer** (entitled "Loose Cannons Sometimes Go Astray").

Tim Hinely loves the *Pittsburgh Pirates* and lives in *Portland, Oregon*. He has been publishing his own zine, *Dagger*, for several years now. Send him \$3.50 to see a copy to: PO Box 820102 Portland, OR 97282-1102 or write at: daggerboy@prodigy.net.

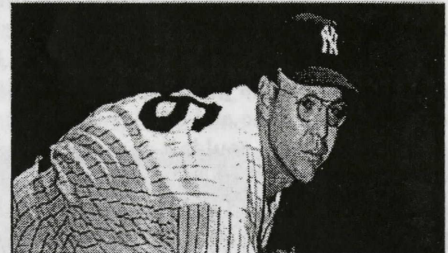


I CAN SEE CLEARLY NOW

Ryne Duren Talks from the Heart About
Life, Baseball, and Alcohol

By Ryne Duren
with Tom Sabellico

Foreword by Jim 'Mudcat' Grant

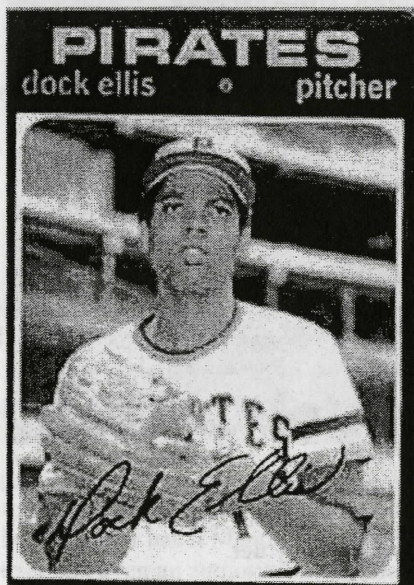


Top 10 Games I've Attended by Kevin Chanel

I love making lists. It all started with *The Book Of Lists* back in the mid-seventies. I was hooked. Anything listy and I get transfixed. It's like looking at boxscores. My eyes get glassy, and the numbers just start to blend into each other. I can look at 200 pages of lists, be entertained the whole time, and later on not be able to tell you a word of what I was reading.

Over the years the conversation has come up repeatedly concerning favorite or most memorable games attended. While some stand out like a biker at a box social, a few I had to sort out and research the dates. So here you go:

1) Montreal vs. San Diego. Jack Murphy Stadium. 6/3/95. Simply amazing. **Pedro Martínez** throws nine perfect innings, only to have **Bip Roberts** break it up with a double in the 10th. Unfortunately, the Padres' **Joey Hamilton** pitched perhaps the only good game of his career, going nine and only giving up three hits and two walks. Montreal couldn't muster up even one run though, as there were two ungodly amazing double plays turned by a juiced-up **Ken Caminiti** and second baseman **Jody Reed**. When Pedro walked off the mound after the bottom of the ninth, the paltry crowd of 9,000-or-so gave him the standing "O." They did the same after manager **Felipe Alou** removed him from the game after Roberts' hit. Absolute finest pitching and defensive performance I've seen.



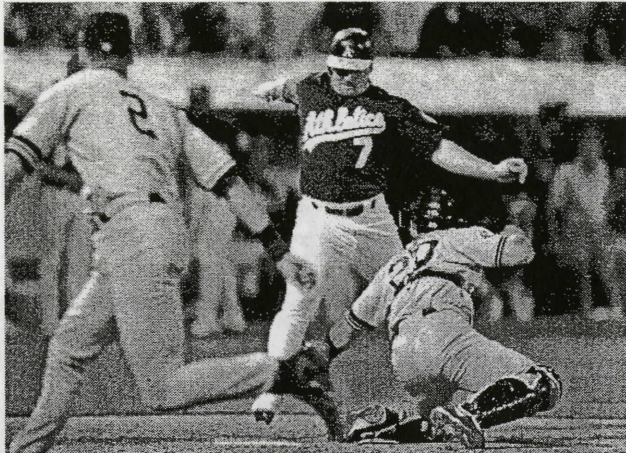
2) Pirates vs. San Diego. San Diego Stadium. 6/12/70. **Dock Ellis'** lysergic no-hitter. Supposedly—if you can believe my father—this is the first game I ever went to. I have no memory of it, as I was only five, and my mother shipped us off to the game with a cache of homemade burritos. Word has it he (Ellis, not my

father) dosed up in L.A. with his girlfriend hours before the game, and was tripping balls by the time he hit the mound. The first pitch bounced 10 feet in front of the plate. Ellis walked eight batters and hit at least one. "I was zeroed in on the (catcher's) glove, but I didn't hit the glove too much. I remember hitting a couple of batters and the bases were loaded two or three times."



3) S.F. vs. Anaheim. World Series Game Four. Pac Bell Park. 10/23/02. Rookie phenom' **Francisco Rodriguez** gets tagged for a single from **David Bell** for the deciding run. My wife and I, after a week of trying to get tickets to the game, went online in the first inning of Game One and snagged three tickets for games four and five. Not only did we see the best game from the Giants standpoint, but we scalped the three tickets to the next game for a total of \$750. We watched the game from the Acme Chophouse next door to the stadium, eating steaks and drinking expensive wine in front of a huge TV and a room full of fans.

4) Padres vs. Astros. San Diego Stadium. 9/24/71. Game one of double-header. 2-1 Astros in 21 innings. Yup. Twenty-one innings...in the 1st game of a twin-bill. Pretty much everyone there just wanted this thing over with, including Astros' outfielder **Jesus Alou**, of the Flying Alou Brothers. Much to the crowd's appreciation he stole home in the top of the 21st. Padres catcher and future father of an All-Star **Fred Kendall** drops the throw to allow the run. My dad and I left at 12:30 a.m., during the 3rd inning of game two, because he had to work in the morning. Some loud hick behind us was yelling "Hey Jee-zus" to Alou the whole game.

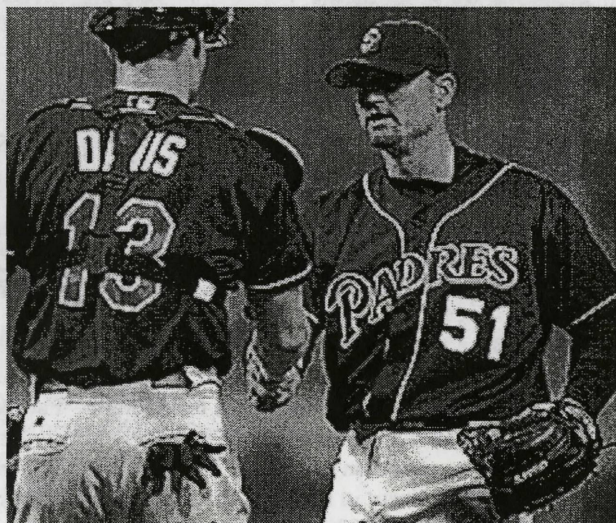


5) A's vs. Yankees. Game Three, 2001 ALDS. Network Associates Coliseum. 10/13/01. Yankees 1, A's 0. Around the Coliseum in Oakland you can still hear the echoing strains of "Slide Jeremy, slide!" This was the play that made **Derek Jeter's** career. With the A's **Jeremy Giambi** ("the other Giambi") on first, **Terence Long** hit a sweet liner down the right field line, a sure double. Jeremy, running at full speed (somewhere between a snail and an anvil caught in an updraft) chugged it around third and was heading for home. Right-fielder **Shane Spencer's** throw misses the cut-off man, and Jeter is miraculously there to receive it, throwing out the non-sliding Giambi at the plate. He never lived it down. A's pitcher **Barry Zito** hurled the game of his life, going eight innings and giving up only two hits. Unfortunately, one of those was **Jorge Posada's** solo blast in the 5th, which was the deciding run. Devastated, the A's couldn't win the clinching game in their next two tries, bowing out in the first round.

6) Boise Hawks vs. Bellingham Mariners. Memorial Stadium. Boise ID. Summer 1991. Don't remember too much from this mid-Summer scorcher except seeing some lady get totally creamed by a screaming liner to the stands about a row from my girlfriend and me. The poor woman never had a chance as the ball smacked her in the face at 125 mph, and was still moving pretty fast by the time it rolled our way. She had to be carried out on a stretcher. The Hawks also had this "Crazy George"-type fan guy with a trumpet or something that was terrorizing little kids, much to everyone's (except the kid's, probably) delight. He was big, fat, drunk and scary. The Hawks manager was the legendary **Orv Franchuk**, and I believe the only guy from that team to make it to the bigs was current Card **Orlando Palmeiro**.

7) Oakland vs. Tampa Bay. Network Associates Coliseum. 5/26/02. Bought ten tickets and forced a bunch of people to go with me to the game, just 'cuz it was my birthday. The night before, **Dead Low Tide** was in town, and we ended up closing the Eagle, a nearby bar to where they were playing. Rolled out drunk as skunks by 3:00, only to get up bright and early for Oakland tailgate-action. My many friends and I (and some others we ran into at the stadium bar) wound up closing THAT bar as well, an hour or so after the game was long over. Closing two bars in less than 15 hours, a new indoor record!

8) San Diego vs. Atlanta, 10/10/98, Qualcomm Stadium. Game Three, NLCS. I'm living in SF by this time, and my pal **Mario** down in SD has procured tickets to the first of the playoff games in SD for this series. So naturally I made the nine-hour drive to see this game. The Pads had already taken two in Turner, so just two more wins and they are off to their first World Series since the dreaded 1984 series drubbing at the hands of one of the best teams in the history of baseball, the '84 Tigers. There were some great moments in this one: **Sterling Hitchcock**



out-pitching **Maddux** in his prime, **John Vander Wal** throwing out **Walt Weiss** at the plate from left field...the list goes on. What I'll remember most was in the top of the eighth, bases loaded for **Javy Lopez**, and **Bruce Bochy** makes the switch to bring in the MLB's best closer, **Trevor Hoffman**, to finish up the inning. First, you hear the bells, then the slow, grinding guitar, then AC/DC's "Hell's Bells" kicks in and the crowd goes totally apeshit. I had never seen 63,000 people waving a sea of white hankies in person, but this was just plain

awesome. Hoffman then strikes out Lopez on three pitches and the whole place is thundering. He finishes them off in the ninth; SD wins one more and then gets demolished by the fucking Yankees in the Series. I hate the Yankees.

9) Padres vs. Cincinnati Reds, 7/25/90, Jack Murphy Stadium. Unremarkable game, other than that this was

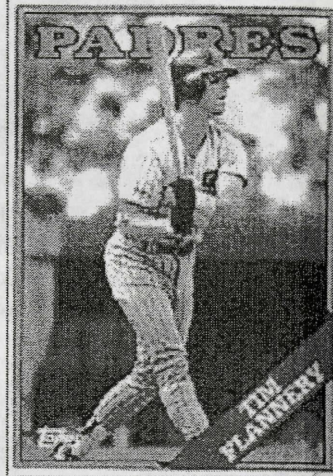


THE infamous game in which noted comedian and pariah **Roseanne Barr** bleated the National Anthem before the game; a retarded stunt devised by a total retard—Padres owner and itinerant shithead **Tom Werner**—to promote one of his banal and unwatchable TV shows. When you read about this event in most recollections, they always paint the crowd as 100% anti-Roseanne, screaming boos and raspberries at her during and after her rendition. The truth is, since she had taken on a godlike status with the housewives of America, there was an overwhelming amount of families—if not only sets of mothers-with-children—in attendance. It's not an exaggeration to state that the crowd was split about 50/50. There were many cheers from indignant women, one of which sat in front of us, monitoring our section for anyone who would dare malign her hero during her big moment. After the "song" the mother of five was seen screaming hysterically at

neighboring fans for their lack of support for Ms. Barr. Needless to say the media coverage the next two days was blanket-like. Every news station lead off with her performance, with one or more newscaster losing their positions for criticizing her openly.

10) Padres vs. Cubs. 1984 NLCS Game Five. Jack Murphy Stadium. 10/7/84. My first experience at a post-

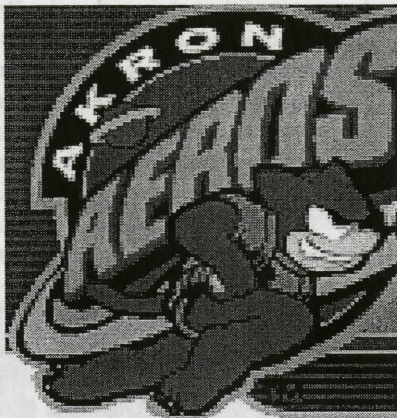
season game. Brought an old, beat-up teddy bear on a homemade noose and sat directly above one of those loge-level mini scoreboards, swinging it among a packed Padres crowd, similarly armed as such. This was SD's first time in the post-season, and having lost the first two games, they surprised the country by coming back to win two with their backs firmly placed against the wall. No one expected the Padres to advance to the World Series in '84. Noted Chicago crotchety geezer **Mike Royko** summed up the entitled feeling of the Cubs faithful by decrying San Diegans as a bunch of unworthy, "quiche-eating" "lousy wimps." This is the first time I remember being kissed by older women I didn't know and being high-fived by total strangers, as a **Tim "Parrothead" Flannery** groundball through the legs of **Leon "Bull" Durham** sealed the victory for the heretofore laughingstock Padres. I do recall having watched only one or two of the World Series games the next week. The whole town knew their homies would be slaughtered by the far superior Tigers and they, in fact, were.



*Having spent years trying to justify a youth spent playing baseball, playing the rock n' roll and hitting the bong, **Kevin Chanel** devised the notion of combining two of the three elements into ChinMusic! Magazine. Soon after he decided to replace the "hitting the bong" aspect with "baseball," and America's first baseball and bigrockaction magazine was born. He is a transplanted San Diegan living in San Francisco, and will never leave his beloved California. Admit it, you're jealous. You can find ChinMusic! at www.chinmusic.net.*

Batman: Making the Case for the Akron Aeros M.E.P. by Mike Faloon

One of the most difficult aspects of following a minor league team is that the players turnover at such a high rate. This is especially true when a good minor league team, like the **Akron Aeros**, is feeding a dying major league team, like the **Cleveland Indians**.



Despite this, every Aeros home game I've seen in the past two years has delivered entertainment. Sure, the players are great, especially the 2002 club, but they have nothing to do with the Aeros' guaranteed ability to entertain.

That obligation rests on the shoulders of the team's adult batboy. Or, rather, their batman. Or, to get it right, **Batman**.

Clad in an Aeros uniform with "Batman" blazing across the back, donning wrist bands and glasses that border on being Sabo-esque, Batman puts on a show each time he steps onto the field. My wife and I became fans at our first Aeros game.

Most batboys pick up a stray bat and scurry back to the dugout. Batman uses a stray bat to kick-start his show. He passes the bat between his legs, twirls it behind his back, and then uses the handle to scoop up a batting helmet. He moves so fast you're certain he'll impale himself but he's as accurate as he is fearless.

In between innings, as the public address system cranks out the hits, Batman steps onto the dance floor. He snaps his fingers to "Runaround Sue," struts to "Hungry Like the Wolf" and unleashes a vast array of full-body spins, side-to-side head bobs, and various manners of arm movements. And, like any great artist interpretive artist, he's not bound by his material, choosing to air guitar to the piano-driven "Great Balls of Fire."

Like a great pitcher, Batman knows how and when to pick

his spots, never getting in the way of the game. And he supplements his role as showman with that of ambassador.

He strikes up conversations with the umps when he brings out fresh balls or a between innings beverage. He guides the first base coach to the coach's box as if he's bringing a plane in for landing. He chats it up with the opposing players, sitting in their dugout while the game's in action.

Watching Batman break out his dance moves, the visitors bust out in laughter. But Batman is unfazed. My theory was that he didn't care if people were laughing with or at him, if they were laughing he felt he was doing his job.

Without planning to do so, I put this theory to the test at the last Aeros game we saw before moving away from Akron. I went down to field level and snapped a picture of Batman. As I readied for another shot, Batman saw me looking up at the scoreboard.

Batman: Who's Cleveland playing tonight?

MF: Boston, I think.

Batman: Huh, I thought it was Cincinnati.

MF: Oh yeah, it's interleague tonight. By the way, I've always enjoyed the way you entertain the fans.

Batman: Thanks. (*Offers to shake hands.*)

MF: By the way, what's your name?

Batman: Brian.

MF: I've always known you just as Batman.

Batman: (*Walking back to dugout*) Batman is my stage name.

That's a man who knows where it's at, thus proving my theory that Batman is the Akron Aeros' Most Entertaining Personality.

Mike Faloon is a school teacher and a fully licensed and accredited Yankee-hater.



Why I Think Roger Clemens Is a Weiner by Kip Yates

I love to root against **Roger Clemens**. I can't stand to see him win. I didn't always feel this way. I grew up in Texas pulling for Roger Clemens but all that changed in 1999: the day the Rocket became a friggin' **New York Yankee**. I pulled for the guy as he led the **Texas Longhorns** to a win in the deciding National Championship game in 1983. I pulled for him when he was selected 19th overall by the **Boston Red Sox** in that year's draft. I pulled for him as he left game six of the 1986 World Series against the **New York Mets** because he had done it. He had led the Boston Red Sox to their first championship in almost 70 years. The Rocket had led his team to the promised land.



Boston had suffered numerous midsummer blues and the occasional October collapse throughout their colorful history. All the while, their hated American League rival, the New York Yankees, seemed to win every year. Baseball fans in Boston had suffered a dry spell that saw our grandfathers, long passed, who had rested their hopes on

Red Sox teams led by **Ted Williams**, **Dom Dimaggio**, and **Johnny Pesky**, bequeath their suffering to their sons, our fathers, who similarly were wiped out by placing their hopes on **Carl Yazstremski's** team and a little later, that of **Carlton Fisk**. Now, our fathers were gingerly placing their hopes on **Dave Henderson**, **Dwight Evans**, an elder **Jim Rice**, and a youthful Clemens. Their sons would not suffer the same defeat that killed their fathers and was summarily closing their own casket. No, their sons would know the sweet taste of victory. They would know what it was like to thumb their nose at New York and give their own "Bronx cheer". When Roger Clemens excused himself from the remainder of game six, the Red Sox were only three innings from securing their first championship since 1918...and then all hell broke loose. You know the story. I don't have to rehash it. You know what happened and what didn't happen. What you may not

be aware of though was that the Rocket tanked it long before **Schiraldi** grabbed the baseball, long before **Bob Stanley's** wild pitch, long before that ball went through **Bill Buckner's** legs. Roger Clemens was the man in 1986: winning the Cy Young, the MVP and setting a major league record by striking out 20 batters in a game. If there was anyone you wanted on the mound for the final out of the "final game" of the series, it was Roger Clemens; and he couldn't play through the blistering pain for a few more innings. For me that was when the myth of the Rocket started to show some cracks. You have to want to be on the mound when the deciding out is made. Especially if that final out relieves a city, such as Boston, from the long dark shadow baseball had cast upon it. And Roger Clemens didn't want to be there! It looked to me that he was content to watch his mates hold the lead he held when he left. After all, he was young; he had his whole career ahead of him to hoist his hand in the air, a number one gesture springing forth. What a cocky sum'bitch!

So now you know, Boston has not won a World Series in eighty-five years. What is worse, the Rocket has gone on to a Hall of Fame/*Player of the Century* career. Sure, most of those 300 wins happened while he was with the Red Sox. He continued to pitch reasonably and considerably well, despite what the Red Sox brass had thought. He even won two more Cy Young awards in Boston. However, in the Winter of 1997, Clemens, tired of the verbal abuse heaped on him by General Manager **Dan Duquette**, took his ball and went home—to Canada. The Rocket went through a rebirth as a **Toronto Blue Jay**, winning the Cy Young award twice more. Even then, I



still had a considerable amount of respect for Clemens. I remember watching the television footage of him glaring at Mr. Duquette sitting in the Fenway box seat as he walked off the mound after a sterling performance against his former team and cheering for him. My respect for

Clemens began to falter soon after though and since has continued to fall into an abyss of hatred.

In 1999, Clemens was traded to the (hated) Yankees. The boy who was denied a ring with Boston finally won a ring as an old man for the pinstripers, just one of the many, many, mercenaries hired by **George Steinbrenner** over the years. My respect for Roger Clemens dwindled slowly like black strap molasses leaking from a pan of southern fried goodness.

Originally, I was excited at the prospect of the hometown



Houston Astros securing Clemens from the Blue Jays. Of course that excitement came to a screeching halt when Astros general manager, **Jerry Hunsicker**, proclaimed that he would love to have Roger Clemens but he was not going to meet the three year, 30-million dollar request that Clemens and his agents, the **Hendry Brothers**, were asking. Hunsicker held that Roger had a chance to get "**Kevin Brown**" money two years ago when he signed as a free agent with Toronto and he was not going to let this trade become a trade-and-sign. Good for you, Jerry, I concur. He can't treat a trade like a free agent signing. He missed that boat two years ago. Of course, Steinbrenner gave Roger everything he wanted. My Astros missed out on Clemens and I hated neither Hunsicker nor the grocer (owner **Drayton Maclane** made his fortune in the grocery business) for missing out on the Clemens sweepstakes.

No, my vitriol was saved for Roger Clemens.

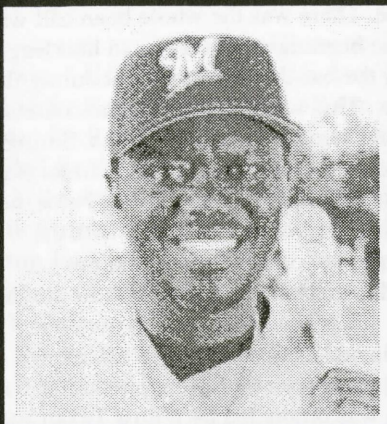
Since the trade to the Yankees, Roger Clemens has done incredibly stupid act after annoying act. If he isn't making a public spectacle of himself by touching the bust of **Babe**

Ruth in centerfield before starting his home games, then it's something else. There was the whole bean ball war with the **Mets**: The beaning of **Piazza** in an interleague game followed by the bat-throwing incident during the 2000 World Series. This was followed by the continued bad blood between Clemens and the Red Sox. Sitting on 299 wins and needing a victory against his former team for number 300, at the request of the Hall of Fame, he actually tried to wear a glove with a patch with the number 300 emblazoned on it. Clemens did not get number 300 that day and when he tried against the Detroit Tigers, one of the worst baseball teams to put on a uniform, he was denied again. The Roger Clemens number 300 train, sponsored by ESPN, pulled into the windy city and he was outdueled by fellow Texan and 20 strikeout pitcher, **Kerry Wood**. Woo hoo! Sure he finally got number 300 but it took him almost three weeks and stops in three cities before he joined the 300 club.

Then it got worse. Clemens started blabbing about how when he goes into the Hall of Fame; he wants to go in as a Yankee. But HOF executives claim that he will wear the cap of the team that he became a HOFer in and that my fine friend is the Boston Red Sox. Suck on that Roger! So what does he do next? He releases a statement saying if he is not allowed to go into the HOF as a Yankee, then he won't go to the ceremony at all, probably becoming the first player in history to raise a stink about something that cannot happen for over five full years. So again, he will just take his ball and go home. Well do us all a favor Roger and puh-lease, make an ass out of yourself one more time.

You big weenie!

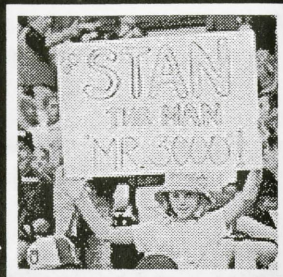
*An actor by trade, **Kip Yates** decided to give this writing thing a shot. Unfortunately, his wife **Jamie** refuses to listen anymore about the curse on the Red Sox and cannot bear anymore rants about **Astros** postseason failures ("He swung at ball four! Did you see that? Why did he swing at ball four...Oh my God **Walt Weiss** doesn't make that play again in a million chances...I hate you **Kevin Brown**, I really, really hate you...**D-a-v-e-S-m-i-t-h**?), so he relegates most of his time hating and consequently writing about the Yankees. Kip would like to thank **Mike** at Zisk for giving this poor scribe a chance. Oh yeah, Kip is expecting his first child this October and baby Yates will be indoctrinated into the world of baseball at a very young age.*



BERNIE...BERNIE...BERNIE MAC! WHEN ARE YOU COMIN' BACK? or YES, HE'S OUR 3000 MAN

MILWAUKEE'S PROUD FAKE BASEBALL TRADITION LIVES ON

Rev. Norb, beat reporter



I have never been completely sure what the point of portraying "real" sports franchises in fictional sports-based movies is supposed to be. Does basing a movie like *Major League* around a fictitious roster of a "real" team like the Cleveland Indians really yield a greater potential for Suspension of Disbelief than it would have had the movie been based on the unlikely exploits of, say, a team called the "Washington Wombats" or "Metropolis Manglers" instead? I mean, what's a greater leap of faith: Allowing for the existence of a completely imaginary MLB franchise, or pretending that Ricky "Wild Thing" Vaughn really pitched the Cleveland Indians to the World Championship in our lifetime? (geez, next thing you'll be expecting me to believe that some day the Indians will be like three outs away from their first World Series title in 49 years, and then they'll blow it in extra innings against some fictitious team like the Florida Marlins or something) I mean, dude, i can look it up: The Indians were never owned by an ex-stripper; haven't won a World Series since the year Israel declared independence; never called Charlie Sheen up from the bullpen. **THERE IS DULY NOTARIZED DATA WHICH STATES OTHERWISE**, and everybody knows it. So, i mean, what's the point? Who ya tryin' ta fool? And whose idea is it to use real teams anyhow? Do the moviemakers think using actual franchise identities attracts sports fans who might otherwise give the movie a wide berth, or is the appearance of legit sports teams mere product placement undertaken by the league? If the latter is the case, fans of the other 29 teams can add another charge of Shameless Porkbellying (or kosher equivalent) to Bud Selig's laundry list of Crimes Against The Sport: The main character in the upcoming *Mr. 3000* movie is -- gasp! -- a Milwaukee Brewer.

For those of you who neither know nor care (which i am estimating to be approx. 100%, +/- about 0.0%), *Mr. 3000* is a Holleewood motion piteher scheduled for 2004 release (about 996 years too soon if the math can be trusted), starring from-what-i've-seen pretty much legitimately useless Chicago comedian Bernie Mac as Stan Ross, an arrogant ex-Brewer who believes he has retired with exactly 3000 hits to his credit, only to find that, due to an accounting error, he actually only has 2997. Soooo...having been chronically unpopular with the fans and writers throughout his career, Ross feels the magical 3000 number is necessary to cement his inclusion into the Baseball Hall of Fame, and returns to the Brewers in hopes of getting the three remaining hits. That's ya plot, folks.

Counterintuitively, some (all?) of the crowd shots for *Mr. 3000* were filmed at the Brewers' stadium, Miller Park (the counterintuitive aspect stems from the fact that *Major League*, which, as indicated previously, featured the Cleveland Indians, was shot at the Brewers' old home, Milwaukee County Stadium, so y'd think that *Mr. 3000* would have been filmed entirely at Jacobs Field -- but, like i said, i don't really understand why they use real teams in these movies anyway [i mean, did they use real teams in *The Bad News Bears*? In *Gus*? In *Son of Flubber*? Actually, i don't remember if they did or not. Perhaps i should be looking this stuff up]) (but this, in fact, inflicts further questions: If they filmed *Major League* at Milwaukee County Stadium [which they did], if the faux-Indians crowd was primarily composed of Brewers fans [it was], and if they even cast the Brewers' radio announcer, Bob Uecker, as the Indians fictitious play-by-play guy, "Harry Boyle" [they did], then WHY THE FUCK DIDN'T THEY JUST MAKE *MAJOR LEAGUE* ABOUT THE BREWERS INSTEAD OF THE INDIANS??? [then-division rivals, at that!]) I mean, it would've saved them the expense of replacing the Brewers' green outfield cushions with Cleveland-Municipal-Stadium-style blue ones, at the very least. See, that's why Bud Selig is such a great Commissioner. 1. He ain't gonna take that shit; 2. He kept the cushions up after the filming was over. *Hey, free cushions!*; we'll let the Continuity Director explain how the home scoreboard for both the *Mr. 3000* faux-Brewers and the *Major League* faux-Tribe came to be emblazoned with a (Brewers radio/teevee flagship) WTMJ logo. **WTMJ, YOUR FICTIONAL SUPERSTATION!**



Needless to say, when presented with the chance for celluloid immortality that sitting in the stands during the filming of *Mr. 3000* would surely afford me, i wasted no (well, some) time in making plans to attend one of the filming sessions, finally settling on the final evening of filming, which was conveniently sandwiched around a "real" Brewers/Astros game. Actually, i had no interest in being part of the filming -- i just wanted to go to that game because, as the last home game before Bob Uecker's induction into the Baseball Hall of Fame (3000 hits be damned!), they were handing out coupons for two bucks off a beer so the whole crowd could get sloshed and toast Uke after the fourth inning. Hey, i'm value-conscious! Sue me!



RAISE YOUR GLASS



Join the Milwaukee Brewers in toasting two baseball legends at the end of the fourth inning of tonight's ball game.

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engraved on the barrel, striding calmly back into the parking lot, and, with no manner of advance warning whatsoever, suddenly start maniacally hopping up and down and shrieking "AY YI YI YI YI YI YI YI YI YI!!!" at the top of my lungs while smashing the shit out of the truck and car with the bat, tongue wagging, eyes bugging out like a Big Daddy Roth cartoon - then stopping just as suddenly as i started, calmly walking back to my car, and driving away -- but then i find two stray beer coupons blowing across the ramp and am filled with nothing but thoughts of peace and love for my fellows.

The fourth inning toast is a great success, as i am getting fairly toasted. Bob Uecker, shown live (along with Brewers neo-glory years GM Harry Dalton) on the Jumbotron during the toast, takes his microphone and imitates the Pope dispersing Holy Water into the crowd at Mass. I am in stitches: Bob Uecker would even be funny as a goddamn MIME.

Brewers win. Having spilled my last beer following a leap to the feet during a particularly adept play by Brewers 3B Wes Helms, i retire to the Fridays Front Row Sports Grill for a cold one (i wind up drinking five pints of Miller in twenty minutes. Hey, Bob would want it that way! Plus he can give me a benediction with his microphone), where i run into Justin (Screwballs/Yesterday's Kids/Obsoletes - plus he's the guy who engineered the "Earth's Greatest Rocker!" album) and Tito (longtime associate of the Screwballs/Yesterday's Kids/Obsoletes camp). We wanna stick around for the filming, but are quite unsure what exactly is happening, and what this will entail on our part, so we figure we will drink and watch the filming for a while that we might get our Wild Hollywood Bearings squared away. The acoustics at Friday's, located above left field, are horrible. The lady running the filming appears to be saying things of some import, but all we can hear is Charlie Brown's teacher. People start taking turns singing the beginning of the National Anthem. Some are cheered; some are booed. We have no idea if the crowd reaction is part of the script, or some manner of peer review. We debate the deep philosophical question of whether a rendition of "The Star-Spangled Banner" sung by an actor in the process of portraying a character singing "The Star-Spangled Banner" is actually an official performance of our national anthem or not (results inconclusive). Large squadrons of faux-Atlanta Braves and faux-San Francisco Giants take the field. We yell a variety of brainless epithets at them as they jog past our perch. The Jumbotron plays a previously shot scene where Bernie "Stan Ross" Mac, clad in period-specific 90's Brewers garb, receives the world's least convincing brushback pitch from a Boston Red Sox hurler, and retaliates by hitting the next offering squarely into the offending pitcher's nuts. If said footage is any indication of the quality of the project as a whole, i fear the term "Sub-Major League II" may be making its way into the contemporary lexicon shortly.

Stan The Man Ross cometh by golf cart. He waves to the crowd, who fill most but not all of the lower deck between first and third base. We decide this is our cue to join the masses (well, that and i had quickly drank myself flat broke), and make our way out and over to the field. A Brewers security doofus stops us, and informs us we need "tickets" to get in. **FUCK YOU! I KNOW THE RALLY RABBIT!** Confused but essentially apathetic, we pull out our ticket stubs, which seems to work (we later decided that, having never signed even the most basic of paperwork, we likely weren't supposed to be there) (ohmigawd, renegade extras!), and meander down to about the fourth row, right behind the backstop. These are, by far, the best seats i've ever had or am likely to ever have at a Brewers game. God bless you, Bernie Mac! You saved Christmas!

The filming, as one might expect, consists of endless variations on one theme: Bernie Mac is on deck, Guy in front of Bernie Mac finishes his at bat, Bernie Mac strides to the plate, Bernie Mac argues balls and strikes, Bernie Mac strikes/pops/fries out, Bernie Mac yells at umpire, Bernie Mac trudges dejectedly back to dugout, guy after Bernie Mac in the order begins his at bat, cut. We, The Crowd, would react appropriately (the guy who always followed Stan Ross [who wears #20, by the way] in the order was named "Osbourne." Needless to say, it didn't take me too many faux AB's to realize that my destiny as an actor was to lead the crowd in a chant of "OZ-ZEEEEE!! OZ-ZEEEEE!! OZ-ZEEEEE!! OZ-ZEEEEE!!", so if any such chant makes it into the movie, that was MY DOING, and i want royalties. **WHERE'S MY TWO DOLLARS??**). Occasionally, Bernie Mac would fuck up and actually get to first base successfully, then stand there sheepishly, absorbing mild hecklement from the crowd - but, for the most part, the filming was three straight hours of watching a guy in a Brewers uniform strike out: As such, the sad punch line is that the filming was virtually identical to the whole 2002 season, 'cept i had better seats. **END**

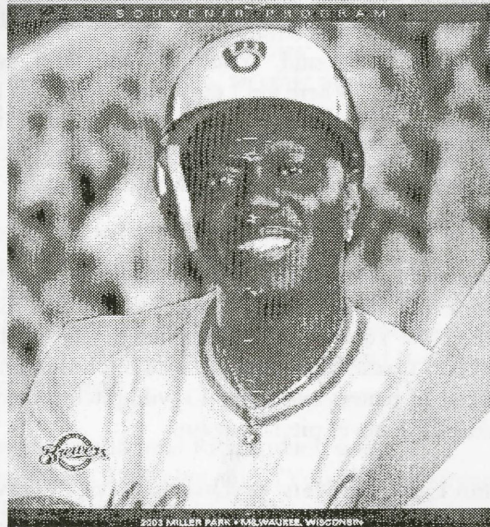
The evening does not start well. In the Miller Park parking lot, i almost get into a fistfight with two carloads (well, one carload, one truckload) of burly dolts, who are irate at me over my perceived breaking of certain traffic protocols (hey, just because YOU want to be in the backed-up lane because you are **TOO FUCKING DENSE** to realize there actually ARE non-backed-up lanes doesn't mean I can't go in the not-backed up lane and you gotta pull out in front of me and yell "FUCK OFF!" or "BACK UP!" or whatever [although you gotta love the middle-aged redneck types who think their every hostile bellow is gonna send the bellowed-at party zipping off in reverse in a cloud of dust, hatpins and speed lines, as they do exude a certain fucked-up tragic beauty]). As i exit my car, the offended parties hurl a variety of *bon mots* my way, ending the merriment with "**WHAT A FUCKING FREAK!!! I BET HE'S GOT TINTED HAIR AND AN EARRING!!!**" I am legitimately offended. I don't have an earring.

Upon entry to the stadium, i briefly plan out potential courses of future action against my belligerent lotmates. My favorite involves going down to the "Stan's Stick" stand, buying one of the super-deluxe \$57 wood bats with my name

Lead Off



SOUVENIR PROGRAM



2003 MILLER PARK • MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

Bring the Pain: An Epilogue by David Shields

Pain is just weakness leaving your body.

—Slogan of The John Hopkins University crew team

During the 1998 and 1999 baseball seasons, while he was being sued for divorce, **Atlanta Braves** relief pitcher **Mark Wohlers** had difficulty getting the ball anywhere near the plate. In '98, his earned-run-average (ERA) was 10.00, which is terrible; in '99 it was 27.00, which is unheard-of awful. "I convinced myself the reason I couldn't pitch straight was because I blew out my elbow," Wohlers said, "even though deep down I don't know what it was. The mind is a powerful thing."

Karl Newell, a kinesiologist at the University of Illinois, says, "Consciousness gets in the way. If a pianist starts worrying where his fingers go while he's playing, it will change the performance."

Atlanta Braves catcher **Dale Murphy** made a few bad throws to second base during a spring training game in 1977. The next day, when an opponent tried to steal second base, Murphy threw the ball to the outfield fence on one hop. Later that year he twice hit his own pitcher in the back on throws to second base. "Your mind won't let your natural abilities flow," he said. "Your mind interferes, and you start thinking, 'Where am I throwing? What am I doing? Instead of just throwing. Your mind starts working against you.'" Unable even to return the ball to the pitcher, he was forced to move to the outfield, where he became a perennial All-Star.

At age 19, **Steve Gasser** was one of the stars of the **Minnesota Twins'** minor-league system. In 1988, traded to the **New York Mets** and pitching in Class A ball, he walked 11 batters and threw 7 wild pitches in one inning, walked 21 batters and threw 13 wild pitches in six innings. He never pitched again.

Allan Lans, the **Mets'** psychiatrist, says, "Everybody brings their personality to the game. It all comes down to an anxiety response. In baseball, people talk about someone getting wild. Then everyone comes rushing to

the rescue to fix it and they just make the problem worse. 'Just throw the damn ball,' I tell them. 'Stop thinking too much.'"

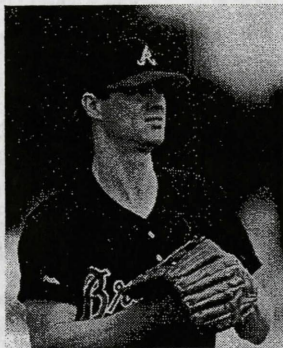
In *I of the Vortex: From Neurons to Self*, **Rodolfo Linás** writes, "That which we call thinking is the evolutionary internalization of movement."

Science writer **Brian Hayes** agrees: "Only organisms that move have brains. A tree has no need of a central nervous system because it's not going anywhere, but an animal on the prowl needs to see where it's headed and needs to predict, even envision its future place in the world. The poster-child for this close connection between motricity and mentality is the sea squirt. This marine creature starts life as a motile larva, equipped with a brainlike ganglion of about 300 neurons. But after a day or two of cavorting in the shallows, the larva finds a hospitable site on the bottom and puts down roots. As a sessile organism, it has no further use for a brain, and so it eats it."

Baseball players suffer mental blocks far more often than athletes in more frenetic, less rote sports, such as football or basketball; in baseball, there's too much time to stop and think. Shortstops and third basemen rarely suffer from the problem, since their throws are nearly always somewhat rushed. For second basemen, it's the easy throw to first base that's usually the culprit, not the difficult, rushed throw from deep behind second base; for catchers, it's the even easier throw back to the pitcher. And it happens by far the most to pitchers, who, of course, have the most time to think.

Pat Jordan's memoir, *A False Spring*, chronicles his experience as a minor-league pitcher whose arm went haywire: "I could not remember how I'd once delivered a baseball with a fluid and effortless motion! And even if I could remember, I somehow knew I could never transmit that knowledge to my arms and legs, my back and shoulders. The delicate wires through which that knowledge had so often been communicated were burned out, irrevocably charred, I know now, by too much energy channeled too often along a solitary and too fragile wavelength. I lost it all that spring."

Daniel Willingham, a psychologist at the University of Virginia, makes a distinction between "implicit learning"—what the body knows—and "explicit



learning”—conscious knowledge. In cases in which athletes develop mental blocks, a switch has been flipped from implicit to explicit. I played high-school tennis, and I remember this happening to me once, in the district finals. I won the first set against someone who was an obviously superior player, and when I realized this fact, I suddenly couldn't get my right arm to stop moving in jagged, pixilated slow-motion. I felt like a marionette operated by some unknown other. I lost the last two sets 6-1, 6-0.

Hayes says, “None of us knows—at the level of consciousness—how to walk, or breathe, or throw a baseball. If we had to take charge of these movements, issuing commands to all the hundreds of muscles in just the right sequence, who would not collapse in a quivering mass?”

“I'd never heard of throwing percentage before I came to the big leagues,” **Texas Rangers** catcher **Mike Stanley** said. “I got here, and that's what catchers are judged on. We had a very slow staff, but I started thinking it was me.” Although he was fixated on the percentage of base stealers he threw out, Stanley—his body in full rebellion against his mind—threw soft, high-arching tosses to second and third base whenever anyone tried to steal. “I never realized how much of the game is mental. You can see it when guys walk up to the plate, which guys are afraid. I'm sure they could see the fear in my eyes.”

Rod Dishman, the director of the Exercise Psychology Lab at the University of Georgia, says, “When thinking interferes, it physiologically, neurologically leads to inappropriate tension. That causes change in velocity and delivery. It wouldn't take much tension to throw it off. Just that split-second thought—‘God, am I going to do it again?’—can affect it.”

In 1997, **Rick Ankiel**, whom *USA Today* named the *High School Player of the Year*, signed with the **St. Louis Cardinals** and received a \$2.5 million bonus. In 1999, he was the *Minor League Player of the Year*. In 2000, his first full season with St. Louis, his won-loss record was 11-7, and in the last month of the season he was 4-0 with a 1.97 ERA. At age 21, he started the first game of the



National League division series against Atlanta. In two starts and one relief appearance in the 2000 playoffs, against the Braves and the Mets, Ankiel walked 11 batters in four innings and threw 9 wild pitches, most of which sailed 10 feet over the batters' heads. In a game against the Mets, he threw 5 of his first 20 pitches off the wire screen behind home plate. He's no longer in major-league baseball.

Ankiel says, “I was always the smallest kid. I was terribly shy. Maybe it was because my dad yelled at me so much. I was afraid to mess up. If I swung at a bad pitch in Little League, he'd make me run wind sprints when I got home. It was always, I could've done better. He always said, ‘Do what I say, not what I do.’” **Rick Ankiel Sr.** has been arrested 15 times and convicted 7 times—burglary, carrying a concealed weapon, and most recently, drug smuggling.

Ankiel says his father instructed him “never to show emotion on the mound, which I always thought was strange because I was never like that anyway.”

At 14, Ankiel told his father, “I'm never going to be in the major leagues, so I'm going to do stuff with my buddies, hang out on the beach, go surfing, go fishing” in Fort Pierce, Florida.

Ankiel's father said, “That's not gonna work. If you love the game, good things will happen.”

In *The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue, and the Origins of Modernity*, **Anson Rabinbach** writes: “Neurasthenia was a kind of inverted work ethic, an ethic of resistance to work in all its forms. The lack of will or energy manifested by neurasthenics is the incapacity to work productively.”

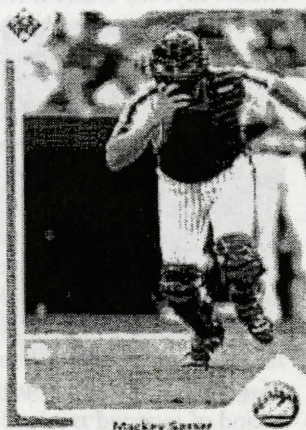
When Ankiel started to have trouble throwing the ball over the plate during the 2000 playoffs, his father, Ankiel's pitching guru his entire life, had recently been sentenced to prison for six years, and his parents had just gotten divorced. With his father gone, Ankiel made sure bad things happened.

Asked how he would treat Rick Ankiel, sports psychologist **Jack Llewelyn** said, “You pull out vintage throws, and then you repeat those throws 8-10 times on videotape. What you're doing is bombarding the system by showing them what they're capable of doing. They've

almost forgotten over time about how good they are, since they've been bombarded lately with all the negatives. If he's strong, young, and healthy, and he's thrown well in the past, then he can get past it. But anybody who thinks he can get rid of it and not think about it again probably is kidding himself. I think it's always there. I think you can do some things mentally to push it to the back. But the worst thing you can do when you start to throw better is to start to get complacent and say, 'Well, I've got that licked.'"

Shawn Havery, a sports psychologist, says about players who have suffered this problem: "I believe that they come to, kind of first off, doubt their ability. They start to overthink something that should be really reflexive. They begin to take too much time to consider all the machinations that go with that. It destroys their ability to do what they've been practicing so long."

Mets catcher **Mackey Sasser** had to pump the ball two or three times into his glove before lobbing the ball weakly back to the pitcher, which drove Mets pitchers to distraction and allowed opposing base runners to make delayed steals. During one game between New York and Montreal, Expo players counted Sasser's tapping of the ball into his glove, then Bronx-cheered when he finally threw the ball back to the pitcher.



When Sasser struggled in spring training in 1992, **Jeff Shames** wrote, "The root of Sasser's problem and mine is that we think too much about performing an ordinary chore. I stutter when I think too much about the act of speaking. All of us have difficulties in daily life. Sasser's and mine are just a little more obvious. We do what we can, even if it's not as quickly as some would like."

Former major-league manager **Chuck Tanner** says, "You can't be afraid to fail. If you worry about failing, you will. The biggest reason behind these throwing mysteries is players trying not to make mistakes." The same is true of stuttering. Stuttering consists of nothing but the attempt

not to stutter. Growing up in a maniacally verbal family, I placed so much pressure on speaking well that I developed a stutter. A similar thing happened to many of these guys: they're almost all hypersensitive, hypertensive types; they wanted it too badly, and then their overstressed body rebelled.

In "On Sickness," **E.M. Cioran** writes, "Flesh freeing itself, rebelling, no longer willing to serve, sickness in apostasy of the organs; each insists on going its own way, each, suddenly or gradually, refusing to play the game, to collaborate with the rest, hurls itself into adventure and caprice."

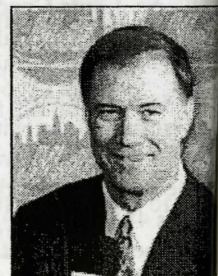
A lot of these guys also had overbearing stage-fathers; the moment the father was dead or in prison or non compos mentis, the sons' bodies celebrated their freedom from tyranny by self-destructing.

I've never heard of a stutterer who couldn't talk fluently to himself; it's a psychosocial disorder, as are athletes' mental blocks. In both cases, the person is unable to exist in easy dialogue (conversation, catch) with another.

Mental meltdowns of this kind are not unrelated to stuttering—the blocked individual becoming self-conscious about a routine activity that everybody else takes for granted—and I think that's part of why I'm interested in the phenomenon, sympathetic to it.

The ritual of rituals, playing catch with Dad, gets problematized and so suddenly you can't make the throw to first base, because you're thinking too much. It's as if at age 22 or 24 or 28 or 31, these athletes newly discovered the activity (worry, contemplation, self-scrutiny) that the rest of us do all the time, or at least I do all the time. For some reason, they're thinking about something else—some failure or sadness or guilt or weakness—and now can't perform without thinking about performing.

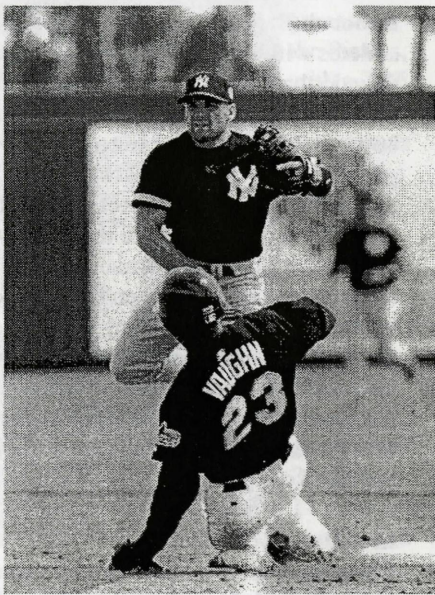
Kansas City Royals catcher Fran Healy (who, like Sasser, developed a mental block about throwing the ball back to the pitcher, and who, like Wohlers, is a native of Holyoke, MA—that mindful town) said, "The easiest thing a catcher has to do is throw the ball to the pitcher. It's a thing that should be



as easy as opening a door. But having to think about something that simple makes it a problem. The problem, to a degree, existed through my career. But I was able to hide it. I'd just flip it back real easy to the pitcher. I'd walk out after every pitch and say something like 'Stay low' or 'Keep on it' or 'Bad call.' As a catcher, you can disguise a problem like this. Pitchers can't. Their careers are over."

Dick Radatz, a **Boston Red Sox** relief pitcher, once threw 27 consecutive balls in a spring-training game.

Playing second base for Minnesota, **Chuck Knoblauch** made only 8 errors in 1996 and won the Gold Glove in 1997, maintaining a 47-game errorless streak. In 1999, playing for the Yankees, undergoing a divorce and watching his father (his high-school baseball coach and lifelong mentor) succumb to Alzheimer's, he made 26 errors, including 14 throwing errors, most of which were on routine throws to first base. On plays on which he had to hurry, Knoblauch virtually always threw the ball fine. His throwing problems inevitably occurred on routine ground balls when he had too much time to think.



"I really think, deep down inside of me, something is going on," Knoblauch said. "Something, somewhere along the line in my life, has affected me, and I don't know what it is. It's frustrating and it's puzzling. I don't ask, 'Why me?' because I'm a firm believer that everything in life happens for a reason. But I just have this feeling that whenever this thing stops, I'll know it without even picking up a baseball and throwing it. When I get to the root of this problem, I'll know I'm better without even walking on a baseball field. A lot of people have suggested that my throwing problems are going to be

fixed simply by my going to left field for a while. I don't think that's going to be the case. That says this is something I can consciously correct. I know for sure it's not."

E.M. Cioran says, "Without pain, there would not be consciousness."

"If we can just get the mental part out of this thing," Yankees' manager **Joe Torre** said about Knoblauch's throwing problem, "we'll be okay."

David Grand, the proponent of a system known as EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing), says, "The problem appears out of nowhere. It can happen a few times and go away or it may never go away. People think what when you add 'sport' to 'psychology,' the reasons change. People, even top athletes, bring to the plate all of their life experiences. The public openness of the problem, for all professional athletes, makes it much worse. EMDR reaches deep into the nervous system and lets people work on releasing traumatic memories. Patients begin to make a connection between the memory and what they are experiencing in the present. Unless you deal with the traumas, you're pulling up the weeds without the roots. Every time Ankiel makes a bad throw, it retraumatizes him. Give me three days with Ankiel and he'll be back to where he was. Give me a week, and he'll be even better. I have no question that

Knoblauch can go back to second base without the yips and return to his Gold Glove position."

Another psychologist, asked how many athletes overcome these mental blocks, replied, "Very few. Almost none."

In 1957, at age 18, **Von McDaniel** won the first four games he pitched in the major leagues, pitched 19 consecutive scoreless innings, including a one-hitter, a two-hitter, and a perfect game for six innings. He finished the year at 7-5, with a 3.22 ERA. In 1958 he pitched two innings in which he walked seven batters; he never pitched again in the major leagues.

Lindy McDaniel, who pitched for many years in the major leagues, said about his brother Von: "He lost his coordination and his mechanics. There was no real explanation. Some people thought it was psychological, but who knew about those things then? They sent Von down to the minors, but he couldn't get anyone out. He

kept sinking further and further until he couldn't pitch anymore. It depressed him for years after he left baseball. But he couldn't talk about it."

None of these guys can talk about what's really bothering them. That's the problem. They're all repressive depressives, strong-silent types.

A student in my class, feeling self-conscious about being much older than the other students, told me that he had been in prison. I asked him what crime he'd committed, and he said, "Shot a dude." He wrote a series of very good but very stoic stories about prison life, and when I asked him why the stories were so tight-lipped, he explained to me the jailhouse concept of "doing your own time," which means that when you're a prisoner you're not supposed to burden the other prisoners by complaining about your incarceration or regretting what you'd done or, especially, claiming you hadn't done it. "Do your own time": it's a seductive slogan. I find that I quote it to myself occasionally, but really I don't subscribe to the sentiment. We're not, after all, in prison. Stoicism is of no use whatsoever. What I'm a big believer in is talking about everything until you're blue in the face.

Daniel Wegner, a professor of social psychology at Harvard, says, "People will develop an obsession not because there's anything interesting about it, but because so much energy is paid in trying to suppress it. For some, the cure is to think about it on purpose. The thing to do is tell everybody you see. Talk about it, even laugh about it."

Detroit Tigers third-baseman **Darnell Coles** said about the 1988 season, "The first six games of the regular season, I had three errors. Then disaster really struck. I had a three-error game in Kansas City, then a few weeks later I had three more in another game. It got to the point where I wanted to cry. I really didn't want the ball hit to me. I wanted to die. Just crawl in a hole."

In 1980, when Philadelphia won the World Series, **Phillies** relief pitcher **Kevin Saucier**—possessor of a 7-3 record and a 3.42 ERA—was named by fans the most popular Phillie. He said, "I'm a hyper person and I've always had a funny walk on me. So when I did a good job or we needed to keep loose, I wasn't afraid to show a little emotion." Traded to Detroit, he pitched even better in 1981; he had 13 saves, a 1.65 ERA, and was the best reliever in baseball at retiring the first batter he faced. In

1982, though—while his marriage was nearly unraveling—he gave up 17 walks in 16 innings. Sent to the minor leagues, he gave up 23 walks in 22 innings, had an 0-4 record, and an ERA of 7.36.

At the Detroit training camp, the next year, Saucier said, "That strange feeling hit me again, and it seemed like things were twice as bad as before. I wasn't just missing high or low. I was missing side to side. I was throwing pitches twenty feet behind hitters. I could have hurt somebody, but then again, I never got that close. I just didn't feel right. It was like I was under a spell. It was a feeling of being lost, like trying to type with no fingers. What do you do? You're lost. You can't help yourself. You try, you try to relax, and you can't."

Deborah Bright, a sports psychologist, says, "Too often, athletes with natural ability are not aware of what it is they do that makes them play well, and when they get off track, they don't know what to look for. Also, few realize how much their private lives can affect their public performance." Interesting that a female psychologist points this out, since it's not a problem women are likely to have—failing to realize that their private lives can affect their public performance. So, too, women athletes are far less likely than men to be reluctant to talk about whatever might be plaguing them. It's nearly unheard of for a woman athlete to suffer from the yips. (So, too, it's also nearly unheard of for a black athlete to suffer from the yips. Absent other pressures, other oppressions, white men have a tendency to oppress themselves by overthinking.)

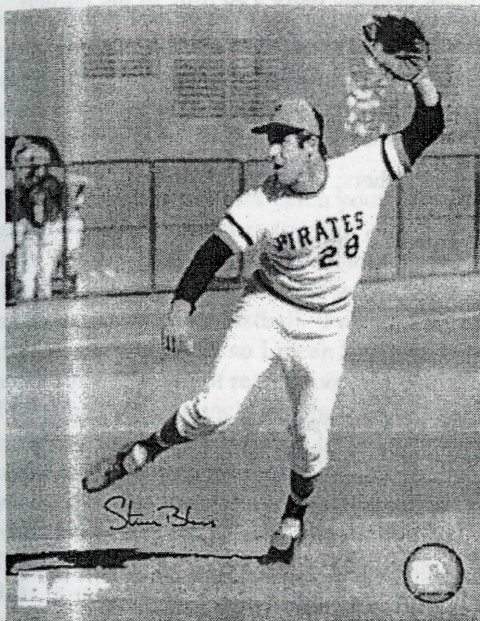
In James Joyce's story "The Dead," which takes place at a Christmas party, the protagonist Gabriel Conroy remembers a phrase from a review he wrote: "One feels that one is listening to a thought-tormented music." Later, when he gives a toast, he says, "But we are living in a sceptical and, if I may use the phrase, a thought-tormented age."

On routine plays, Texas Ranger minor-leaguer **Monty Fariss**, a rare shortstop with this particular mind-body problem, threw timidly to first base, often allowing the batter to beat the throw, although on difficult balls into the hole at shortstop he would still make strong throws across the diamond. "Everybody wants to help solve the problem," Fariss said, "or help create one."

In the bullpen, **Oakland A's** pitcher **Bill Mooneyham** was so afraid of throwing a wild pitch, which could roll onto the field and delay the game, that while warming up he was able to throw only changeups.

David Mamet says, "It is in our nature to elaborate, estimate, predict—to run before the event. This is the meaning of consciousness; anything else is instinct."

In 1987, a year after throwing a no-hitter, **Joe Cowley** of the **Chicago White Sox** gave up 21 hits, 17 walks, and 20 earned runs in less than 12 innings. He never regained his form.



In 1971 **Steve Blass** won 15 games for the Pirates, with a 2.85 ERA. He won games 3 and 7 for the Pittsburgh Pirates in the 1971 World Series. In 1972, he won 19 games, lost 8, pitched 11 complete games, had

an ERA of 2.48, sixth best in the National League, and was an All-Star. Throughout his career he had allowed less than 3 walks per 9 innings.

During spring training in 1973, he walked 25 men in 14 innings, throwing a pitch that was so wild it nearly landed in the third-base dugout. In the 1973 season, Blass was 3-9 with a 9.85 ERA, walking 84 batters in fewer than 89 innings. He tried pitching from the outfield. He tried pitching while kneeling on the mound. He tried pitching with his left foot tucked up behind his right knee. He tried Transcendental Meditation. He studied slow-motion films of his delivery. Warming up or throwing on the sidelines, while working alone with a catcher, he pitched well, but the moment a batter stood in against him he struggled,

especially with his fastball. Blass was permanently out of baseball the next year.

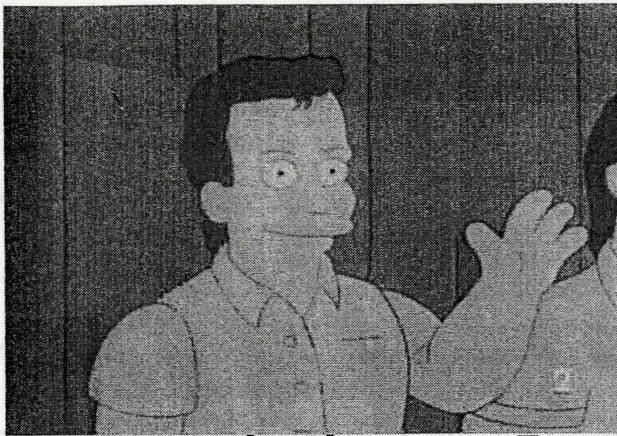
Blass recently said, "I still can't pitch, not even at my own baseball camp."

There were many theories about Blass: he was too nice, he lost his will to win, his mechanics were off, his eyesight deteriorated, he was afraid of being hit by a line drive, he was afraid of injuring a batter with a fastball, the death of his superstar teammate **Roberto Clemente** incapacitated him, a slump led to a loss of self-confidence, which led to a worse slump, which led to less self-confidence...

Dave Giusti, Blass's close friend and fellow pitcher, said about Blass, "He is remarkably open to all kinds of people, but I think he has closed his mind to his inner self. There are central areas you can't infringe on with him. There is no doubt that during the past two years he didn't react to a bad performance the way he used to, and you have to wonder why he couldn't apply his competitiveness to his problem. Last year I went through something like Steve's crisis. The first half of the season, I was atrocious, and I lost all my confidence, especially in my fastball. I began worrying about making big money and not performing. I worried about not contributing to the team. I worried about being traded. I thought it might be the end for me. I didn't know how to solve my problem, but I knew I had to solve it. In the end, it was talking to people that did it. I talked to everybody. Then, at some point, I turned the corner. But it was talking that did it, and my point is that Steve can't talk to people that way. Or won't."

In *Intoxicated by My Illness*, **Anatole Broyard** writes: "The patient has to start by treating his illness not as a disaster, an occasion for depression or panic, but as a narrative, a story. Stories are antibodies against illness and pain. When various doctors shoved scopes up my urethral canal, I found that it helped a lot when they gave me a narrative of what they were doing. Their talking translated or humanized the procedure. It prepared, strengthened, and somehow consoled me. Anything is better than an awful silent suffering."

Los Angeles Dodger second-baseman **Steve Sax**—after overcoming such a severe case of the yips (30 errors by mid-August in '83) that it became known for awhile as Steve Sax Disease—said, "It's a matter of eliminating all possibility of error as far as mechanics go. Get that down



Steve Sax, in Simpsons Form

pat, make good throws, and get your confidence back.”

The Dodgers tied a sock over Sax’s eyes and made him throw balls to first base blindfolded.

The Tigers had Coles throw sidearm.

The Mets had Sasser practice throwing from his knees.

When Philadelphia Phillies pitcher **Bruce Ruffin** lost his control in 1988, a fan suggested that he take the can of chewing tobacco out of his back pocket.

Everybody tells a player with a mental block not to think about it.

Sax said, “It’s like a big elephant in front of you. You can’t ignore it.”

Sasser said, “I’ve been working with people on visualization. But either the throw’s going to come or it’s not. What can you do? Just pray.”

Mike Stanley said, “All I could visualize was making an errant throw. I couldn’t even visualize making a good one.”

In the Land of Pain is **Alphonse Daudet**’s diary of the disintegration of his body (and fellow sufferers’ bodies) from neurosyphilis. “No general theory about pain,” he writes. “Each patient discovers his own, and the nature of pain varies, like a singer’s voice, according to the acoustics of the hall.”

Nobody’s perfect.

Everybody’s human.

A magazine editor putting together a “How-to” issue asked if there was any activity about which I wanted to write a “How-to” article. “How about a ‘How-not-to?’” I replied. There are so many things I don’t know how to do properly—just for starters: blow a bubble, dive, whistle, snap my fingers. My former writing teacher, the novelist **John Hawkes**, often used to say, “Failure is the only subject.” “Winners” (**Michael Jordan**, **Tiger Woods**, the Yankees, et al.) bore me silly; there’s nothing compelling to me about them, because there’s so little of the human predicament in their shiny glory.

Woody Allen says, “Basically, everybody is a loser, but it’s only now that people are beginning to admit it.”

Success has many fathers; failure is an orphan.

The mind is a powerful thing.

Everybody’s an expert.

Nobody knows anything.

“We work in the dark,” **Henry James** wrote. “We do what we can. We give what we have. Our doubt is our passion and our passion is our task. The rest is the madness of art.”

In the fairy-tale, sport is supposed to be some sort of transcendence, a lift-off from life’s travails.

The director **John Cassavettes** supported himself by acting in commercial movies. He said that he could take almost any line and make it interesting as long as he was allowed to put pauses in. In other words, to insert thinking.

David Shields’s *Body Politic: The Great American Sports Machine* is forthcoming from Simon & Schuster in May 2004. He’s also the author of “Baseball Is Just Baseball”: The Understated Ichiro and *Black Planet: Facing Race During an NBA Season*, a finalist for the *National Book Critics Circle Award*.

From Blackjack to Stickfigure (Part 2) by Dave Schulps

*Editor's note: Due to printing problems, two pages of the interview with **Jack McDowell**, ex-pitcher and current musician, and his **Stickfigure** bandmate (and **Smithereens** bassist) **Mike Mesaros** did not make it into Zisk # 6. So here are those missing pages.*

DS: Did you have one highlight as a major leaguer that stands out above the rest?

JM: I think the highlights I had were the clinch days going toward the playoffs. I was never lucky enough to actually win a playoff series in the handful of years I got to go, so I think the highlight was when you finally reached that first step. You set out a goal and you get to reach it, so I think those days are definitely the highlights, sprinkled along with the things I got to enjoy, like a couple of milestones Carlton Fisk had when I was with the **White Sox** and we got to celebrate with him. That was great, too.

DS: Having Carlton Fisk catch your first major league game, what did that mean to you?

JM: Oh, it was great. The one story I tell about Pudge all the time is I came to the majors with a good fastball and a mediocre split-finger fastball. I mean, I was still developing that pitch, so I mean I was a 1½-pitch pitcher at the time. So he got really good at using my fastball. I've related this a bunch, but there were times when I would go into the windup and he would move to set up his target and he'd be literally behind people, like "OK, if you're missing, throw it through this guy." That's the way I learned to pitch early on with him.

DS: Were you kind of a **Drysdale** disciple attitude-wise?

JM: Yeah. I was pretty aggressive on the mound and I went after people, you know, but I never liked to waste pitches. I wasn't trying to scare anybody by throwing up and in, but I would throw inside to try and get people out. You know, you miss by six inches and you're right on them. You make the pitch you want to and they're not going to hit the pitch. That's the thing; if you're trying to throw strikes on the inside part and you miss, it looks like you're trying to dust somebody off the plate. I never liked to waste pitches. I liked to get to it, get after them, and get them out as quick as I could.

DS: Is there a constant battle with the batter moving in on you and the pitcher trying to keep him off the plate?

JM: There is, especially nowadays. The thing is, they stopped calling the inside strike for a long time, so batters just got up on top of the plate. Basically, the outside corner of the plate was right down the middle where these

guys were standing and you'd throw a perfect pitch inside and they'd jump off the plate and everybody would think you're throwing at them. Meanwhile, the pitch is right there. It's a strike if you go back and look at it. They weren't calling that for a while so you had to be more aggressive in there. The trick for me was getting them into a situation to exploit that and I used to use it in the opposite way from most pitchers. When I'd get behind in a count, I'd challenge people inside and they'd see fastball and think, "This is something I can handle." Early on in my career, when I had a good enough fastball, I'd be able to get in on them. That's how I used that.

DS: Later in your career, when the fastball was not as good, did you develop other mechanisms?

JM: You know I never got a chance to get to that point. I kind of just went boom [McDowell's career ended at 33 after a botched elbow surgery] and I was done so I never got to it. But I was stubborn; it would have taken me a while. I still would get to a situation where I'd go, "I'm going to jam this guy inside here." I would try to throw my 84-mile-an-hour fastball by somebody and he'd remind you that's not a good idea.

DS: How did you and Jack meet, Mike?

MM: I saw Jack on **Roy Firestone**'s show in 1990 and he was on with, I think, **Lee Plemmel** who was a member of Jack's band **V.I.E.W.** I remember he played a song called "Prodigal," and it made quite good musical sense to me. I can tell in one song if a person is coming from the same musical place as I am. Then through a mutual friend we met and those guys came out on the road with the **Smithereens** for a good month on tour in '91 or '92.

DS: Was that your first bona fide tour, Jack?

JM: Oh, yeah. Absolutely. I tell these guys now, but I didn't tell them at the time, that we had only done a handful of **V.I.E.W.** shows with that band together and they called us out to do the **Smithereens** tour with all these packed crowds and I remember showing up, the first gig was in Louisville, and having the auditorium just jam packed with kids. It was nuts and the first thing they see is us, because we're the opening band, and we go out there, and I remember finishing the first song and I know the whole crew of the **Smithereens** were checking us out, because they didn't know what we were all about. Nobody had heard us or anything. So we had the added pressure of the veterans looking on plus all the kids. At the end of the song, the kids were going nuts and I thought, "Oh we can do this, this is cool." I probably learned as much during that three weeks on the road as I

have since.

MM: There was no hazing going on, though. We didn't give them the shave and all that.

JM: That's right. They were nice to us.

DS: So, Mike, were you the one responsible for having V.I.E.W. on the road with the Smithereens?

MM: Yeah. I knew it would be musically compatible, which it was. A good guitar-oriented rock and roll band. I knew it would be a hell of a lot of fun, which is one of your main concerns. A gig is only an hour, or 90 minutes, then you've got the rest of that time out on the road, so it's good to have good things going on then so that everything's going to be fun and going to work.

DS: So Jack, were you a Smithereens fan?

JM: Oh, absolutely. I was sitting there playing their songs one winter. Me and Lee were learning their songs as we were sitting around messing with each other and here we are a year later and they're calling us up to go on tour with them and we're just looking at each other and going, "OK, now what do we do?" It kind of stepped things up for us in a hurry, which was great.

DS: Did the kind of discipline and practice regimen you had in baseball carry over into learning to play the guitar and sing.

JM: I think so, but I'm not so sure it's from baseball. I think you either have that kind of mentality or not, but it definitely comes in handy. A lot of the same disciplines that I used in baseball that were my strong points I've used in music—as far as having tunnel vision and going for it and working hard and working on your craft and all that stuff. This record that we have out now is the first project that I've been able to put all my efforts into and not have the old baseball day job stepping on its toes. It's been great. You know, it's a lot of work running a band and getting things going. You want people to be able to hear the music. It's all about getting it out there to the people and there are different ways to do it, whether it be sitting and talking to you about it or playing shows or whatever. There's a lot to it.

DS: Do you have to be in the same mind frame to get up on stage as you do to get up and pitch.

JM: It's not so much of a competitive thing. What do you think of playing sports, Mike?

MM: Well, you're not trying to beat someone who's trying to beat you; there's no one trying to make you look foolish and if you make a mistake, you're not going to get booed and it's not going to be part of your permanent record in a book forever and ever that you made this many mistakes this particular tour: "You made 33 mistakes on that tour in 1988." It doesn't work like that, but

baseball's like that. Every move you make is recorded forever.

DS: What about the competition between bands on a bill? I mean sometimes you hear about that kind of thing.

MM: I don't believe in that kind of thing between musicians. Comparing one band or musician to another is like arguing about which is a better color, red or blue. How do you argue that point? It's all in the ear or eye of the listener or beholder. You know, if you're a naturally competitive person you do have a certain amount of it, but often, if you're playing on a bill and there are other good musicians and their performance is good and it goes good, well, that works in your favor because it fires you up. Maybe you're beat or tired and you need that little extra kick in the butt to really put out at the top of your game so in that way it could work for you.

DS: So you guys really got to know each other on that tour. When and how did you decide to work together?

MM: Well, Jack asked me to play on a few tracks on one of his subsequent records and it went well and we have a good musical rapport. It's a comfortable fit. It's fun for me because Jack's writing is different from Pat [DiNizio]'s writing because Jack is a little bit of a different generation. He's coming from a different place; not as rooted in the '60s as the Smithereens. Jack has a lot of that, but there's also a few more contemporary things as far as what feels we're going to use drum-wise and stuff like that. So, it's a good way for me to expand my vocabulary.

DS: What was recording this album like?

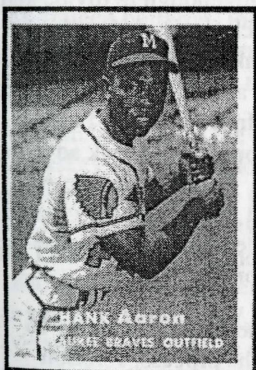
JM: It was kind of crazy because it was done over maybe a year and a half or two years, the last couple of years that I was playing ball. I had my home studio that I was doing a lot of the stuff on and I would do drums at an outside studio. It was a period of time where I probably recorded about two records worth of material, which I pared down to one record for this. I've got a whole 'nother bunch of songs sitting around waiting to be redone better now that we've been together as a band as much as we have the last year or so. But it was weird because it was a definite outlet for me and a lot of songs came from the emotional roller coaster, I guess you could say, of seeing the end of my career and not knowing what's going on and thinking, "Wow, this record might actually be something I might be doing fulltime." When I started doing it I was planning on it being just another record that I put out while I played ball. So it was all things in one.

Why I Wear # 44 by Lisa Alcock

I play second base on our co-ed company softball team. This year when we got to choose jersey numbers, my very first choice was no. 44, the same number worn by my all-time favorite player. No not, **Reggie Jackson** (please!), but in my opinion, the *only* no. 44: **Henry (Hank) Louis Aaron**.

I'm only 34, not old enough to have seen Hank play in his heyday, or really remember him in the early '70s, up until he retired, in 1976. But from what I've read about him, and seen on sports specials/documentaries, hands down, Hank is the man.

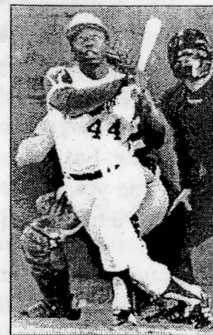
Hank might not have had as much flair as **Willie Mays** in the outfield, but he didn't need to. Hank got the job done. He also didn't need to loosen his hat so it would fly off when he ran for a fly ball, like Mays was known to have done. In Hank's 23 seasons, he played mostly right field (he also played first, second and third and was a DH in 1976). He played in 3,298 games with 7,436 put outs, a fielding percentage of .982 and only 144 errors. He has four gold gloves. Despite these numbers, I think Hank is mostly known for his hitting. Everyone knows the significance of the number 755; it is the most recognizable statistic in baseball. Hank's lifetime batting average was .305. He was the first player to have 3,000 hits and 500 homers. He had two National League batting titles. In 12,364 at bats Hank had 2,174 runs, 2,297 RBIs, 3,771 hits, an on-base percentage of .374 and a slugging percentage of .555. His statistics are amazing and what got him into the Baseball Hall of Fame. But that's not the only reason I admire Hank.



If I could go back in time, he is one of the players I wish I could have seen play. He is the epitome of grace and power and quiet strength. He shut up a lot of critics when he surpassed the Babe's HR record. I get goose bumps and a little teary-eyed when I see news footage of that game. If I could pick one baseball moment in which to be present, it would be April 8,

1974, Atlanta, Georgia, Dodgers vs. Braves. In that one defining moment a man from Mobile, Alabama made a statement and wrote baseball history.

It was the 4th inning; **Al Downing** pitches to Hank... Thwack! The ball was gone!!! There was Hank, rounding the bases...two fans ran onto the field and patted him on the back...the crowd erupting into a frenzy, and there, waiting at home plate along with his teammates, was his mom. She grabbed him and hugged him...and clung onto him because she had feared he would get shot that day. She has said in interviews that if her son was going to get killed, she was going to go with him. Hank had received many death threats and thousands of pieces of racist hate mail on his road to beating **Babe Ruth's** homerun record. (He'd also received letters of praise and encouragement, all of which he's saved). Through the racist climate in Atlanta and throughout the country...Henry persevered and excelled. He let his bat and glove speak for him. Hank and his family were threatened as he moved closer to passing Babe Ruth's HR record. (FBI agents accompanied his daughter **Gaile** when she attended Fisk University). He had to endure things that no one should ever have to endure. He was the pillar of strength and dignity at the darkest hour. He was a strong, somewhat shy, reluctant hero. He's someone to look up to. Not only did he achieve baseball greatness, he brought attention to the fact that baseball didn't exist in a vacuum; the sport was also affected by the racist climate in the U.S. He gave hope to thousands of kids and adults (myself included) as to how far one could go. If you apply yourself, you can write history. I would think that many players today stand on the shoulders of this giant.



Now, when I step up to the plate...I admit, I'm no Hammerin' Hank. I'm lucky if I get a double. But in the back of my mind...Hank is there, the reserved, dignified hero. Number 44.

By day, Lisa Alcock is a copyeditor at a legal publishing company. By night, she can usually be found drinking a pint of Guinness at a local pub, or at home watching Law & Order reruns and SportsCenter. It is her dream job to work at ESPN. The author also admits that she has not read the Chicago Manual of Style in its entirety. Kip says of the author: "When she steps inside the white lines herself, she can bring it!"

The Founding of the American League: Those Were The Days by John Shiffert

1901—those were the days. The American League wasn't polluted by the designated hitter or terrorized by **George Steinbrenner**. Maybe polluted by the lack of the foul strike rule and terrorized by **Ban Johnson** and **John McGraw**, but at least the DH and Steinbrenner weren't on the scene yet. It was an exciting time in baseball history, because a new and promising league was on the horizon.

Following the untimely demise of the American Association in the fall of 1891, the National League ruled baseball with a less-than-admirable monopolistic grip. Syndicate ownership, rowdiness (the **Baltimore Orioles** and the **Cleveland Spiders** being the foremost practitioners), violence, competitive imbalance and salary classifications that resulted in a theoretical \$2,400 per man salary cap, had taken a lot of the fun out of the game. Especially the concept of individuals owning pieces of more than one team—"Syndicate Baseball" it was called. And it was, indeed, a sin. After all, "monopoly" is an ugly concept, unless you're playing the Atlantic City-based board game.

It was into this unseemly situation that **Ban Johnson**, **Connie Mack**, **John McGraw**, **Charles Somers**, **Charlie Comiskey**, et al, brought the American League—an idea whose time had come.

Interestingly, it should be noted that, outrage over syndicate baseball to the contrary, there were also situations in the new American League where an individual had a piece of the action in more than one team. In fact, **Charles Somers** in **Cleveland** was **Mack's** and **Shibe's** financial angel (to the tune of \$30,000) in getting the Athletics started.

However, neither **Somers** nor anyone else in the American League caused the wholesale shifting of players from one team to another. Although some player transfers were made, they were done to shore up struggling American League teams in the war with the National League, not because a joint ownership was trying to stack the deck for one city, as happened to the NL's **Baltimore**, **Cleveland** and **Louisville** clubs.

Syndicate ownership aside, it's safe to say the National League was not an especially successful organization during its 12-team monopoly from 1892 to 1899. Despite its monopoly position, most teams lost money, and the competitive balance was terrible. Even the shakeout of

four teams following the 1899 season accomplished little more than putting a lot of major leaguers out of work, and depriving fans in four cities of major league baseball, although it did provide the still-minor American League with half of its players in 1900. What four cities were dropped? As if you had to ask, **Washington** and the three less-favored "syndicate" cities, **Baltimore**, **Louisville** and **Cleveland**.

Even before the shakeout, the competitive situation in the National League was what **Bill James** has called, "A hybrid major/minor league, with teams competing against what would later be called their own farm teams." In effect, the **Baltimore**, **Louisville** and **Cleveland** clubs had become farm teams for **Brooklyn**, **Pittsburgh** and **St. Louis**. Actually, this unique situation was repeated to a certain extent in the 1920's, when **Boston Red Sox** owner **Harry Frazee** sold off most of his good players (**Babe Ruth**, **Waite Hoyt**, **Wally Schang**, **Sam Jones**, **Joe Bush**, **Everett Scott**, **Joe Dugan**, **George Pipgras**, **Herb Pennock**) to the **New York Yankees**. It should further be noted that **Frazee** owed Yankee owners **Jacob Ruppert** and **Tillinghast Huston** \$350,000—and that the loan was secured by a mortgage on **Fenway Park**. The Yankees could have literally put the **Red Sox** out on the street, if they had so desired. **Frazee** made sure they didn't so desire.

Just to prove things seldom change in baseball, almost the exact same situation came up again in the 1950's, this time with the once-proud **Philadelphia Athletics** franchise, after it was sold to **Arnold Johnson** and moved to **Kansas City**. Although **Johnson** was sharp enough to divide and conquer the already-divided **Mack** family in buying the **A's**, he wasn't sharp enough to take advantage of the fact that he owned **Yankee Stadium**, and could have exercised some leverage on the Yankees. Indeed, it was Yankee owners **Del Webb** and **Dan Topping** who took advantage of the relationship with **Johnson**. Shortly after the **A's** moved to **KC**, **Missouri** baseball fans found they would not be able to enjoy their ill-gotten ballclub, because the Athletics became a farm team for the Yankees.

Over the course of five years, the two teams made 16 trades involving 60 players. In the process, **Johnson** invariably dealt off the Athletics' best players (**Roger Maris**, **Bobby Shantz**, **Harry Simpson**, **Art Ditmar**, **Ralph Terry**, **Enos Slaughter**, **Hector Lopez**, **Clete**

Boyer, Ryne Duren, Buddy Daley) and fueled the Yankees' string of pennants in the late 1950s and early 1960s. In fact, it could be argued, only somewhat facetiously, that the fall of the Yankees' dynasty after 1964 stemmed not from New York's well-noted failure to sign black players, but from the failure of Kansas City to employ enough good players of any color.

Returning to the 19th Century version of "Let's Make a Deal," the competitive results of syndicate baseball in the National League were astounding, and predictable. In the years from 1892 to 1899, the first place teams in the National League finished with an average record of 94-43, a .686 winning percentage. The 12th place team's average record was 35-102, a .255 winning percentage. The average difference? The last place team finished 59 games out of first each year.

Given the situation that fans had been living with for the past eight seasons, Ban Johnson's decision to re-name his Western League in 1900 was met with more than a little interest, especially since he also made it clear that his new American League was getting ready to challenge the National League's monopoly.

The history of Johnson's creation actually dates back to late 1893, when the original Western League folded. Johnson, a collegiate catcher who graduated from Marietta College (much later, the winner of three NCAA Division III baseball crowns) in 1887 and went into journalism with the Cincinnati *Commercial Gazette* was, like most sportswriters past, present and future, a highly opinionated individual. In Johnson's case, his opinions were directed at the biggest (and almost only) target in American sports—baseball. However, unlike most of his ink-stained brethren, Johnson was in a position to do something with his opinions—or, at least do something more than seeing them in print.

Johnson had caught the eye, ear and attention of Charles Comiskey, from 1892 to 1894 the manager-first baseman of the National League **Cincinnati Red Stockings**, and a key figure at the same two positions with the champion **St. Louis Browns** of the American Association in the 1880's. Since the not-yet-Old Roman was about through as a player, hitting .227, .220 and .264 in that high-average era, it could be speculated that Johnson was writing that Comiskey should retire.

However, that was not the case. Johnson and Comiskey ended up talking about the future of the game, and how a

league should be run. (Actually, Comiskey did retire as a player following the 1894 season, with a career .264 average that suggests his Hall of Fame election was a tribute to his organizing, fielding and managing skills. It certainly couldn't have been for the pinch-penny ways and the player relations skills that helped bring about the Black Sox scandal.)

In November 1893, while still managing the Reds, Comiskey met with several club owners from the failed Western League, and persuaded them to re-group, and name Johnson as president. Thus, what would become the American League in 1901 began with the 1894 season and teams in Sioux City, Toledo, Indianapolis, Detroit, Kansas City, Milwaukee, Minneapolis and Grand Rapids.

When Comiskey was fired from the Cincinnati job following a 10th place finish in 1894, he joined Johnson, taking over the Sioux City franchise and moving it to St. Paul and eventually (following the 1899 season) to Chicago where he appropriated the National League club's old nickname, **White Stockings**.

One of the other key moments in the development of the Western League took place in September 1896, when Pittsburgh owner **William W. Kerr**, a managerial second-guesser such as baseball has seen time and again over the years, came to a parting of the ways with his frustrated catcher-manager, Connie Mack.

Johnson ran his Western League with a good deal more, for want of a better word, dignity, than the National League. Umpires were given real authority, parks were spruced up, drinking and rowdiness were frowned upon (although Johnson himself was known as hard drinker) and most of the clubs made money.

A key moment in the development of 20th Century baseball came after the 1899 season when, as previously mentioned, the National League cut loose Washington, Baltimore, Cleveland and Louisville from its unwieldy 12-team set up. Although the move to dump the weak sisters of syndicated baseball made sense (even though they might not have been weak sisters if not for the joint ownership situation), it gave Johnson an opening to upgrade his operation into a major league city, moving the Grand Rapids franchise to Cleveland. Of course, after what Cleveland fans had experienced from afar in 1899 (a 20-134 record), any reasonably capable team would have probably been welcomed with open arms.

At the same time, Johnson re-named his circuit "The American League," and Comiskey moved his team from St. Paul to Chicago, interestingly enough, with the agreement of Cubs owner Jim Hart, who felt that The American League wouldn't prove a threat with its ballpark located in the malodorous stockyard section of Chicago. While still a "minor" league, and bound by the National Agreement that governed all organizations within "organized" baseball, there was no doubt that the now-renamed American League was getting serious, and war clouds were gathering at the edges of the National League's wooden bleachers.

Were the fans and the media ready for war? Did **William Randolph Hearst** invent "Yellow Journalism" a couple of years earlier to fan the flames of the Spanish-American War?

By the time the 1901 rolled around, and war was formally declared, there wasn't much doubt as to the potential of the American League, at least not in the pages of the Philadelphia Ledger. "Its course has been such as to win it many friends," said the paper's April 23, 1901 edition regarding the new League. And this was the day before the Athletics' scheduled opener. "That it has outgrown being minor league cannot any longer be denied, for that has been demonstrated by its growing popularity, and more especially by the caliber of the teams that represent the cities composing its circuit."

Details of the actions of the new league and the impending war spread like wildfire through the industry's two trade papers, *Sporting News* and *Sporting Life*, as well as through dozens of local newspapers (this was the height of the newspaper boom, when a big city would typically have a half dozen dailies) in the late winter and early spring of 1901.

After a successful 1900 season, and after the National League had rebuffed an overture by Johnson to incorporate some of the Western League teams into the National League (which would have ended our story before it began), Johnson eliminated the minor league cities of Minneapolis, Indianapolis, Buffalo and Kansas City, and replaced them with Philadelphia, Boston, Washington and Baltimore. The first two were in direct competition with two of the National League's stronger teams and the last two were, of course, two of the recently evicted NL cities. These moves, in effect, changed the American League from a regional, midwestern loop to a national organization.

At an October 14, 1900 meeting in Chicago, Johnson, in what would prove to be one of his biggest mistakes, gave the Baltimore franchise to old Orioles John McGraw and **Wilbert Robinson**. McGraw's ego was as big as Johnson's, and, even worse, his behavior was far from the professional and more refined image that Johnson was trying to create for the new league. It was a case of open warfare from the beginning, culminating in McGraw jumping back to the National League in July 1902 and sabotaging the Oriole franchise through a slick stock transfer scheme that put control of the American League team in the hands of **New York Giants** owner **Andrew Freedman**.

While Johnson was bringing McGraw into the fold (a wolf in sheep's clothing, as it turned out), he was also giving control of the Washington franchise to **Tom Manning** (actually, Johnson himself owned 51% of the franchise) and dispatching Connie Mack from Milwaukee to the City of Brotherly Love.

If Mack's many responsibilities in Milwaukee did indeed stand him in good stead when he came to Philadelphia, standing him in even better stead when he was putting the Athletics together were...a couple of other newspapermen...Philadelphia newspapermen. That's right, the establishment and early acceptance of the A's received a tremendous boost (and not just in the form of good publicity) from the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, the *Associated Press*, and various other local media outlets.

Mack arrived in Philadelphia following the 1900 season and set up shop in the Hotel Hanover, initially holding one-quarter of what became the Philadelphia Athletics' stock, worth between five and 10 thousand dollars. The rest was originally held, as previously noted, by Johnson's primary money reserve, Charlie Somers.

Two weeks later, Nick Young, president of the National League, wired Johnson to advise him that he had forgotten to renew his protection fees for the National Agreement for the 1901 season. Johnson, who viewed protection fees the same way as a small shop owner views paying protection to the neighborhood hood, wrote back in typically undiplomatic fashion that he hadn't forgotten. At the same time, he also referred to the on-again, off-again efforts various baseball people were making to revive the old American Association (or, at least, a new major league bearing that name) as a threat that helped motivate the American League's non-payment. (Just to confuse things

further, the National League also attempted to form a minor league called the American Association in early 1901, with teams in all of the American League cities.)

Here's the important part of Johnson's letter to Young:

"The plan of the American League to occupy Eastern territory has been well defined, and I think the men of the National League thoroughly understand our position in this matter. For the two years we have been menaced by the possible formation of a league hostile to our interest and detrimental in many ways to organized baseball. This annual agitation is hurtful and we propose to so shape our organization as to check it in the future. In extending our circuit to the far East, it is unreasonable to assume we could continue along the old lines prescribed by the National Agreement. New conditions must alter, in part, our relations with the National League. This is a matter I have informally discussed with some of your members."

Imagine being a fly on the wall of Young's office when this little missive came in...

"I think the men of the National League thoroughly understand our position."

"Yes, we understand you're trouble," growls Young.

"For two years we have been menaced by the possible formation of a league hostile to our interest and detrimental in many ways to organized baseball."

"Ho, ho. The pot calling the kettle black," snorts Young.

"In extending our circuit to the far East..."

"We'd rather you really extend it to the far East, say to China. Maybe you could get caught in the Boxer Rebellion," wishes Young.

"It is unreasonable to assume we could continue along the old lines prescribed by the National Agreement."

"Since when did you really want to follow the National Agreement in the first place?" asks Young.

"New conditions must alter, in part, our relations with the National League."

"As if you didn't create those conditions yourself," rages Young.

Certainly the part about the menace of another league (the new American Association) was a red herring, since Johnson had only one thing in mind, having the American League take on the National League for supremacy. He couldn't have cared less about a phantom American Association.

Actually, Young didn't directly answer Johnson's baseball version of firing on Fort Sumter, although the November National League annual meeting in Indianapolis decided that it would hold the high moral ground in a baseball war, since the American Leaguers were the secessionists

However, Johnson, et al certainly weren't viewed as secessionists, at least not in the sports pages of the April 24, 1901 *Philadelphia Inquirer*. (Inky Sports Editor **Frank Hough** was a stockholder in the A's!)

"The commanding position in the baseball world secured by the American League, which opens its championship season to-day, is due in great part to the mistakes of the older organization, the National League. While there has always been a well-defined sentiment favorable to two organizations of a national character, it would have been the work of years to build up the American League to its present proportions but for the shortsighted policy and the grab-all disposition shown by the National League magnates ever since the asinine Indianapolis amalgamation."

Of course, *Inquirer* readers could also have gotten the picture from the cartoon of Ban Johnson holding an Emancipation Proclamation in front of an unchained American Leaguer. "The Liberator of the American Baseball Slave" the cartoon was titled.

Those were the days...

John Shiffert is a member of the Society for Baseball Research (SABR), the former publisher of the Philadelphia Baseball File (1989-1991), the former Sports Information Director for Earlham College (1973-1974) and Drexel University (1975-1979) and a sportswriter of some 35 years experience, starting in high school in Philadelphia. Every week Shiffert (a baseball historian and Phillies fan living in exile outside of Atlanta) looks at a timely event from baseball's history and ties it into a event or news story from today's headlines in his free e-zine, 19 to 21 (www.baseball19to21.com).

Year in Baseball: 2003 (continued from page 4)

suddenly this summer, but he was a great announcer. With an obvious love of language, history, and literature, he would weave these obscure (at least to me) and often funny quotes into his on-air patter which always seemed just perfect for the moment, never pretentious or phony, just a sincere and perfect description of the moment. In signing off the last broadcast of his 30 plus year Sox career, following another season-long 7 month roller coaster ride of triumph and post-season tragedy, he chose this slightly less obscure quote from former baseball commissioner Bart Giammati to say good-bye and describe his feelings for the game. In its entirety it's really quite wonderful, in part it goes.....

'It breaks your heart. It is designed to break your heart. The game begins in the Spring, when everything else begins again, and it blossoms in the summer, filling the afternoons and evenings, and then as soon as the chill rains come, it stops and leaves you to face the cold of fall alone.'

"Current announcer Joe Castiglione followed Martin as 'voice of the Sox,' and last night continued the tradition (with credit and tribute to Martin) of signing off the last broadcast of the year with Giammati's quote. Castiglione is a sincere, corny in a good way, non show biz type whose home run calls, as much as anything, are the soundtrack of summer around here. He's called a Sox game pretty much every day since spring training started in February, and he lives and dies with this team in a most endearing way. To sit beside the radio in the wee hours of the night, following last night's game, and finally hear him say goodbye with Giammati's words, well, it really was the sound of a broken heart. It was really quite a memorable moment.

"Shortly after our trip to Boston, Dustin decided that he'd rather watch or listen to anything instead of these awful, boring, awful, Red Sox games. Because they always suck and lose in the end anyway. The other night he wanted to use the tv to watch a movie rental (which we had for several more days) instead of a play-off game, and got all hot and profane (I've actually come to enjoy short sharp bursts of teenage profanity in the home) when I told him I really didn't have a choice, I had to watch the game. In case you've forgotten (which I had) the 14 year old mind operates in a fairly concrete way. In his mind it was totally ridiculous, I'm sorry, TOTALLY FUCKING RIDICULOUS!!! that I really had no choice in the matter. I told him that some time between 1967 and 1986 something happened. Whether it was countless late-night hours sitting with Dad on the porch at camp listening to Ned Martin, or countless crushing defeats at the hands of handsome, talented, but nonetheless evil New Yorkers I couldn't say, but something had happened. This had become my team. A bond had been created that no man nor

Judge could break, and that I was certainly powerless to change. I told him that if he showed me a kid at school who claimed to be a Yankees, Lakers, or Cowboys fan I'd show him a total fucking pussy phony who didn't know the first fucking thing about what it's like to actually care about something other than their pitiful fucking pussy selves (I've found this to be an effective method of communicating with today's young people). I told him this was about DNA, about the stuff that runs in your veins. That this wasn't about choosing the flavor of the week, instead this was about being chosen. And no matter how crushing the end of season blow is, you can't wait to do it all over again next year.

"Before last night's game, Dustin came to me and asked if we could watch the game together. I wept openly and embraced him. O.K. I didn't weep and embrace, but I do consider that my work here as a parent is largely done. Literally as I was writing this part of the mail (truth) Dustin came through the door, home from school saying "I want to knock this kid flat on his ass for talking Yankees all day." I told him his mother and I would support his decision to kick a child's ass at school for talking Yankees even if it took place over a portion of the day, much less the entire day. And why? Because that person is a fucking pussy phony. And down deep even pussy phonies want to be good people, and we can't help them in their goal to become better people unless we kick their ass and then tell them why we kicked their ass (I think I'm finally getting the hang of this parent stuff). In short, I think there may be hope for our potty mouthed young man.

"From Dustin, to our extended family, to the Red Sox, and ultimately to a theory. 2003 represented the first time this team had won 6 or more post season games since 1986. 2003 also represented the first year this family sent an entourage of support to Fenway Park to cheer or at least observe their efforts. Coincidence? I don't think so. I think the data clearly demonstrates a direct connection between the success of the Red Sox franchise and this family's willingness to share their "essence" (if you will). In fact I will go one step further and extrapolate from the data that had all members of this family attended that August game, a World Series title would have been attained. I'm calling on all members, and you know who you are, to join in Boston next summer. Not for just a game, but for a Yankees game. By showing Steinbrenner, and in fact the world, what we think of his little band of evildoers, I believe we can effectively change the legacy of this rivalry. We can no longer dip our toes in the waters of indifference (yes I actually made that up). It's time to gather in Boston as one, and do what we must. If we're to see the Yankees we'll need to be on the phone the first hours that tickets go on sale. A simple yea or nay will signal your intent. We

have only begun to fight, and I believe we have the Yankees exactly where we want them.

Part 3

Over the past two years my brother, Casey, has finally caught the baseball bug. I have been trying to indoctrinate him since the late 70s, but only recently have such efforts taken hold. As two guys who hate the Yankees and love underdogs, we were ecstatic over the prospect of a Cubs/Red Sox World Series. When both of those teams collapsed we considered surrender. We finally caught up by phone while watching game 6 of the World Series, Casey in Syracuse, me in Brewster.

Mike: Were you watching the game while you were out earlier?

Casey: Oh yeah, I was getting shit for it, too. I was the only one person in the place clapping (for the Marlins). I got a lot of bad looks because I said out loud, Bobble head Jeter? No, bobble hands Jeter. Meanwhile, the Fox tv broadcast of the game shows Josh Beckett striding to the mound to start the ninth.

Mike: Holy cow.

Casey: What?

Mike: Josh Beckett is going to go for the complete game.

Casey: You got that before me.

We realize that our televisions our slightly out of synch, mine being about two seconds ahead of Casey's.

Mike: It must be that delay again. Holy shit, someone's just shot Jeter!

Casey: What? Fuck you.

Bernie Williams comes to the plate.

Casey: This guy's dangerous. Every time he's been retired I'm like, go sing me a song, Bernie.

Williams flies to left.

Casey: Did you see Petite yelling into his glove earlier? He put his glove over his face and you could see him screaming, "Motherfucker, asshole, shitbag, fuck, fuck, fuck." He's just screaming. And obviously he might have been saying, "Cheese and rice, golly willagers, hootenanny," or something like that.

Matsui flies to left.

Mike: Two outs.

Casey: One away, oh my god. How's that burn in your Cheerios, Steinbrenner?

Mike: Who's going to make the last out?

Fox cuts to Jorge Posada in the on deck circle.

Casey and Mike: Ooohhh!

Mike: Posada's going to make the last out. The chinless wonder. He looks like the weasel from the Emmet Otter special.

Casey: *(sings "Brothers" from the Emmet Otter Christmas special)* Brothers...

Mike: (Laughing) Stop, I'm hyperventilating here.

Casey:...brothers...

Mike: Twenty six outs. The only, the only good thing about the Yankees in the World Series is the possibility of watching them lose.

Posada grounds out to Beckett.

Mike: There it is, how sweet is that?

Casey: Holy fucking shit. Look at them (the Marlins)!

Fox cuts to the Yankee bench.

Mike: Zimmer, maybe you should have run out and tackled Beckett.

Casey: Holy shit. For a club whose farm team had better attendance last year...I can't believe Beckett did it. Three days rest and he pitched a complete game.

Mike: A shutout. In Yankee Stadium.

Casey: I would love to be in a fenced in cage outside of Yankee Stadium right now, telling all the Yankee fans to go "f" themselves.

Mike: Like a shark cage?

Casey: Yeah, exactly. But those Yankee fans, they know a guy. Next thing I know I'd be on the back of a towtruck slung around the boroughs of New York City.

(Replay of Juan Pierre charging in from centerfield.)

Casey: Look at that, that is the best look on anyone's face. I could watch that forever.

Mike: Right, and none of the Yankees would react with that amount of joy. For the Marlins, it's a group of guys winning it for the first time, not a bunch of smug bastards racking it up for the seventeenth time. Sure, the Yankees would be happy, but it'd be more of a sense of getting what was owed to them, that sense of entitlement they have.

Cut to weeping Jorge Posada

Casey: Poor Jorge.

Mike: And right now the Yankees know they're going to be in the playoffs next year. There's no drama.

Casey: I wish I had a dvd-r so I could record this. I'd print it out and put it all over the office.

Cut to Marlins lockerroom. Bud Selig readies himself to present the World Series trophy to Marlins owner Jeffrey Loria.

Mike: It's about now that it sinks in: we're rooting for a Florida team. It's good, but it could be better.

Casey: Did you see Loria's shirt the other night? He looked like an Easter basket.

A reporter serves Jack McKeon the inevitable "you have to hand it to the Yankees" set up.

Mike: What he really wants to say is, "The Yankees and everybody else can kiss my 72-year-old ass."

Then, after lapsing into a barrage of crass (but obvious) anti-Yankee exchanges, things end on a pensive note.

Casey: You know what kind of depressed me, Mike—and I'm sure you'll be real happy to hear this—I pull into the driveway, and I'm listening to the radio, and I go, There's only six more outs of baseball left in the year. Period.

Mike: Wow, you're going to miss the season. We can commiserate during the off-season drought.

The New York Yankees Play Two by Michael Baker

In Yankee Stadium where tragedies
happen at least twice a day and
it's 5PM and workers belt bourbon
and beer after church and the mugginess cracks
over the light over the green fields,
as women stay startled, hands
reaching for tissues, garments shut tight.
In the bleachers we sought distraction
and the gap-toothed hag's arms
seemed ready for flight. Every game she tells us
about the night she ate a box
of Cracker Jacks and fell into a coma.
Nothing could save her. Like Lindbergh
she left her easy life and floated,
without modern instruments, towards Kansas City
to have coffee with God: I can't go forward,
I can't go back. They argued about Fisk
and Bucky Dent, laughed about the Babe,
and arm-wrestled over Rizzuto in the Hall.
Help me, make me stronger, but God
always triumphs.
He grandly points to his groin: "Seed,
Divide, and Lay 7 on the Yanks."
In twenty minutes the scoreboard stat line
starts to zigzag like a whore's whip—
it's 8-6 in the 7th, Tribe winning,
and she and her bleacher buddies scream

for Gehrig, Little Leaguers,
a miracle from the bullpen, if not merely cable coverage.
The fans ignored her and gave warnings about pills.
Later, we pray, she will join a circus in Double A,
become a minimum wage clown/masseuse,
a short order cook, and reliable plant
in Midwest barrooms for the visiting teams.
She will marry a blind, bald man, rear Koreans,
bathe in barbed wire, and get emotional
over cotton candy scandals. She will then come home.
She works the third base area near here now,
threatening the Wall Street types with crossed fingers
pointed in her pockets, following
other fathers to the restrooms
on Sundays, mocking their selections
of foot longs and generic domestics.
Weather and play become dull and damp
and our Faith, the fan, spreads with the sinking sun,
leaning towards our younger brothers, puffing
and scratching, day in day out,
dreaming of past World Series, hits of codeine
and Buds, her future fanatic tormentees,
because she knows soon the loud roar
after another comeback
alarms another fleshy heaven
that stains her thighs' second game.

Michael Baker, an adjunct professor in Northern New Jersey, loves the Indians, both the Cleveland and the gambling varieties.

Match the Player With Their Product Endorsement by Mark Hughson

EASY ROUND

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Mike Piazza | a. Oscar Meyer Lunchables |
| 2. Rafeal Palmiero | b. Advil |
| 3. Derek Jeter | c. Arm & Hammer Ultramax |
| 4. Steve Garvey | d. "The Power Of Cheese" |
| 5. Nolan Ryan | e. Hanes Underwear |
| 6. Sparky Anderson | f. 1-800 COLLECT |
| 7. Cal Ripken Jr. | g. Degree Deodorant |
| 8. Jim Palmer | h. Miller Lite |
| 9. Jason Giambi | i. Amtrak |
| 10. George Brett | j. Gatorade |
| 11. Nomar Garciaparra | k. Nestle Quik |
| 12. Randy Johnson | l. Just For Men Hair Color |
| 13. Keith Hernandez | m. Viagra |

HONUS ROUND 1

Which one of these candy bars was NOT named after a baseball player?

1. Baby Ruth
2. O Henry
3. The Reggie Bar

HONUS ROUND 2

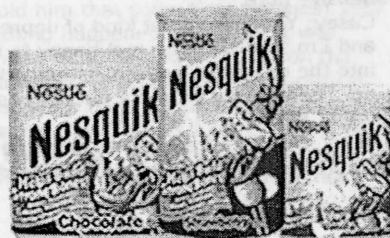
Name all the baseball players that have appeared on a Wheaties cereal box.

HONUS ROUND 3

Which one of these players does NOT have a product endorsement with Pepsi?

1. Ken Griffey Jr.
2. Sammy Sosa
3. Ichiro Suzuki

Born and raised in Central New York, zine writer and all around pop culture fanatic Mark Hughson knows both the joys of success (the contending Oakland A's are his favorite team) and failure (the annual basement dwellers Syracuse SkyChiefs are the local ball club). He holds the local church league's record for most ground-outs to second.



Honus Round 3 – It's a trick question! All 3 have

1987 Twins and 1990 Reds.
 Barry Bonds, Dave Winfield, Kirby Puckett, Hank Aaron,
 Ripken Jr., Jackie Robinson, Mark McGwire, Joe Torre,
 Horton, Jim Palmer, Johnny Bench, Babe Ruth, Cal
 Snider, Tom Tresh, Bobby Richardson, Tim Lincecum, Joe
 George Kell, Preacher Roe, Roy Campanella, Duke
 Durocher, Hank Greenberg, Ralph Kiner, Bob Lemon,
 Charles Gehring, Bob Feller, Johnny Mize, Leo
 Carl Hubbell, Earl Averill, Billy Herman, Lefty Grove,
 Harold Trosky, Cecil Travis, Mel Ott, Lefty Gomez,
 Honus Round 2 – Jimmie Foxx, Lou Gehrig, Dizzy Dean,

Cleveland's daughter, not Babe Ruth)
 Honus Round 1 – Baby Ruth (was named after Grover

Easy Round – (1,f) (2,m) (3,j) (4,k) (5,b) (6,d) (7,a)
 (8,c) (9,c) (10,h) (11,j) (12,g) (13,j)

Answers:

The Comedy of Baseball by Steve Reynolds



In the opinion of this writer, and the whole *Zisk* editorial team, **David Cross's** 2002 *Shut Up, You Fucking Baby!* (Sub Pop) is one of the best comedy albums of the past decade. It's a tour de force of observations about politics, rednecks and people who talk in the third person. Now *Zisk* presents a

transcription of Cross's take on the champ of talking in the third person—**Rickey Henderson**.

"But there's one guy who's the fucking king, who's the worst. Yes, you got it, it's Rickey Henderson. If you've ever seen Rickey Henderson interviewed, it's the best. It's sweet, it's sweet glorious music. It's like he's communicating secretly to like an intergalactic leader from another space federation. Every time he says Rickey Henderson he's giving coordinates to the planet, or whatever."

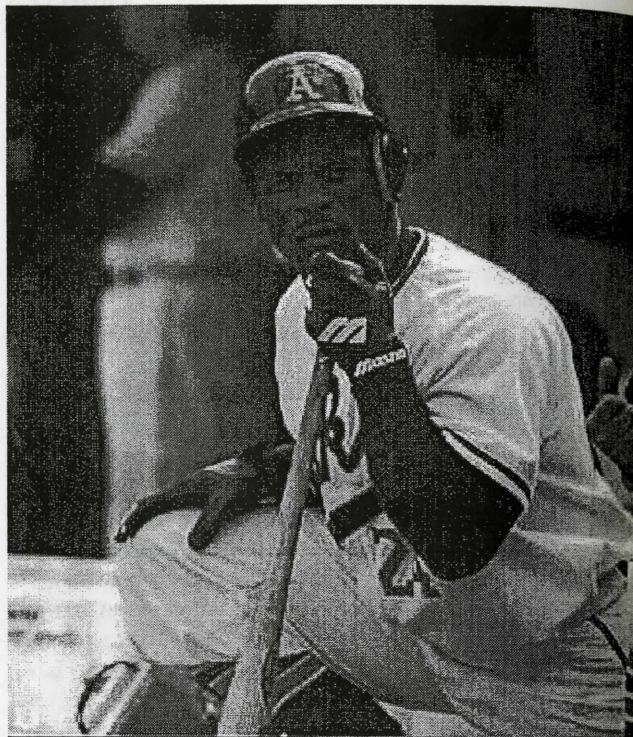
[Posing as a reporter] "Hey Rickey, I noticed you taped your bat up a little higher than normal—what's that about?"

[As Rickey] "Well, you know, Rickey Henderson has to do what's best for Rickey Henderson, you know. I mean, if Rickey Henderson feels that Rickey Henderson needs to tape his bat up higher, to be the best Rickey Henderson that Rickey Henderson can be, then Rickey Henderson is going to tape his bat higher in way that Rickey Henderson can perceive, as Rickey Henderson can, to be the best Rickey Henderson that Rickey Henderson can or will or want to be as Rickey Henderson qualifying in a Rickey Henderson-esque type of way to be a Rickey Henderson for which all Rickey Hendersons around us, being one Rickey Henderson to speak through Rickey Henderson as vessel to reach all Rickey Hendersons out there in the world in a qualitative Rickey Henderson-esque magnanimous display of Rickey Henderson-tude and quality that you can find only in Rickey Henderson as Rickey Henderson as want to do for Rickey Henderson being Ricky Henderson as Rickey Henderson."

"You come in here, 'Rickey, how come you taping you bat,' you know, Ricky Henderson is going to answer you

in a way that Rickey Henderson can to be—in fact, that reminds me, I got to give that motherfucker phone call, you know. Uh-huh, that's right."

[Phone rings a few times, machine picks up]



[Message] "Hi, this is Rickey Henderson. Rickey Henderson is not available right now, but if you leave your name and number, Rickey Henderson will get back to you when it is best for Rickey Henderson to do so [beep]."

[As Rickey] "Rickey Henderson pick up"

"Pick up the phone Rickey."

"Rickey Henderson, pick up the phone."

"Pick up the phone Rickey!"

"Rickey, pick up the phone!!!"

"It's me—you! God damn, that motherfucker's never there!"

continuous

As of Aug. 5, 2003

Rickey
Henderson
1979 - ?



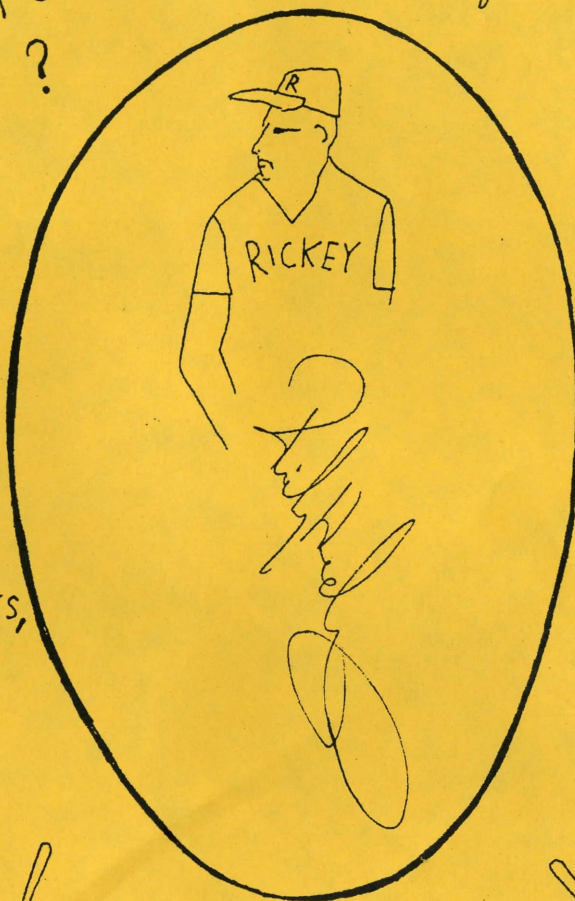
2292

career runs,
All-time
leader



2181

career walks,
All-time
leader



3049

career hits

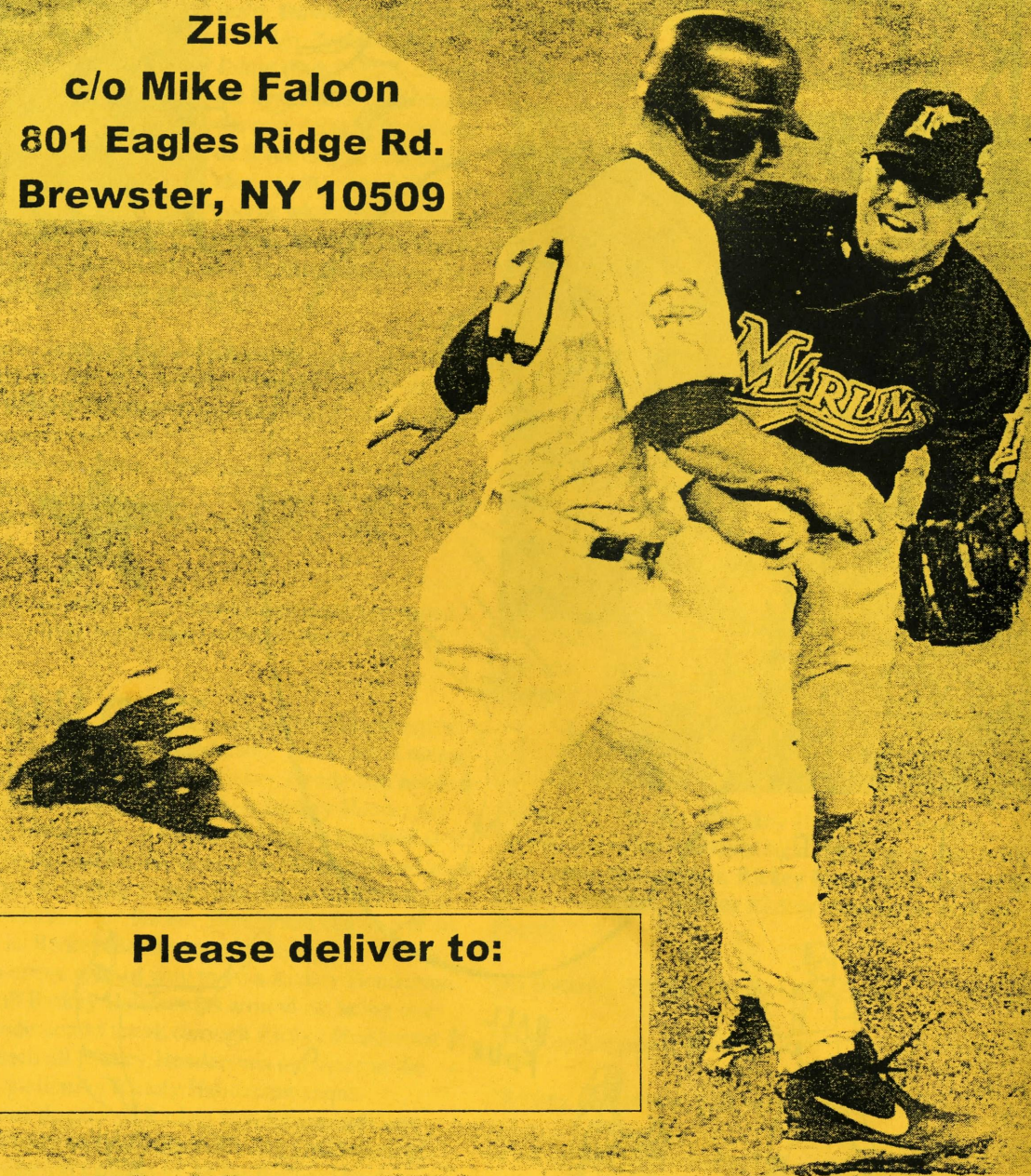


BALL
FOUR!



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SLINK
MOSS

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