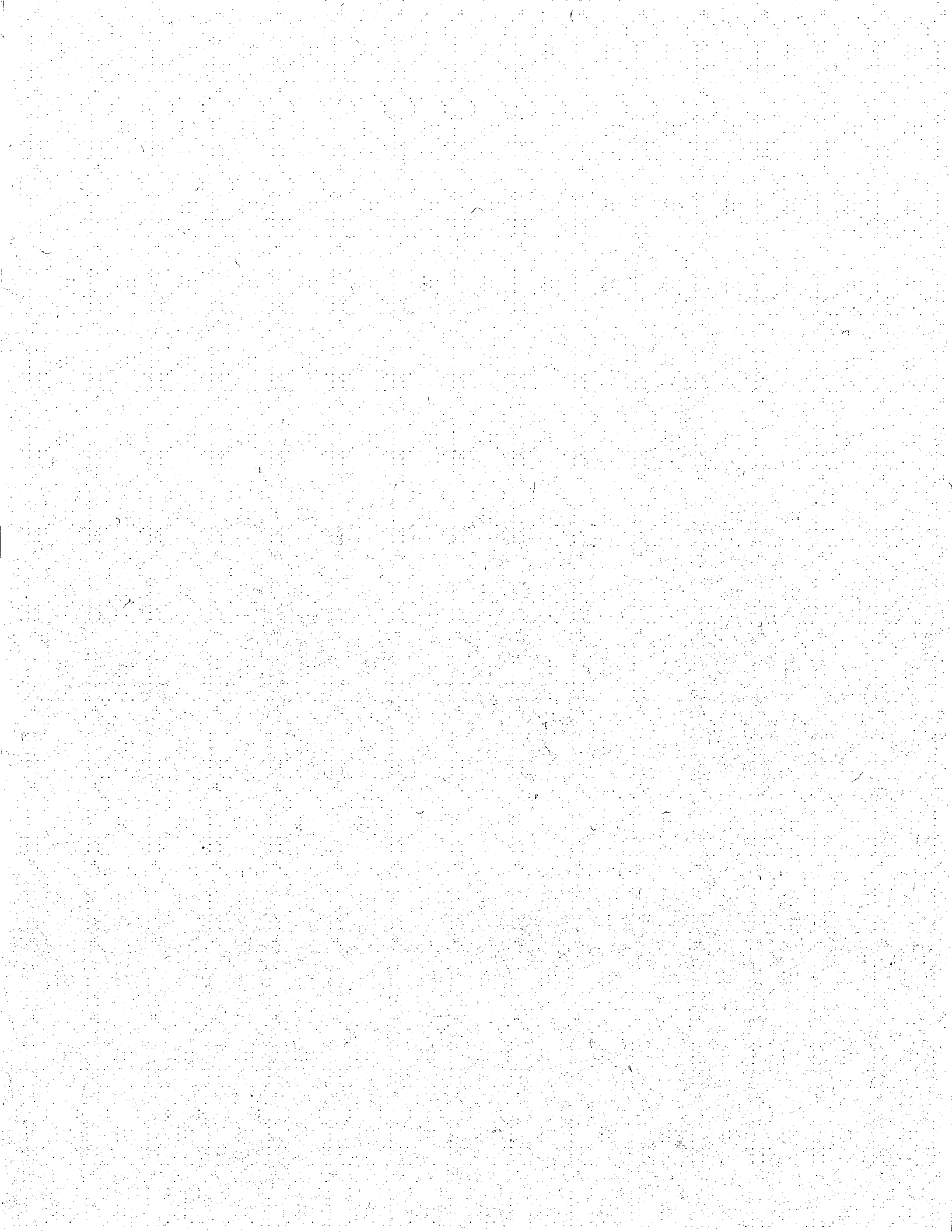




New York Yankees Clips
Sunday, July 22, 2012



LOST!

Santana goes on DL;
Mets beaten once again,
fall to .500: P. 50-53

Sunday, July 22, 2012

SPORTS
FINAL

DAILY NEWS

Rivera changes
tune, now
has doubts
about comeback

NO MO?

HELD AT BAY
Hughes, Pank lose third straight
in Oakland: P. 54-57

Mariano Rivera, who was adamant in May that he would return from knee injury, now says he's not positive about that. Page 56

ESPN.com

A's stay on roll as Jarrod Parker shuts down Yankees

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. -- With the score tied in the bottom of the eighth inning, **Brandon Inge** sought out starter **Jarrod Parker** in the dugout for a few choice words before the **Oakland Athletics** slugger headed to home plate.

"He told me, 'I'm going to get you one here,' " Parker said.

The way the A's have played lately, perhaps nobody should have been surprised by what followed.

Inge homered on the first pitch from **Phil Hughes** after Parker shut down one of baseball's best lineups for eight innings, and the A's beat the **New York Yankees** 2-1 on Saturday night for their fourth straight win.

"What you guys see right now is what we feel," Inge said, surrounded by music blaring in the clubhouse from his smiling teammates. "As far as things in this clubhouse, we're having a blast. I think that's leading to a lot of wins."

Parker (7-4) allowed only an RBI single to **Raul Ibanez** in the fourth to become the latest Oakland starter to baffle the Bronx Bombers. He struck out five and walked one to hand New York its third straight loss in the series.

Yoenis Cespedes crushed a tying homer in the fourth off Hughes (9-8) for his 13th long ball of the season. The Cuban defector extended his career-high hitting streak to nine games.

Sean Doolittle struck out the side in the ninth after **Alex Rodriguez** singled for his first save in two chances after All-Star closer **Ryan Cook** worked the last three games. He had the ball and the lineup card already shelved in his locker.

The low-budget A's have won 13 of 15 to climb into a tie with the **Chicago White Sox** and **Baltimore Orioles** for the final AL wild card spot.

"If the playoffs started tomorrow," Cespedes said in Spanish, "You better be careful against the Oakland A's."

Inge, entering the game with a .198 batting average, ripped a fastball off the concrete facade under the seats high above the wall in right-center field for his ninth homer of the season. Hughes, who initially pointed up thinking it was just a fly out, only gave up three other hits in the game while striking out six in 7 2/3 innings for a hard-luck loss.

"I just made one too many mistakes," Hughes said. "I thought my command was very good. It was just two mistakes."

Rodriguez beat out an infield single to short leading off the fourth. After Rodriguez reached third on consecutive groundouts, Ibanez singled up the middle to give the Yankees a 1-0 lead.

Not the usual New York way.

Then again, that's the kind of week it has been in the Bay Area for the visitors.

The Yankees sent 99 batters to the plate over the first 23 innings of the series without a walk until [Curtis Granderson](#) took a close full-count pitch called outside leading off the sixth. [Robinson Cano's](#) 23-game hitting streak also ended. He went 0-for-4 with two strikeouts, including the first out in the ninth after Rodriguez singled.

Doolittle also struck out [Mark Teixeira](#) and pinch-hitter [Andruw Jones](#) to end the game as A's players streamed out of the dugout in celebration.

"That was fun," Doolittle said. "That was right up there with my debut. That was a rush."

The first three games of the series have been a far cry from New York's first visit to Oakland in late May when the Yankees overwhelmed the A's in a three-game sweep to extend their winning streak at the Coliseum to nine games. That was part of a nine-game overall losing streak for the A's, who have recovered since then to post the second-best record in the majors to the Yankees since June 2.

New York entered Friday night with a streak of 43 consecutive games with at least three runs -- the longest in the majors since Cleveland's 48-game run in 1994 -- but has scored three total runs in the last two games.

"They have talented kids over there," Yankees manager Joe Girardi said. "When you get good pitching, you're always going to have a chance to win."

Game notes

Yankees OF [Nick Swisher](#) sat out the game with a strained hip flexor. An MRI exam confirmed the strain. He is not expected to play Sunday but is hopeful to return at some point during the team's series at Seattle beginning Monday. [Dewayne Wise](#) started in right field in Swisher's place. ... Athletics LHP [Dallas Braden](#) and RHP [Brandon McCarthy](#) each threw about 40 pitches during a bullpen session before the game. Manager Bob Melvin said the team is still deciding on the next step for both. ... Yankees ace [CC Sabathia](#) turned 32 years old Saturday. Sabathia (10-3, 3.27 ERA) will face Oakland's [Bartolo Colon](#) (6-8, 3.88 ERA) in Sunday's series finale.

MLB.com

Hughes stung by home runs; Cano's streak ends

Gives up two solo shots; 23-game hitting streak halted with 0-for-4

By Evan Drellich / MLB.com | 7/22/2012 1:35 AM ET

OAKLAND -- The team with the largest division lead in the Majors probably doesn't need to be up in arms about a three-game losing streak. Not when it hasn't lost four in a row yet this season and not when the last time it had lost three in a row was a month earlier.

The Yankees' third straight loss to the A's came 2-1 Saturday night, decided by a tie-breaking home run from Brandon Inge in the eighth inning at the Oakland Coliseum. Phil Hughes was impressive in 7 2/3 innings, allowing just four hits and striking out six, but two of those hits were solo bombs. Even with the Yanks' mighty lineup, a strong starting pitching performance doesn't guarantee a win.

"Here we have the luxury," Hughes said, "When you do pitch like that, we normally win."

The Yankees' bats have been tamed by a young A's pitching staff that's helped Oakland to eight wins in its last nine and into a two-way tie for a Wild Card spot. Shadows might've contributed to the low output for both sides Saturday, with an hour earlier start time than the previous two games. Curtis Granderson drew the Yankees' only walk thus far in the series in the sixth.

"This team has always thrown strikes," said Yankees first baseman Mark Teixeira, who went 1-for-4 with a strikeout. "It's probably something that they teach in the Minors, because I've been playing this team for 10 years. When their young guys come up, they're always throwing strikes. You don't see a lot of 3-1 counts, you don't see guys putting on many guys via walks. And that's why almost every year they have a top pitching staff."

The A's first three starting pitchers this series have been rookies. Hughes kept pace for seven innings with 23-year-old Jarrod Parker, who gave up one run in a career-high-tying eight innings. The Yanks' only run came off Parker in the fourth inning on a Raul Ibanez two-out single up the middle. That also qualified as New York's only lead of the series, and the 1-0 advantage didn't last even an inning.

A's outfielder Yoenis Cespedes hit another rocket home run with some styling -- the distance and the flair are quickly becoming trademarks -- to tie the game at 1 with two outs in the fourth. Hughes left a 92-mph fastball belt-high and on the inner half with a 2-1 count, and Cespedes crushed it on a line to left for his second homer of the series.

"He's strong," Yankees manager Joe Girardi said. "He hits the ball hard, squares it up on a consistent basis. We're running into a hot hitter right now."

From then until the Inge homer, only two A's reached base: one of them Cespedes, and both by walk. That success made it easier for Girardi to keep David Robertson, who was warming up, in the bullpen at the start of the eighth inning.

The Inge homer came to center on a 91-mph fastball over the middle, knee-high.

"Everybody says you get the ball down, but I kind of like the ball to ride up on him a little more," Hughes said. "That one was down. He likes the ball down, and in the past I've gotten him out a lot kind of in the belly-button region. I don't want to say it was too far down, but it kind of was."

Said Inge: "It was kind of tough to see in the first two at-bats. Both at-bats he threw me a fastball, good pitch to hit, but I swung through both of them. Whether I was late, I don't know why, but I just really told myself on the last at-bat, sit on the fastball and make sure I get on top of it, because I was swinging and missing underneath of it a lot, so on that last one I was just trying to make an adjustment. Just tried to get a good pitch and swing and swing hard."

Alex Rodriguez singled to start the ninth against left-hander Sean Doolittle, who was pitching because A's closer Ryan Cook had thrown three straight days. Doolittle struck out Robinson Cano for the first out, ending Cano's hitting streak at 23 games. Doolittle then fanned Teixeira and pinch-hitter Andruw Jones for his first career save.

That sealed it for Parker, whose performance followed Tommy Milone's from Friday and A.J. Griffin's on Thursday. The last time the Yankees lost three straight was June 19-22, against the Braves and Mets.

"My first and second at-bat, yeah, the shadows were [a factor]. But there's no excuses," said Cano, who went 0-for-4 with two strikeouts. "I just go out there and try to get a hit every at-bat. I don't put it in my mind that I've got a hitting streak or something like that."

BASEBALL

A's Again Brush Off Yanks, Proving End of Runs Streak Was No Fluke

By DAVID WALDSTEIN

OAKLAND, Calif. — The Yankees came strutting into Oakland on Thursday with the majors' best record and one of the most potent offenses. Opposing teams

had not been able to keep them under three runs in a game since May 30, and they were upholding their reputation as the big, bad Yankees, the best team in baseball.

But at the same time on the West Coast, the Oakland Athletics were quietly rounding into a dangerous team with an emerging star outfielder and young, talented pitchers.

On Friday, that staff was able to break the Yankees' streak of 43 consecutive games with at least three runs scored, and it held them below that number again Saturday.

Athletics starter Jarrod Parker picked up where A.J. Griffin and Tommy Milone left off in the first two games of this four-game series, leading the Athletics to a 2-1 victory with eight sterling innings that sent the stunned Yankees to their third straight defeat.

"They face tough lineups in their own division," Yankees Manager Joe Girardi said. "It's not like they're going to be intimidated when we come walking in."

With the score tied, 1-1, in the bottom of the eighth inning, Brandon Inge hit a home run off the cement facing below the stands high above center field on the first pitch from Phil Hughes.

Hughes had pitched well, his only other mistake coming on a home run to the streaking Yoenis Cespedes in the fourth inning.

The Yankees put the tying run at second base in the ninth inning when Alex Rodriguez singled off Sean Doolittle and advanced with a stolen base. But Doolittle responded by striking out Robinson Cano, Mark Teixeira and pinch-hitter Andruw Jones to end the game as the A's moved into a three-way tie for the second wildcard spot in the American League.

Coming into the series, the Yankees had won nine straight games at Oakland, and they had not lost three straight over all since June 19 to 21. They have not lost four in a row all year.

"It happens," Hughes said. "I can't explain it. Normally, we play really well in this building. But they're pitching really well. It's as simple as that."

The Yankees scored three runs Thursday, two on Friday and only one on Saturday, and their Oakland-induced hitting slump was underscored as Cano went 0 for 4 with two strikeouts to end his career-high hitting streak at 23 games.

The A's came into the game with a 12-2 record in July, the best in baseball, and were five games over .500 (49-44) for the first time since April 17, 2010, when they were 9-4. The last time they were six games over .500 was July 18, 2008.

Much of their success is a credit to their stellar pitching. Coming into Saturday's game, their staff

earned run average was 3.40, which was the fourth best in baseball.

But they have also seen the blossoming of Cespedes, the Cuban defector and outfielder whom they signed in February to a four-year, \$36 million contract, making him their highest-paid player. His home run in the fourth inning, a laser to left field on a 2-1 pitch from Hughes, was his 13th of the season and his 2nd of the series.

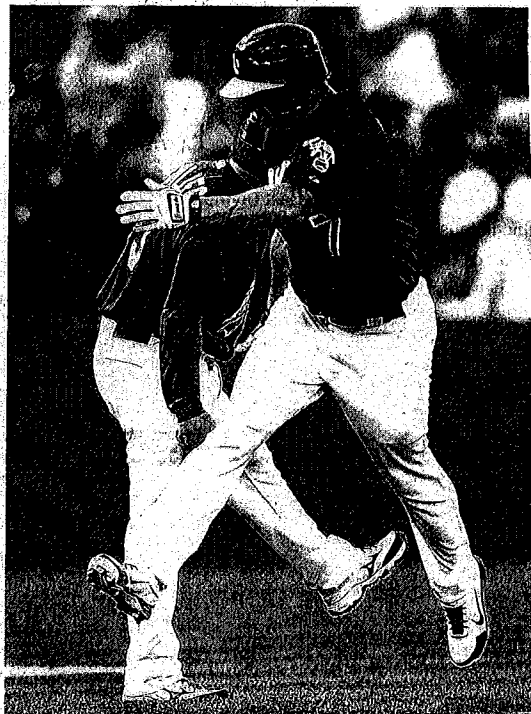
On Friday he had four hits in a 3-2 win, and in his previous seven games since the All-Star break, he had gone 17 for 29 (.586) and led the majors in hits.

In the first two games of the series, Cespedes went 6 for 8 with a homer, two runs batted in and two runs.

Soon after he defected from Cuba and was preparing to enter baseball's free-agent market, Cespedes's management team put together a video exhibiting his athletic talent. The video seemed excessive at the time, but Cespedes is almost living up to it.

"He's strong, fast; you see he's got bat speed," Girardi said before the game. "I know he's a center fielder by trade, but he's playing left here. He has impressed me."

The Yankees had taken a 1-0 lead in the top of the fourth with a manufactured run. Rodriguez reached on an infield single as his ground ball bounced off the mound and high into the air. He moved to third base on groundouts by Cano and Teixeira, and then scored on a ground ball up



BEN MARGOT/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Brandon Inge, right, after his solo homer on the first pitch from Phil Hughes in the eighth put Oakland ahead, 2-1, on Saturday.

the middle by Raul Ibanez.

Ibanez was back in left field Saturday, and Dewayne Wise was in right field replacing Nick Swisher, who left Friday's game with a strained hip flexor in his left leg. He had a magnetic imaging resonance test Saturday, which confirmed the strain. Swisher will do nothing until Monday or Tuesday and then test

it in Seattle.

Swisher said he was stiff on Saturday but did not expect that the injury would keep him out of the lineup for more than a few days. Girardi said that Swisher would definitely not play in the final game of this series, and that he hoped to have him back for the three-game series beginning Monday in Seattle.

'A'-NOTHER LOSS

Punchless Yanks drop 3rd straight

By GEORGE A. KING III

OAKLAND, Calif. — With CC Sabathia starting today for the Yankees you would figure they are locks to halt a three-game losing streak because the A's are easily the worst hitting team in the American League.

Nevertheless, pitching hasn't been the Yankees problem across the slide that extended to three games with last night's 2-1 loss to the A's in front of 28,142 at the Coliseum.

"Our pitchers are doing a great job but we are not coming up with any runs for them," Mark Teixeira said after the Yankees were handcuffed by a third straight young A's starter last night.

When the Yankees rolled into the Bay Area Thursday they were averaging 5.5 runs per game in the previous 13 games.

In the past three games — all losses — the Yankees have scored six runs.

Phil Hughes gave up two runs in 7 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings and got beat because Jarrod Parker, a 23-year-old right-hander in his first appearance against the Yankees, limited them to a run and five hits in eight frames thanks to a mid-90s fastball and tantalizing change-up.

"Here, we have the luxury where if you pitch like that, normally you win," said Hughes, who gave up homers to Yoenis Cespedes in the fourth and Brandon Inge in the eighth and fell to 9-8. "It didn't work out that way."

The lone Yankees run was delivered by Raul Ibanez's two-out single in the fourth that delivered them their only lead of the three games.

Coupled with the second-place Orioles fourth straight victory the Yankees' AL East lead, that was 10 games on Thursday, was sliced to seven.

"It's disappointing," Teixeira said about the lack of hitting. But you have to give them credit."

Because of a 6 p.m. local time start the first six innings hitters on

ATHLETICS 2
YANKEES 1

Boxscore
Page 64

each side struggled with shadows but the Yankees hitting woes started Thursday and carried into Friday when the games were played under the lights.

When Inge, whom the A's rescued from the street after he was released by the Tigers, homered the shadows had vanished.

"I thought he hit it high but it's one of those things where I had no second thoughts about going any other way," said Hughes, who wanted the fatal pitch further away and little more up than he

got it. "It's tough because I knew my pitch count was high and I was being aggressive like I was all game. It's tough to deal with, one too many mistakes."

With David Robertson throwing in the bullpen, manager Joe Girardi sent Hughes to the mound for the eighth with a 106 pitch count.

"If we had taken the lead I was going to bring [Robertson] in and I liked the way [Hughes] was throwing," Girardi said.

As they did Thursday and Friday, the Yankees stirred in the ninth although they didn't homer like they did in the first two games.

Facing lefty Sean Doolittle because A's manager Bob Melvin didn't want to use closer Ryan Cook for four straight days, Alex Rodriguez opened with a single to left. Robinson Cano then fanned on a 94-mph fastball. Teixeira was called out as Rodriguez swiped second and pinch-hitter Andruw Jones whiffed to end it.

"I thought he pitched really well," Girardi said of Hughes. "You give up two runs, usually that's not going to beat you. We have had a tough time scoring runs."

george.king@nypost.com



DONE STREAKING: Robinson Cano, who saw his 23-game hit streak end after an 0-for-4 performance, reacts after striking out in the sixth inning of the Yankees' third straight loss to the A's last night. Getty Images

ON DECK AT ATHLETICS

TODAY: 4:05, YES, WCBS
(880 AM)

LHP CC Sabathia
(10-3, 3.27) vs.
RHP Bartolo Colon
(6-8, 3.88)

THREE-GAME SERIES
AT SEATTLE BEGINS
TOMORROW

INSIDE THE MATCHUPS

YANKEES: In Sabathia's first start back after missing two starts on the disabled list with a strained groin, the Yankees ace looked like he missed no time at all. Pitching at home against the Blue Jays, Sabathia won his third straight decision, allowing no runs and four hits over six innings while striking out six. In 23 career starts against the A's, Sabathia is 8-8 with a 4.84 ERA.

A's: Colon missed all of 2010 due to issues in his throwing arm, but had an unexpected bounce back campaign with the Yankees last season. Now with Oakland, Colon has continued his resurgence: The former Cy Young Award winner has not won in his past four starts, but has allowed more than one earned run in only one of those outings. In his last start, Colon took the loss against the Rangers, allowing four runs and eight hits over seven innings. In 14 career appearances against the Yankees, he is 4-6 with a 6.30 ERA.

STAT SO?

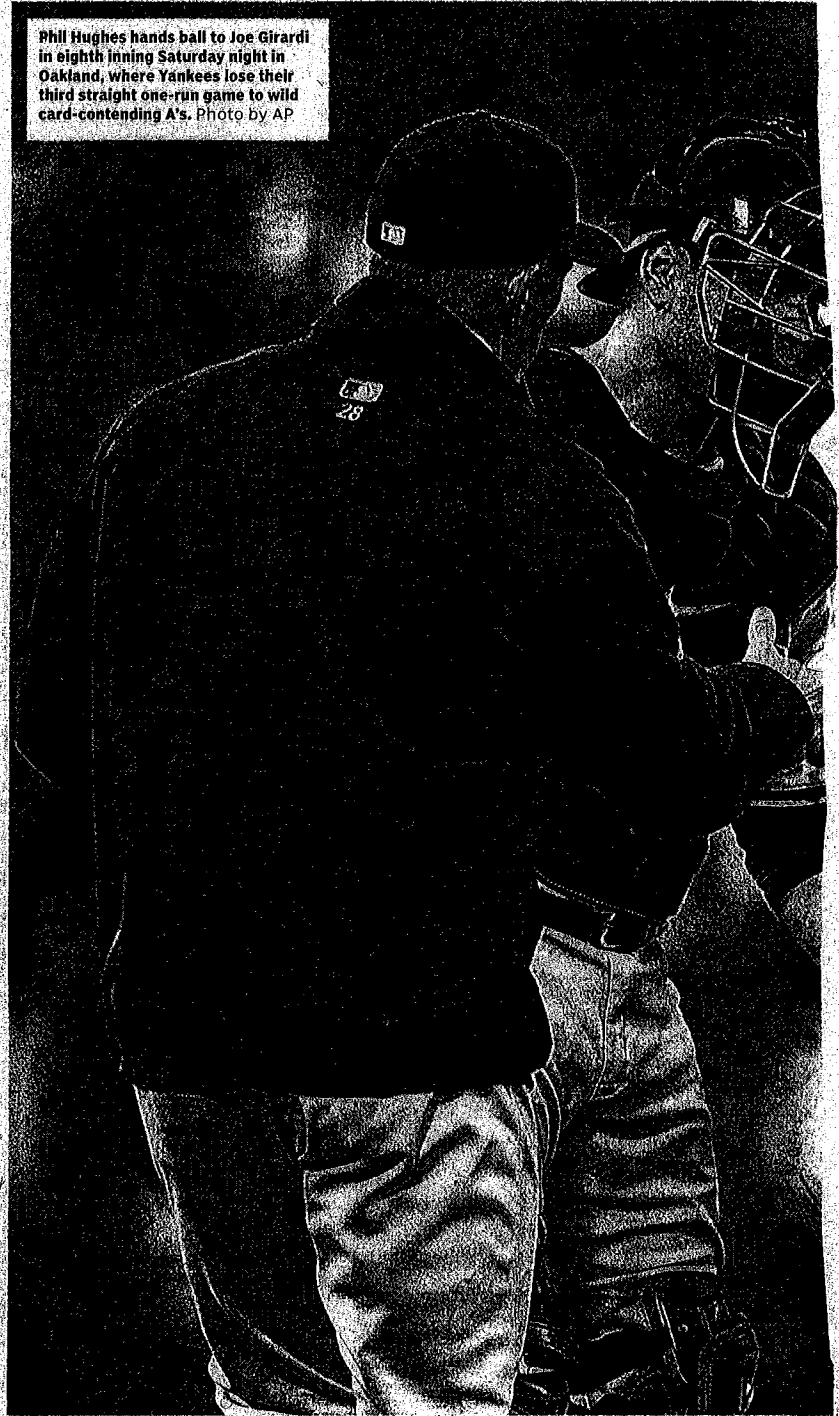
YANKEES: Mark Teixeira's 20 career home runs at Oakland Coliseum are the most home runs he has hit at a stadium he never called home.

A's: Coco Crisp's 22 career stolen bases against the Yankees are his most against any team.

BASEBALL

PHIL & YANKEES

Phil Hughes hands ball to Joe Girardi in eighth inning Saturday night in Oakland, where Yankees lose their third straight one-run game to wild card-contending A's. Photo by AP



ARE OUTDUELED

Lose 3rd in row to hot Oakland

BY MARK FEINSAND
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

OAKLAND — If the A's weren't being taken seriously as a contender before this weekend, they're certainly sending a message to the rest of the American League now.

Jarrod Parker bested Phil Hughes in a classic pitcher's duel Saturday night, leading Oakland to its third straight win over the Yankees, 2-1, one that clinched the four-game series for the A's.

"We've been scoring a lot of runs, so you're almost due for a couple days where you're not scoring," Mark Teixeira said. "It doesn't make it any easier, you definitely want to score runs. Our pitchers are doing a great job, but we're just not coming up with any runs for them."

The A's have won four in a row, seven of their last eight and 13 of 15, thrusting themselves firmly into the AL wild card mix.

"Losses are losses," Joe Girardi said after his team dropped a third straight one-run game.

"The good thing is that we're pitching well. We know that our bats will eventually wake up again. Sometimes you're going to run into good pitching."

With a little help from some difficult shadows during the early innings, Hughes and Parker were locked in a 1-1 duel in the eighth before Brandon Inge drilled a tie-breaking homer to right-center.

Hughes was charged with two runs on four hits and two walks over 7½ innings, striking out six as he fell to 9-3. The other run came on a homer by the red-hot Yoenis Cespedes.

"Obviously I would have loved to go eight scoreless or nine scoreless, but it's two mistakes and it's tough," Hughes said. "With our offense, I'll take that every day. Their guy did extremely well. Sometimes that happens."

With closer Ryan Cook unavailable after pitching three straight days, the A's turned to rookie lefthander Sean Doolittle — a product of Shawnee High School in Medford, N.J. — in the

ninth. Doolittle gave up a lead-off single to Alex Rodriguez, but fanned Robinson Cano, Mark Teixeira and Andruw Jones to earn his first career save.

The Yankees will send CC Sabathia to the mound Sunday against ex-Yankee Bartolo Colon. "You have to give them credit the first three games," said Cano, whose 23-game hitting streak ended with an 0-for-4 night. "You try to forget about it and go out there tomorrow and just try to win a game."

A'S	2
YANKEES	1

As good as Hughes was, Parker was better. The 23-year-old limited the Bombers

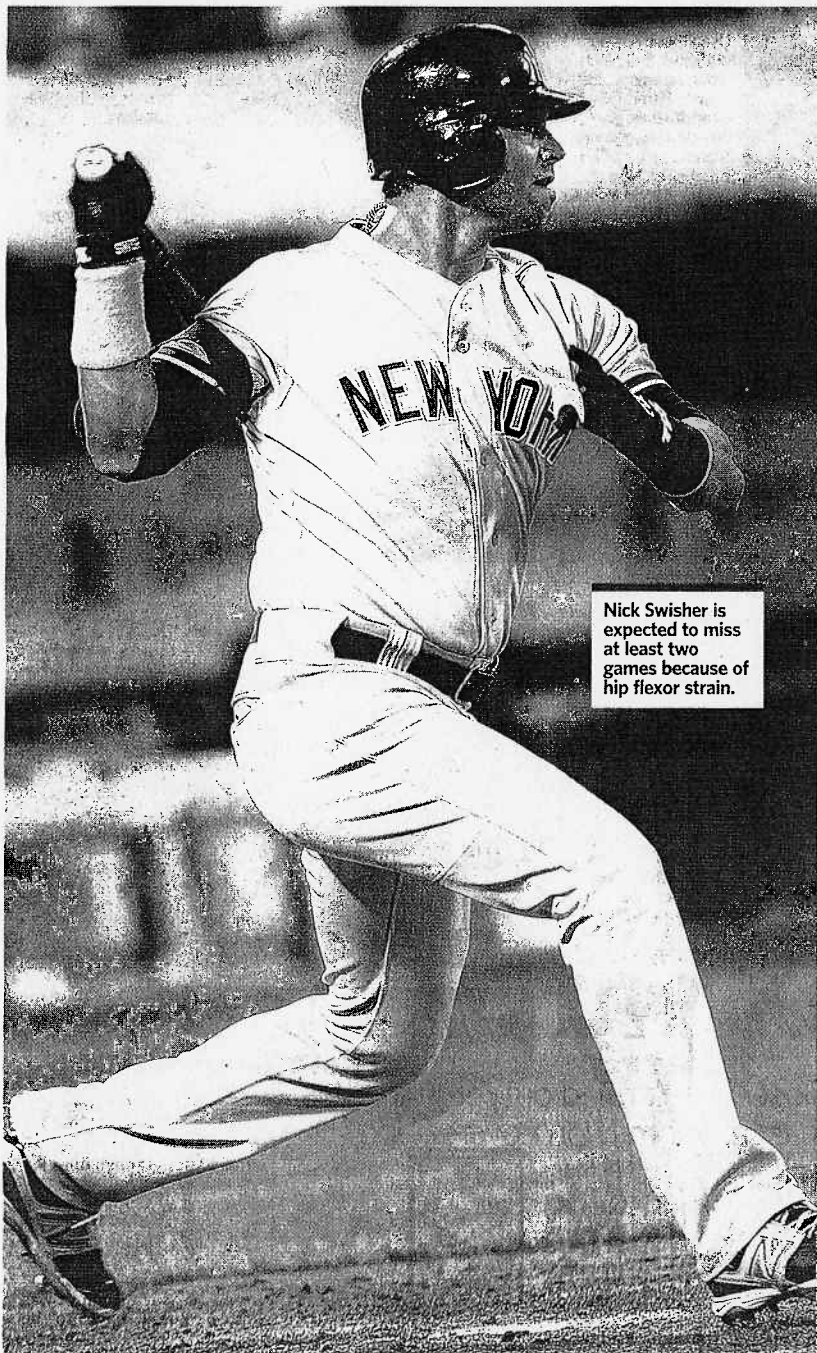
to one run on five hits and one walk over eight innings, striking out five. Parker, acquired along with Cook in the five-player deal that sent Trevor Cahill to Arizona last winter, is 7-4 with a 3.00 ERA. "He kept the ball down, kept you off balance just enough with that changeup for lefties," Teixeira said. "He could get up to 95 when he wanted to and then if he needed a ground ball he'd throw that 92-mph sinker. That's really good stuff."

Raul Ibanez singled in a run in the fourth, but Cespedes tied it in the bottom of the inning with a blast into the back of the left-field bleachers. Over his last 20 games, Cespedes is hitting .392 (29-for-74) with six homers and 15 RBI, including a 7-for-10 performance and two homers in the first three games of this series. "He's strong," Girardi said. "He hits the ball hard, squares it up on a consistent basis. We're running into a hot hitter right now."

Hughes retired nine of the next 11 batters after the homer, walking two. Parker also went on a roll after allowing his run, sitting down 13 of 14 between the fourth and eighth, holding the Yanks to just a walk. That walk of Curtis Granderson to lead off the sixth was the only one the A's have issued in the first three games of the series. "They face tough lineups in their own division, so I don't think they're going to be intimidated because we're walking in," Girardi said. "They're seeing Texas, the Angels and they're making pitches."



Cautious approach



Nick Swisher is expected to miss at least two games because of hip flexor strain.

Yanks not taking any chances with Swisher's injury

Today **Yankees**
at Oakland
TV: YES, 4:05 p.m.
Radio: WCBS (880)

BY ERIK BOLAND
erik.boland@newsday.com

OAKLAND, Calif. — Nick Swisher joked on the disabled list, "that's not in my vocabulary," when asked if he thought a stint might be required.

But the rightfielder is playing it cautious with what the Yankees called a mild left hip flexor strain, sustained running out a seventh-inning grounder in Friday night's loss to the A's.

"I just felt something tug halfway down the line and I let up on it, which was good because I didn't feel like I really yanked it," Swisher said after the game.

Before last night's game, Swisher, who underwent a precautionary MRI yesterday morning, said he's OK with the prognosis of missing at least the next two games.

"I feel like I'm one of those guys who can play through a lot of pain," Swisher said. "But I think more than anything I want to get back [soon] so I need to take these next couple days off, chill out and see what happens in Seattle."

The Yankees start a three-game series in Seattle tomorrow night.

"I don't think it's anything super-serious," Swisher added. "It just kind of feels tight but I'm moving around pretty good."

The Yankees haven't had much good news on the outfield front. Thursday, though it didn't come as a surprise, it was announced that Brett Gardner would undergo arthroscopic surgery this week on his right elbow, likely ending his season.

As Gardner's return in recent weeks became less and less of a sure thing, the team stepped up its efforts in perusing the trade market for outfield help.

Among the outfielders the Yankees have looked at of late are the Phillies' Shane Victorino, the Padres' Carlos Quentin and Coco Crisp of the A's.

NOW ONLINE

Last night's Yankees-A's game ended too late for this edition. Story, photos at newsday.com/yankees.

But neither Joe Girardi nor Swisher expects this to turn into a Gardner situation, even though the leftfielder originally thought his elbow strain would keep him out just a couple of days, too.

"I feel like I know my body pretty well in situations like that, you know when something really goes," Swisher said. "I feel it's hopefully just a little strain and it's day-to-day from here."

Last night Girardi started DeWayne Wise, who has performed reasonably well in his sporadic playing time, in right and Raul Ibanez in left.

"In the meantime we're OK," Girardi said of Swisher's absence, provided it doesn't go on for an unforeseen stretch. "It's something we're just going to have to deal with over the next couple days. But the MRI will give us a better idea of how much longer it's probably going to be."

The results of the MRI were not immediately available before last night's game.

Last night was Wise's third start of the season in rightfield. He also has two starts in center and nine in left. The left-handed-hitting Wise, 34, has played well in the field and held his own in the limited at-bats he's gotten. He came into yesterday hitting .278 (15-for-54) with three homers and eight RBIs.

With Swisher down and last night the start of a stretch of five straight games in which the Yankees were scheduled to face right-handed starters, Wise figures to get some extended playing time.

"He's got a chance to play a lot," Girardi said. That's for sure."

NorthJersey.com

Phil Hughes solid but late mistake costs Yankees

SUNDAY JULY 22, 2012, 12:35 AM
BY PETE CALDERA
STAFF WRITER
THE RECORD

OAKLAND, Calif. – The fearless, young and surging Athletics didn't wait until the ninth inning this time.

In the eighth, Brandon Inge crushed Phil Hughes' first pitch over the right field fence for a tie-breaking homer. That, and the sensational pitching of rookie right-hander Jarrod Parker, was enough to carry the A's to a 2-1 victory before 28,142 fans at the Coliseum.

The A's (50-44) now have taken the first three games of this four-game set, all one-run games.

The Yankees (57-37) took their first lead of this entire series in the fourth inning. And it took all of three batters before the A's canceled it out.

Yoenis Cespedes' two-out, solo homer in the bottom of the inning was a monstrous shot that soared over the out-of-town scoreboard and into the concrete bleachers in left.

To that point, Cespedes was 7-for-10 in the series with two home runs.

"We're running into a hot hitter right now," Yankees manager Joe Girardi said of the Cuban slugger whom the A's signed in a free agent sweepstakes – one in which the Yankees were on the fringes.

One night earlier, Cespedes singled and scored the winning run off Cody Eppley for the A's major-league leading 10th walk-off victory.

"Well, I think it gives them a lot of confidence that if they're down late in games they're going to come back," Girardi said. "They probably have a feeling of 'keep it close, guys.'"

A sensational leaping catch from second baseman Jemile Weeks in the first (robbing Alex Rodriguez of a hit) and an inning-ending double play off the bat of Russell Martin in the second helped Parker avoid early trouble.

A-Rod led off fourth with an infield hit, advanced to third on a pair of groundouts and scored on Raul Ibanez's ground single up the middle to give the Yankees their 1-0 lead.

But that was the last of the Yankees' five hits off Parker (7-4), who walked one and struck out five.

"They've faced some tough lineups in their own division," Girardi said. "so they're not going to be intimidated when we come walking in."

Hughes (9-8) gave up two runs on four hits in 7 2-3 innings, with two walks and six strikeouts. Inge was 0-for-10 against Hughes going into the eighth, when he drilled a fastball over the center field wall.

"It wasn't a perfect location, but I'm not always going to be perfect going after guys," Hughes said. "I thought I was throwing better as the game progressed."

Facing lefty Sean Doolittle in the ninth, A-Rod led off with a single but Robinson Cano struck out (ending his hitting streak at 23 straight games). Rodriguez stole second as Teixeira struck out but pinch-hitter Andruw Jones struck out to end the game.

Oakland entered the game with a 2.65 ERA in its last 30 games, going 21-9 in that stretch. And its starters had yielded two earned runs or fewer in 23 of those games.

In just his fifth big league start, right-hander A.J. Griffin allowed two runs in six innings in Thursday's 4-3 win over the Bombers.

And Friday, lefty Tommy Milone blanked the Yanks for seven innings and absorbed a tough no-decision in the A's 3-2 walk-off win.

The Yankees hadn't drawn a walk in this series – the first time that's happened in consecutive games since last September – until Curtis Granderson took a close 3-2 pitch to lead off the sixth.

Granderson moved to second on a one-out wild pitch but was stranded there as Cano struck out and Teixeira grounded out into the right-side shift.

Teixeira shattered his bat in the process, part of which twirled over Parker's head.

Due to the shadows from the 6 p.m. Pacific start, "for the first six innings it was real challenging to hit," said Mark Teixeira, though it only enhanced Parker's 95 mph fastball and 92 mph sinker. "(He had) really good stuff...when their young guys come up, they're always throwing strikes."

“Overall it’s disappointing but you’ve got to give them credit,” Teixeira said of the A’s staff this weekend. “Our pitchers are doing a great job. We’re just not coming up with any runs for them.”

The Yankees also snapped their string of 11 straight games with a home run, which matched a season high.

JOB UPDATE: Joba Chamberlain used his entire arsenal in Friday night’s two-inning, 32-pitch outing for Class A Tampa, his fourth minor league rehab appearance. Though he gave up a run, “I don’t see how it could’ve [been] any better,” Girardi said. Recovering from Tommy John surgery and a dislocated right ankle, Chamberlain needs to pitch in back-to-back games before the club would consider activating him.



Yankees fall to A's, 2-1

Published: Saturday, July 21, 2012, 11:34 PM Updated: Sunday, July 22, 2012, 1:11 AM



By **Marc Carig/The Star-Ledger**

OAKLAND, Calif. — The Yankees shifted uneasily in their chairs, their clinking silverware the only soundtrack as they ate their postgame meals, in almost complete silence. Nobody uttered a word.

It remained this way for several minutes following the Yankees' 2-1 loss to the A's last night in which their bats were equally quiet.

"You got to give them credit," Yankees first baseman Mark Teixeira said. "We've been scoring a lot of runs so you're almost due for a couple days where you're not scoring. Doesn't make it any easier."

Not too long ago, the Yankees could boast about their remarkable consistency. Weeks had passed since any team had kept the Yankees from scoring at least three runs in a game. The streak had reached 43 games.

But in two consecutive nights, the streaking A's have held the Yankees to under three runs, just the latest example of the pitching dominance that has made them the hottest team in baseball.

A's starter Jarrod Parker allowed just one run in eight innings, which was good enough to beat Yankees right-hander Phil Hughes, though just barely.

Hughes pitched 7½ innings, though he paid for his mistakes, allowing solo homers to Yoenis Cespedes and Brandon Inge, who hit his winner in the eighth.

As a result, the Yankees find themselves hoping to avoid a four-game sweep in today's series finale.

"The good thing is that we're pitching well," Yankees manager Joe Girardi said. "We know that our bats will eventually wake up again"

With shadows making for difficult hitting conditions for both teams, the Yankees took a 1-0 lead in the fourth behind a timely two-out hit by Raul Ibanez. Parker jumped ahead in the count, coming within one strike of stranding Alex Rodriguez at third base. But Ibanez battled back, pulling a run-scoring single to right.

But the Yankees managed nothing more against Parker, who like the rest of the A's starters had no problems challenging hitters. In three games, the A's have walked just one batter, a testament to an aggressive approach that has kept the Yankees offense on ice.

The result was a tough-luck loss for Hughes, who kept the A's to just two runs, only to watch his offense fizzle.

"Obviously, I would have loved to go eight scoreless or nine scoreless, but it's two mistakes and it's tough," said Hughes, who finished with six strikeouts. "With our offense, I'll take that every day. Their guy did extremely well. Sometimes that happens."

The damage came from a familiar source.

In the fourth, Hughes caught a first-hand glimpse at Cespedes, who unloaded on a mistake with a solo home run.

In the eighth, Hughes paid a steep price for leaving a pitch over the plate for Inge, whose homer gave the A's their first lead of the game.

"Here we have the luxury, when you do pitch like that, we normally win," Hughes said. "Just didn't work out tonight."

Parker Leads A's Past Yankees 2-1

Parker (7-4) allowed only an RBI single to Raul Ibanez in the fourth.

By ANTONIO GONZALEZ

| Sunday, Jul 22, 2012 | Updated 12:00 AM EDT

Brandon Inge and Yoenis Cespedes homered, Jarrod Parker shut down one of baseball's best lineups for eight innings and the Oakland Athletics beat the New York Yankees 2-1 Saturday night for their fourth straight win.

Parker (7-4) allowed only an RBI single to Raul Ibanez in the fourth to become the latest Oakland starter to baffle the Bronx Bombers. He struck out five and walked one to hand New York its third straight loss in the series.

Cespedes crushed a tying homer later in the fourth and Inge hammered the first pitch of the eighth off Phil Hughes (9-8) for the go-ahead shot.

Sean Doolittle struck out the side in the ninth after Alex Rodriguez singled for his first save in two chances after All-Star closer Ryan Cook worked the last three games.

The low-budget A's have won 12 of 14 to climb into a tie with the Chicago White Sox and Baltimore Orioles for the final American League wild card spot.

Inge, entering the game with a .198 batting average, pulled a fastball off the concrete facade under the seats high above the wall in right-center field for his ninth homer of the season. Hughes only gave up three other hits in the game, striking out six in 7 2-3 innings for a hard-luck loss.

One of those other hits was a tying two-out homer deep into the stands in left by Cespedes in the fourth. The Cuban defector's 13th long ball of the season extended his career-high hitting streak to nine.

Rodriguez beat out an infield single to short leading off the fourth. After Rodriguez reached third on consecutive groundouts, Ibanez singled up the middle to give the Yankees a 1-0 lead.

Not the usual New York way.

Then again, that's the kind of week it has been in the Bay Area for the visitors.

The Yankees sent 99 batters to the plate over the first 23 innings of the series without a walk until Curtis Granderson took a close full-count pitch called outside leading off the sixth. Robinson Cano's 23-game hitting streak also ended. He went 0 for 4 with two strikeouts, including the first out in the ninth after Rodriguez singled.

Doolittle also struck out Mark Teixeira and pinch-hitter Andruw Jones to end it.

The first three games of the series have been a far cry from New York's first visit to Oakland in late May when the Yankees overwhelmed the A's in a three-game sweep to extend their winning streak at the Coliseum to nine games. That was part of a nine-game overall losing streak for the A's, who have recovered since then to post the second-best record in the majors to the Yankees since June 2.

New York entered the series with a streak of 43 consecutive games with at least three runs — the longest in the majors since Cleveland's 48-game run in 1994 — but has scored three total runs in the last two games.

NOTES: Yankees OF Nick Swisher sat out the game with a strained hip flexor. He is not expected to play Sunday but is hopeful to return at some point during the team's series at Seattle beginning Monday. Dewayne Wise started in right field in Swisher's place. ... Athletics LHP Dallas Braden and RHP Brandon McCarthy each threw about 40 pitches during a bullpen session before the game. Manager Bob Melvin said the team is still deciding on the next step for both. ... Yankees ace CC Sabathia turned 32 years old Saturday. Sabathia (10-3, 3.27 ERA) will face Oakland's Bartolo Colon (6-8, 3.88 ERA) in Sunday's series finale.

Copyright Associated Press

LoHud.com

Yankees lose another tight one in Oakland

For a third night in a row, the Yankees were one run short. Tonight it was Brandon Inge's solo homer in the eighth inning that carried the Athletics to a 2-1 win in Oakland. All three games this series have been decided by one run, with the Yankees losing all three of them, and they'll need a win tomorrow to avoid a four-game series sweep. Inge's game winner came four innings after Yoenis Cespedes tied the game at 1 with a solo homer in the fourth inning. The two home runs were the only dark spots in an otherwise strong start by Phil Hughes, who allowed four hits through 7.2 innings. A's starter Jarrod Parker was the third straight Oakland rookie to shutdown the Yankees. He allowed one run through eight innings.



Saturday, July 21, 2012

Rapid Reaction: A's 2, Yankees 1

What it means: That Yankees starters are going to start complaining about a lack of support if this keeps up. **Phil Hughes** pitched very well, but the two solo homers he allowed -- to sizzling **Yoenis Cespedes** and not-sizzling **Brandon Inge** -- were enough to beat him. That's because the Yankees couldn't do anything with **Jarrod Parker**. Three games in a row, an Oakland rookie pitcher has quieted the Yankees' bats, and three games in a row, the Yankees have lost.

It's over: **Robinson Cano's** 23-game hitting streak came to an end. Cano grounded out twice and struck out twice.

A losing streak: The Yankees equaled their longest losing streak of the year, at three games. They last lost three in a row June 19-22. The only time this year that the same team had beaten them three in a row was when the Rays swept them in the first series of the season.

Hughes sharp: Hughes was on his game, allowing two runs in 7 2/3 innings. He gave up just one hit in the first three innings, with barely a ball hit hard. Then he gave up a towering solo homer to Cespedes, but he settled down and did not give up another hit until Inge's opposite-field homer in the eighth. Inge was hitting .198 when the game began.

Cuban crusher: The Yankees probably need to scrap whatever their scouting report is on Cespedes. He put the A's on the board with a long home run in the fourth inning. He has torched them so far this series, to the tune of 7-for-11 with two homers. It's not just the Yankees, though. Cespedes was 12-for-23 with two homers in the six games before this series began.

Scuffling against another kid: Parker, the key prospect acquired from the Diamondbacks in the **Trevor Cahill** deal, is considered the most talented of all the A's rookie pitchers. The Yankees managed five singles and one run in seven innings against Parker. For the weekend, the Yankees have scored three runs in 21 innings in three games against A's starters.

Be patient, guys: The Yankees are known for making pitchers work and swinging early in the count only at pitches they can drive, but Parker got the Yankees to make six outs on five first pitches. The most crushing of those was in the second, when **Russell Martin** came up with two on and one out, and hit into an easy double play. **Mark Teixeira** also grounded out on a first pitch with a runner in scoring position and two outs in the sixth. **Derek Jeter** was the only player to get a hit on a first-pitch swing. Going into the game, the Yankees were hitting .359 when putting the first pitch in play, best in the

league.

At least they walked once: After failing to draw a walk in back-to-back games for only the second time in two years, the Yankees drew one free pass this time, when **Curtis Granderson** walked to lead off the sixth.

Botched rundown: The Yankees had **Coco Crisp** picked off first in the eighth inning, but the rundown was blown when pitcher **Boone Logan** missed the tag on Crisp. Logan made up for it by picking Crisp a few pitches later.

What's next: A couple of longtime friends and two-time former teammates will square off at the Coliseum. The Yankees send **CC Sabathia** (10-3, 3.27 ERA) to the mound against the A's **Bartolo Colon** (6-8, 3.88). Sabathia and Colon were teammates in Cleveland and New York.



Sunday, July 22, 2012

This weekend, A's arms > Yankees bats

OAKLAND, Calif. -- It is baseball's ultimate half-empty, half-full question.

If a team's bats go silent for a few games, is it good pitching or bad hitting?

Considering the Yankees are one of the highest-scoring teams in baseball, and considering the A's lead the American League in ERA by a healthy margin, the answer is simple. At least it's simple to the guys in Yankees' clubhouse.

"It's disappointing, but you've got to give them credit," **Mark Teixeira** said after the Yankees' 2-1 loss on Saturday night in Oakland, their third consecutive lackluster offensive performance. "We've been scoring a lot of runs, so you're almost due for a couple days when you aren't scoring. It doesn't make it any easier."

The Yankees have scored six runs in the three games, including just three runs in 21 innings against three Oakland rookie starters: **A.J. Griffin**, **Tommy Milone** and **Jarrod Parker**. Parker, who gave up one run in eight innings on Saturday night, was the best of them all.

"Very good," Teixeira said. "He kept the ball down, kept you off balance with that changeup to lefties. He could get 95 miles per hour when he wanted it and if he needed a ground ball he'd throw that 92-mile-per-hour sinker. That's really good stuff."

Robinson Cano, whose 23-game hitting streak came to an end at the hands of a couple rookies -- 0-for-3 against Parker and a ninth-inning strikeout against **Sean Doolittle** -- echoed Teixeira's opinion.

"(Parker) had a good changeup and he was throwing 95," Cano said. "Those are the kind of guys you don't want to be late (on) and you don't want to be out front."

The constant throughout the three games has been the way the A's pitchers have pounded the strike zone. They didn't issue a single walk in the first two games of the series, a remarkable accomplishment against the Yankees' patient hitters. So on Saturday night the Yankees came out swinging, and they just got themselves into trouble.

Parker got six Yankees to put the first pitch in play, and he got six outs on those balls. **Derek Jeter** singled to lead off the game, but the other five players went hitless. **Russell Martin** came up with two on and one out in the second and hit a first-pitch fastball into an easy double play. In the sixth, Teixeira

came up with two outs and a runner in scoring position, and he also hit a routine groundout on the first pitch.

"This team has always thrown strikes," Teixeira said. "It's probably something they teach in the minors. I've been playing this team for 10 years. When the young guys come up, they always throw strikes. You don't see a lot of 3-1 counts. You don't see many guys get on via walk. That's why every year they have a top pitching staff."

Manager **Joe Girardi** also was quick to say it was the Oakland pitching that has been the key in this series.

"Our bats will eventually wake up," Girardi said. "They've thrown the ball well. I don't want to take anything away from them. Sometimes you are going to run into good pitching."

07/22/12 1:53 AM ET

Cano goes hitless to end 23-game streak

By Evan Drellich / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Robinson Cano's career-high hitting streak ended at 23 games on Saturday night, victim to another strong pitching performance from the A's.

He said the streak was not on his mind as he went 0-for-4 with two strikeouts.

"Honestly, no," said Cano, who hit .400 (36-for-90) during the streak. "I just go out there and try to get a hit every at-bat. I don't put it in my mind that I've got a hitting streak or something like that. But I go out there and try to get on base."

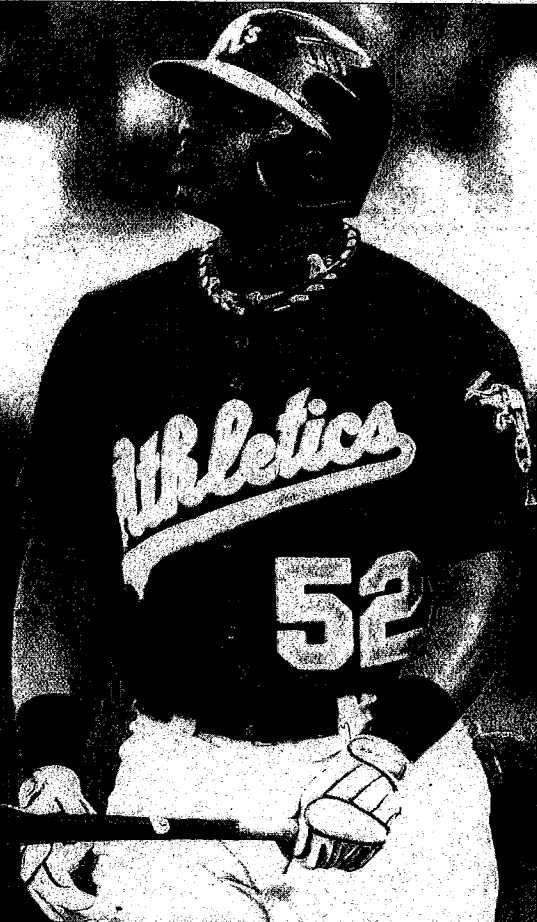
Cano had the longest active streak in the Majors and the longest for the Yankees since Derek Jeter's 25-game run from Aug. 20-Sept. 16, 2006.

Cano's last chance came in the ninth inning, with none out and the tying run on first base as the Yankees fell to Oakland, 2-1. Cano struck out swinging against left-hander Sean Doolittle, whose ball Cano said "just moved a little bit." Doolittle threw only fastballs to Cano in a five-pitch at-bat.

Jarrold Parker, a 23-year-old rookie right-hander, went eight innings for the A's and retired Cano in his first three trips. Shadows might have played a part in the low-scoring game, particularly during Cano's first two at-bats, but he said he didn't want to make excuses.

"They're throwing their pitches whenever they want," Cano said of Oakland's staff. "They're throwing a lot of strikes. Like I say, you have to give them credit."

Stun of a pitch



WATCH IT GO! Yoenis Cespedes takes a moment to admire his moonshot home run in last night's 2-1 A's victory, the Yankees' third straight loss in Oakland.

Reuters

Glimpse of worst-case playoff scenario in Oakland

OAKLAND, Calif. — Welcome to the Short-Series Nightmare for the Yankees.

The Yankees are learning some valuable lessons on this swing out west. First and foremost is they are not as invincible as their 57-37 record makes them out to be as they sit high atop the AL East. Despite all of their success, this is what could happen to the Yankees in the postseason if they run into some strong pitching.

The scrappy A's have shown to be a little bit like the Rays of previous seasons. They have plenty of young pitching and just enough offense to make it interesting. Now they are just one win away from a four-game sweep of the mighty Yankees.

The Yankees lost their

third straight one-run decision to the A's last night at the O.co Coliseum, 2-1, and this time they were beaten by their own playbook.

Incredible rookie Yoenis Cespedes and ancient Brandon Inge slugged solo home runs off Phil Hughes to forge the victory for Oakland. Cespedes' shot to deep left came in the fourth and Inge led off the eighth with a blast to right-center to snap the 1-1 tie.

"Cespedes is strong," manager Joe Girardi said. "He hits the ball hard and squares it up on a consistent basis."

The A's aren't intimidated by the Yankees anymore, that's for sure.

"They've really pitched well against us," Mark Teixeira said. "If you pitch, you have the chance to win every game."

The win was the eighth for the A's in their past nine games and pushed them into a tie for the second wild-card spot.

"There are some talented kids over there, and they are throwing the ball well," Girardi said. "These guys have been command guys."

In 27 innings here, the Yankees have scored all of six runs as they have been completely throttled by three rookie pitchers. Last night it was Jarrod Parker, who allowed one run over eight innings. Lefty Sean Doolittle came on in the ninth, and after surrendering a leadoff single to Alex Rodriguez, he struck out

Robinson Cano, Teixeira and pinch-hitter Andrew Jones.

The Yankees have struck out 25 times in this series and walked once. This series is giving the Yankees nightmares of what could happen when the playoffs roll around. Their offense has to find a way to manufacture runs in this type of game.

On Friday night, Tommy Milone delivered seven scoreless innings as he faced 25 batters. He threw first-pitch strikes to 22 of the batters he faced. Too often, opposing pitchers try to nibble against Yankees hitters, and they soon find themselves in trouble

in the count and in the game. Attack early and make the Yankees expand the strike zone.

The Yankees have learned these A's, a team they have been steamrolling for years, cannot be taken lightly. This is a much different team than the one the Yankees saw earlier in the season. General manager Billy Beane's shrewd signing of Cespedes is beginning to pay huge dividends as the Cuban defector learns the difference between the MLB strike zone and the much wider international strike zone.

"We just can't get him out right now," catcher Russell Martin said.

Cespedes also picked up four hits Friday night and now has a nine-game hitting streak going during which he is batting .593. He

is doing his mini-Bo Jackson imitation.

Friday night's walk-off win was Oakland's 10th of the season, though they really should be called dance-off wins because young teams like the A's dance off the field in victory. Ten different A's have contributed to the "dance-offs" with Brandon Moss becoming No. 10 Friday night with his game-winning single off Cody Eppley. Last night it was a different Brandon, the veteran Inge, who did the damage against Hughes.

"We feel we can beat anyone," Moss said. "We've come a long way. We don't have a ton of big names, but we have good players."

The Yankees have learned that the last three nights. The A's have been a nightmare.

kevin.kernan@nypost.com



Kevin Kernan

MLB.com

A's face Sabathia as they try to sweep Yankees

By Quinn Roberts / MLB.com | 7/22/2012 12:34 AM ET

Winning their first three games against the Yankees at Oakland Coliseum, the A's sure have caught the eye of opposing manager Joe Girardi.

Whether it's on the mound or at the plate, Oakland has come to play, tossing three quality starts to win each game by a slim one-run margin.

"They've done a really good job. You look at it, they're all a little bit different," Girardi said of the A's rotation. "They're young, they're throwing the ball well and they're locating."

The Yankees will try to reverse their fortune come Sunday as the team tries to prevent a four-game sweep.

Having a tough time getting runners on base in the series, New York has managed just one walk through three games. The team was unable to draw a walk in the first two games, marking the first time it had gone consecutive contests without a free pass since September of last year.

That could be a problem for the Yankees again on Sunday with Bartolo Colon set to take the hill. With pinpoint control for much of the season, Colon has surrendered just two walks in his last four games.

He allowed just one walk in his last start against the Rangers on Tuesday, but took the loss after allowing four runs on eight hits in seven innings of work.

"Bart's another one of those guys, he's not going to walk people. He's not. He's coming right at you. 'Here it is, I'm going to throw it, I'm going to locate it down and away and inside with movement,'" Girardi said of his former pitcher. "'If you do something with it, do something with it.'"

A veteran workhorse for Oakland this season, the right-hander has a 2.89 ERA over his last seven starts.

"We felt like with the youth that we were going to have in our rotation, his experience and all that he's been through and the way he goes about his business and prepares, would be good for our younger guys," said A's manager Bob Melvin.

Yankees: Sabathia takes hill after 32nd birthday

- After turning 32 on Saturday, CC Sabathia will get the start for the Yankees in Sunday's series finale.

If the left-hander can get the win, it would mark his 11th win, a mark he's reached in his first 12 seasons in the Majors. He'd then join Don Sutton, Eddie Plank and Tom Seaver as the only pitchers to accomplish such a feat in the modern era.

Sabathia got the victory on Tuesday against the Blue Jays, tossing six scoreless innings and allowing only four hits and one walk in his return from the disabled list.

In his last nine starts against Oakland, Sabathia is 6-1 with a 2.62 ERA.

A's: Cespedes on a roll

- On a tear as of late, Yoenis Cespedes continues to show few growing pains in his rookie campaign.

Over his last nine games, Cespedes is hitting .576 (19-for-33) with four home runs.

"The ball gets up there in a hurry and it can make you do some funny things, even though you try to have a plan each and every time," Melvin said. "But I think the confidence that he has going the other way and up the middle is lending him to feel pretty confident about having a particular plan and staying with it."

- Josh Reddick was at designated hitter on Saturday instead of his normal right field position in an attempt to help give him some rest, according to Melvin. Brandon Moss took Reddick's spot in right and Chris Carter started at first base.

Worth noting

- A's right-hander Brandon McCarthy, on the 15-day disabled list since June 20 with recurring shoulder soreness, threw another bullpen session on Saturday and said it went well. Melvin said the team would wait until Sunday to determine McCarthy's next step.
- Yankees right-hander Joba Chamberlain's next rehab game will likely come Tuesday, with the Class A Advanced Tampa Yankees for a second straight outing. Chamberlain's made four rehab appearances so far, and his first above rookie ball came on Friday when he made a two-inning start for Tampa in Bradenton, Fla. He gave up a home run to the first batter he faced, the only run he allowed.

LoHud.com

A New York Yankees blog by Chad Jennings and the staff of The Journal News

Yankees trying avoid four-game sweep in Oakland

The Athletics dismantled much of their team this offseason, yet they've remained in the playoff hunt because of a few surprises and a few impressive additions. As the Yankees try to avoid a four-game series sweep this afternoon, two things have stood out this weekend.

This team can really pitch

We're past the All-Star break, so it's hard to call this a fluke at this point. The A's have the lowest ERA in the American League, and they have it despite four rookies in their starting rotation. The Yankees have seen A.J. Griffin, Tommy Milone and Jarrod Parker the past three nights, and all three shutdown this offense.

"I would say they've been throwing strikes," Robinson Cano said. "Especially the guy from (Friday) night, (Milone). They're throwing their pitches whenever they want. They're throwing a lot of strikes. Like I say, you have to give them credit."

In today's finale, the Yankees won't be facing a rookie. They'll be facing Bartolo Colon, who has a 3.88 ERA while continuing some of the things he did so well last season. The Yankees haven't had any success against the young A's starters. Maybe they'll have some success against the familiar veteran.

"Bart's another one of those guys, he's not going to walk people," Joe Girardi said. "He's coming right at you. Here it is, I'm going to throw it, I'm going to locate it down and away and inside with movement. If you do something with it, do something with it."

Yoenis Cespedes can really hit

He burst onto the scene this winter with a YouTube video and a ton of prospect hype. International free agents rarely become household names before they reach the big leagues, but Cespedes became an exception to the rule. The Athletics decided to take the risk with a big contract for a largely unknown player, and it's paying off.

"You just hope nobody's on base when you have to go through his at-bat," Phil Hughes said. "Fortunately there wasn't any guys on when he hit the first one (last night). From there, we just tried to go in to him. He's patient for a guy that swings so hard. You normally expand the zone a little bit, but he hasn't been. He's impressive."

During a current nine-game hitting streak, Cespedes has hit .576 with four home runs and 10 RBI.

"He's strong. He hits the ball hard, squares it up on a consistent basis," Girardi said. "We're running into a hot hitter right now."

07/22/12 1:53 AM ET

Swisher ruled out until at least Monday

OAKLAND -- Yankees outfielder Nick Swisher joked Friday that "disabled list" wasn't in his vocabulary. He followed up Saturday by asking "What's that mean, anyway?"

Swisher won't be playing until the Yankees hit Seattle on Monday, at the earliest, but still expects he will be out for just a few days. An MRI on of Swisher's left leg Saturday morning near the Oakland Coliseum revealed what's being called a mild left hip flexor strain -- the result Swisher and manager Joe Girardi expected.

"It's tight. Walking around good," said Swisher on Saturday afternoon, after he was hurt running to first on a seventh-inning groundout Friday. "I know you guys want a timetable. I wish I could tell you, but I just don't know. We'll go in here and hang out with [head trainer Steve Donohue]. Me and Stevie haven't been hanging out very much lately."

Said Girardi after a 2-1 loss to the A's Saturday night: "He has a mild strain. He's still day to day. He's not going to play tomorrow and I don't know if we'll see him in Seattle. We'll just see how he responds to treatment."

Swisher sustained a quad contusion in June, but said "that was on the outside, this is more on the inside." He also indicated he won't need to be at 100 percent to return to the field.

"I feel like I'm one of those guys that I can play through a lot of pain," Swisher said. "I've got to take these next couple of days off, just chill out, and we'll see what happens in Seattle."

Swisher's injury in reality may be slightly different than a hip flexor strain. He said Friday he felt the injury was more in his quad area, and both Swisher and Girardi indicated Saturday night that it was being termed a hip flexor strain for simplicity's sake.

"I think what they're calling it is a mild hip flexor strain," Swisher said. "I think that's what everybody's on board saying."

Said Girardi: "That's not the muscle that they call it. Ask -- I'm going to say it's the hip flexor."

Dewayne Wise started in right field and batted ninth Saturday. Girardi said the Yankees are OK to play short for a bit.

"In the meantime, we're OK because we have Wisey," Girardi said. "We're OK there. It's something we're just going to have to deal with over the next couple days."

Daily News 7/22/12

Hip check: Nick has mild strain

OAKLAND — A MRI on Nick Swisher's left leg confirmed the Yankees' original diagnosis, with the test revealing a mild strain of his hip flexor.

"He's still day-to-day," Joe Girardi said Saturday. "He's not going to play tomorrow and I don't know if we'll see him in Seattle. We'll just see how he responds to treatment."

Swisher wasn't surprised to hear the results of the MRI, although he admitted to feeling



some relief after learning the injury wasn't more severe than expected. "Hearing that, it just puts your mind at ease," Swisher said. "We know exactly what we're dealing with."

Earlier in the day, Swisher said his leg felt "tight," but he was walking around the clubhouse without much of a limp.

"I feel like I know my body pretty well," Swisher said. "In situations like that, you know when something really goes or when something kind of gets nicked a little bit. I feel it's hopefully just a little strain and then just kind of day-to-day from here. I don't know what the results say, but I don't think it's going to be anything super serious."

Dewayne Wise went 0-for-3 in Swisher's place Saturday night.

WALK-OFF WONDERS

Brandon Moss' walk-off single Friday night marked the fifth time in the A's last 10 home games that they had won on their final swing of the bat, giving them 10 such wins this season.

The Yankees had 15 walk-off wins in their 2009 World Series season, with the postgame pie-in-the-face becoming one of the trademarks of that club. The A's have adopted their own pie tradition, although theirs also includes a Gatorade bath.

MORE YANKS: Potential outfield trade prospects.

nydailynews.com/sports

EXTRA INNINGS

STAT OF THE DAY

11 The Yankees saw their 11-game streak with at least one home run come to an end Saturday. They're 2-15 this year when they don't homer.

TEST YOUR YANKEES IQ

CC Sabathia became the fifth pitcher since 1900 to win 10 or more games in each of his first 12 seasons. Who were the other four?

M.I.A.

Robinson Cano saw his career-high 23-game hitting streak snapped with an 0-for-4 night. It was the Yankees' longest hitting streak since Derek Jeter hit in 25 straight in 2006.

NEXT GAME

Today, 4:15, Yankees at A's; CC Sabathia (10-3, 3.27) vs. Bartolo Colon (6-8, 3.88); TV: YES



A: Tom Seaver, Don Sutton, Carl Hubbell and Eddie Plank

What can a slew of late-inning comebacks do for a young team such as the A's, who have seen 10 different players deliver the game-winners?

"I think it gives them a lot of confidence if they're down late in the game that they're going to come back instead of saying, 'Here we go again,'" Girardi said. "I think it's the difference that you feel as a player, the 'I don't know if we can get to this closer; he's been so good.' They probably have the feeling, 'Keep it close, guys, and we have a shot.'"

OTX

NY Post 7/22/12

Swisher hopes to be hip and avoid disabled list

By GEORGE A. KING III
and KEVIN KERNAN

OAKLAND, Calif. — Nick Swisher said he doesn't think he is headed for the disabled list, but his hip flexor problem suffered Friday night was serious enough for the Yankees to stuff him into an MRI tube yesterday.

According to manager Joe Girardi the MRI exam confirmed the original diagnosis that Swisher has a mild strain of the left hip flexor.

Nevertheless, it's not clear when the right fielder will return. It's

possible Swisher won't be back until the Yankees play host to the Red Sox this coming weekend.

"When they do the tests in Seattle they will be very light tests," Swisher said before the Yankees' 2-1 loss to the A's last night at O.co Coliseum. "And we will see where we are from there."

The Yankees aren't planning on promoting an outfielder from the minor leagues for protection while Swisher is out but not on the disabled list.

"It puts your mind at ease," Swisher said of the MRI exam.

YANKEES NOTES

Swisher suffered the strain running out a ground ball in the seventh inning of Friday night's 4-3 loss.

"I know you guys want a timetable and I wish I knew," said Swisher, who missed six games in late April and early May with a left hamstring problem. "I don't think it's anything super serious."

► **Joba Chamberlain's** fastball was clocked at 100 mph, according

to a speed gun at his rehab appearance Friday night in Bradenton, Fla.

Yet the Yankees didn't need to see triple digits to understand Chamberlain's return from Tommy John surgery last summer and right ankle surgery in March has been spotless.

"I don't think it could have gone any more smoothly," Girardi said of the four-game rehab stint that continues Tuesday. "He has thrown two innings [in one game] and 32 pitches [Friday]. I don't see how it could be any better."

Chamberlain has yet to throw in consecutive games. When he does that, the right-handed reliever could be ready to come off the disabled list, though don't look for him much before next weekend's series against the Red Sox. His 30-day rehab assignment expires Aug. 8.

► **Robinson Cano**, who went 0-for-4 last night, had his hitting streak snapped at 23 games. It was the longest streak by a Yankee since **Derek Jeter** hit in 25 consecutive games from Aug. 20-Sept. 16, 2006.

YANKEES NOTEBOOK

Swisher not too worried about injury

Right fielder to sit at least until Monday

By Chad Jennings
cjennings@ohud.com

OAKLAND, Calif. — Yankees right fielder Nick Swisher went for a precautionary MRI on Saturday morning and was held out of the lineup on Saturday night, but he seemed perfectly unconcerned about what's believed to be a slight strain of his left hip flexor.

"I feel like I know my body pretty well," Swisher said. "In situations like that, you know when something really goes or when something kind of gets nicked a little bit. I feel it's hopefully just a little strain and then just kind of day to day from here."

Results from the MRI weren't immediately available, but Swisher was initially diagnosed with a strain after he came up hobbling after a groundout on Friday night. He was pulled from the game and manager Joe Girardi said he won't play again until Monday at the earliest.

"It's something we're just going to have to deal with over the next couple days," Girardi said. "Depending on what the MRI shows, it will give us a better idea how long it's probably going to be."

Swisher said the dis-

comfort is in the middle of his upper leg, in a different spot from the hamstring and groin injuries that bothered him earlier this year.

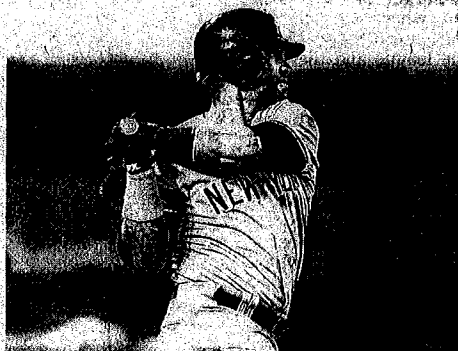
"I feel like I'm one of those guys that I can play through a lot of pain," Swisher said. "I think more than anything, I just want to get back. I've got to take these next couple of days off, just chill out, and we'll see what happens in Seattle."

Wise stepping into right field: With Swisher out, fifth outfielder Dewayne Wise stepped into the Yankees' lineup on Saturday night, and he might stay there until Swisher returns. The Yankees face righty starters in their next four games, which seems to be a good fit for the left-handed Wise.

"We're OK because we have Wisey," Girardi said. "We're OK there. ... He's got a chance to play a lot, that's for sure."

Bartolo in the finale: After a surprisingly effective season out of the Yankees' rotation last year, veteran Bartolo Colon has carried a 3.88 ERA with the Athletics this season. The Yankees will face Colon in this afternoon's series finale in Oakland.

"We saw him do it last year for us," Girardi said. "And Bart's another one of those guys, he's not going to walk people. He's not. He's coming right at you, here it is. If you do something with it, do something with it."



Nick Swisher will be out of the Yankees' lineup at least until Monday with a strained left hip flexor. AP



Saturday, July 21, 2012

Swisher's status for Seattle series uncertain

OAKLAND, Calif. -- The Yankees got the news they hoped for when an MRI exam on Saturday revealed that **Nick Swisher** has a mild strain of his left hip flexor, and nothing more serious.

"He's not going to play tomorrow and I don't know if we'll see him in Seattle," manager **Joe Girardi** said after Saturday night's 2-1 loss to the A's. "(We'll) see how he responds to treatment."

#33 RF

New York Yankees

2012 STATS

- GM85
- HR14
- RBI54
- R40
- OBP.342
- AVG.258

Swisher, who was injured while trying to beat out a ground ball in the seventh inning on Friday night, said he was relieved that the injury was not more serious.

"After hearing that it puts your mind at ease," he said. "You know exactly what you are dealing with."

Even if Swisher misses all three games in Seattle, a series starting Monday, the Yankees would be able to play a man short, Girardi said.

"We can do that if we have to," he said.

Dewayne Wise, who started in Swisher's place in right field on Saturday night, is a left-handed hitter. The Yankees will face all right-handed starters for the rest of this trip.



Yankees' Nick Swisher to sit final two games vs. A's; club awaits MRI results on strained hip flexor

Published: Saturday, July 21, 2012, 11:45 PM Updated: Sunday, July 22, 2012, 12:58 AM



By **Marc Carig/The Star-Ledger**

OAKLAND, Calif. — The Yankees are awaiting the results of a precautionary MRI on outfielder Nick Swisher, who will not play in the final two games of the team's four-game series against the Athletics.

The team is calling Swisher's injury a strained left hip flexor, though Swisher said he is still feeling tightness closer to his quad muscle.

"In situations like that, you know when things really go," said Swisher, who doesn't believe the injury is serious.

Swisher left Friday night's game in the middle of the seventh inning after feeling a tugging sensation in his quad while trying to beat out a ground ball.

- Robinson Cano finished 0-for-4, snapping his career-high hit streak at 23 games.

Cano already has one of the longest hitting streaks in Yankees history since Joe DiMaggio set the record with his 56-game hit streak in 1941.

Don Mattingly's hit streak reached 24 games in 1986, Derek Jeter's extended to 25 games in 2006 and Joe Gordon — who was also a second baseman — ran his hit streak to 29 games in 1942.

"I just go out there and try to get a hit every at-bat," Cano said. "I don't put it in my mind that I've got a hitting streak or something like that. But I go out there and try to get on base."

- As the ninth inning revealed on Friday night, the Yankees bullpen could be helped by a bit more depth.

Right-handed specialist Cody Eppley allowed the game-winning hit in a 3-2 loss to the A's to Brandon Moss, a left-handed hitter. Girardi had already used lefties Boone Logan and Clay Rapada, forcing Girardi to keep Eppley in the game.

"It's frustrating," said Eppley, who has earned Girardi's trust in close games.

General manager Brian Cashman always has the option of scouring the trade market for help. With the July 31 trade deadline approaching, the Yankees may get more active if asking prices begin to fall, as they tend to do later in the process.

However, the Yankees also have the promise of help at no cost. That's where the Yankees could use Joba Chamberlain.

The right-hander is well into his minor-league rehab assignment, which has unfolded so far with no issues. In four appearances, Chamberlain has allowed only one earned run.

Girardi has said Chamberlain could be fast-tracked to the big leagues if needed.

However, the Yankees would first need to see how Chamberlain responds to pitching on consecutive days.

If Chamberlain returns, the Yankees would gain a power arm capable of tackling both lefties and righties. David Phelps could also grow into a similar role, though he has never pitched back-to-back days during his career. It's a steep adjustment to make on the fly.

Said Phelps, "I'd be up for it if my body allows."

Yanks notes: Nick Swisher optimistic

SUNDAY, JULY 22, 2012

THE RECORD

Swisher optimistic

Nick Swisher insists the words "disabled list" are not in his dictionary, but he'll settle for being day to day with what the club termed as a mild left hip flexor strain.

"I feel like I know my body pretty well ... you know when something really goes or when something just kind of got nicked a bit," Swisher said before results of a precautionary MRI taken Saturday confirmed the diagnosis.

Swisher felt a tug in his hip/quad area halfway down the first base line while running out a seventh-inning grounder in Friday's 3-2 loss. Manager Joe Girardi planned to keep Swisher sidelined and evaluate his status before Monday's game at Seattle.

In the short term, Girardi feels he's covered in the outfield. Lefty-hitting Dewayne Wise started in right field Saturday night and the Yankees are due to face right-handed starters through the remainder of a road trip that concludes Wednesday. Girardi also is comfortable using Jayson Nix in left field.

If Swisher's recovery is further delayed, "then we'll cross that bridge," Girardi said. "In the meantime, we're OK." Earlier this year, Swisher missed a week due to a low-grade strain of his left hamstring. "I know you guys want a timetable," Swisher said. "I wish I could tell you but I don't know."

Santo fan

As a kid growing up in Illinois and as a former Cubs player, Girardi had a unique connection to Ron Santo, posthumously inducted today into the Hall of Fame. "I idolized him and had a chance to really get to know him when I was a player and he was a broadcaster," Girardi said. "I really miss him but I'm happy for the family on this day."

— Pete Caldera

BASEBALL

RIVERA BALKS

BY STEFAN BONDY
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

MARIANO RIVERA has gone from adamant to hesitant about playing next season.

Baseball's best closer ever said Saturday he's so focused on the day-to-day grind of physical therapy that he can't commit to pitching in 2013, let alone this season, declining to let his mind wander beyond the moment.

"I don't even know if I want to play next year. I don't know what tomorrow is going to bring. One day at a time," said Rivera, who was walking without a limp at Yankee Stadium after watching a training session of the English Premier League's Chelsea soccer squad, which plays an exhibition Sunday at the Stadium.

"I don't want to put something in my mind because if it doesn't happen, I'll be disappointed," he added.

Rivera's comments come in stark contrast to what he said shortly after tearing up his right knee shagging fly balls in May.

"I am coming back," Rivera said then. "Put it down. Write it down in big letters. I'm not going out like this."

At 42 years old with a surgically repaired knee, the righthander understands there's a possibility he may never pitch again.

In other words, the pitcher who is the epitome of control on the mound is feeling the helplessness of injury.

"I love (baseball). I love the game. I love the competition. I love being on the field," he said on Saturday. "Going out like that, to me, I won't take it. Hopefully the good Lord will allow me to be on the field again."

Rivera suffered a torn ACL and torn meniscus after he fell awkwardly in the outfield while shagging flies before a May 3 game in Kansas City.

The surgery on June 12, delayed because of a blood clot in his right calf, went "perfectly," he said. He was assured that

Injured Yanks closer now having second thoughts about returning

MAY 4

'I am coming back. Put it down. Write it down in big letters. I'm not going out like this.'

SATURDAY

'I don't even know if I want to play next year. I don't know what tomorrow is going to bring.'

his knee will return to full strength and stability.

Rivera attends physical therapy sessions daily in New York. But he stressed that he wouldn't return until he's 100%, fearing that a wrong step might otherwise blow out his knee again. He has yet to throw a baseball since the surgery.

While the future Hall of Famer had floated the idea of returning for this

postseason, he said he can't yet squat on his knee, let alone run or pivot on a mound, so discussing a return this season is premature.

Rivera said the recent success of the Yankees is "giving me a peace of mind," allowing him to concentrate on rehab instead of worrying about the team. He also praised the efforts of his replacement, Rafael Soriano, who has put up Rivera-like numbers with 24 saves and a 1.46 ERA.

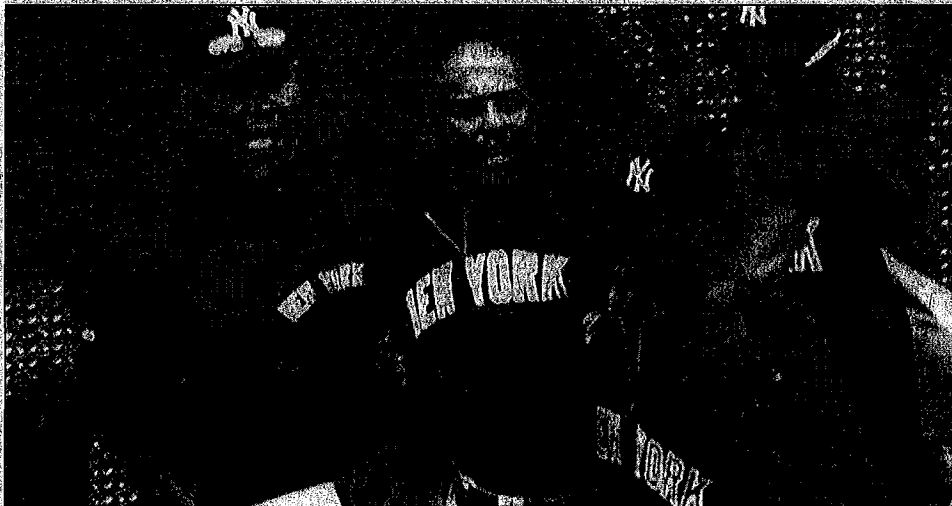
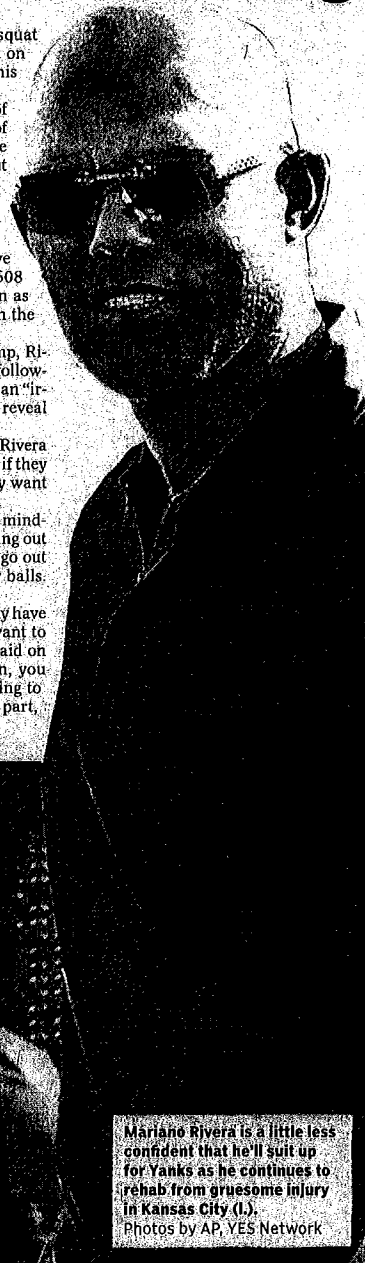
Rivera has nothing more to prove on the diamond, with a record 608 saves, five rings and the reputation as the most dominant, clutch closer in the history of the game.

When he arrived at training camp, Rivera hinted strongly at retirement following this season, saying he had made an "irrevocable" decision but refusing to reveal what that decision was.

"I've made my decision already," Rivera said. "Even if I save 90 games; even if they want to pay as much money as they want to, any team."

Then, when Rivera got hurt, his mindset appeared to change. "I'm not going out like that," he said. "I don't want to go out because I hurt myself shagging fly balls. No."

The grueling recovery process may have Rivera rethinking that stance. "I want to go out on my own terms," Rivera said on Saturday. "But also as a Christian, you have to understand the Lord is trying to do tell you something. I will do my part, though."



Mariano Rivera is a little less confident that he'll suit up for Yanks as he continues to rehab from gruesome injury in Kansas City (l).
Photos by AP, YES Network

BASEBALL

BY MIKE GAVIN
michael.gavin@newsday.com

Mariano Rivera signs for Chelsea's Petr Cech and David Luiz, who play soccer at Yankee Stadium today.

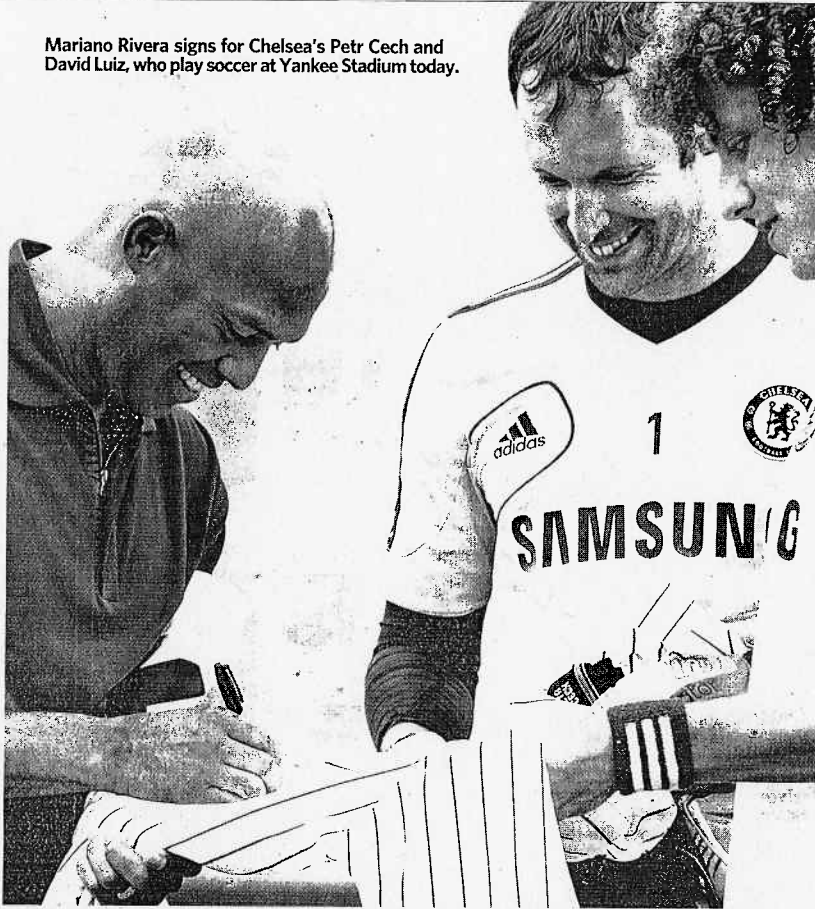


PHOTO BY PATRICK E. MCCARTHY

The greatest closer in baseball history isn't quite ready to close out the possibility of returning this season.

But that doesn't necessarily mean that fans can expect to see Mariano Rivera emerge from the bullpen doors as Enter Sandman blares from the speakers at Yankee Stadium anytime soon.

Rivera, who tore the ACL in his right knee while shagging fly balls during batting practice in Kansas City on May 3, prefers to continue his rehab with no timetable for a return whatsoever.

"If you're asking me what my wish is, I'd love to play," Rivera said when asked about returning this season. "I'd love to be playing now. But you have to be smart and you have to be able to let time do its thing. I cannot rush it."

"I don't want to put things in my mind. I just want to make sure that I take it day by day and stay focused on what I have to do and not try to rush or try to do something that I can't do."

Rivera spoke to reporters at the Timex Performance Center in East Rutherford, N.J., after he watched a training session for the Chelsea Football Club, which plays Paris Saint-Germain today in the first soccer game at the new Yankee Stadium.

Rivera, who said he feels pain in the knee when he sits or stands for prolonged periods of time, hasn't starting running or throwing, but is rehabbing every day in Manhattan and occasionally wears a brace. The 42-year-old, who is on the disabled list for the first time since 2003, said he doesn't even speak to his doctor or physical therapist about a return date.

After suffering the injury and having his surgery delayed until June 12 because of a blood clot in his right calf, Rivera was expected to miss the entire season. Despite Rivera's refusal to entirely rule out a 2012 return, Brian Cashman and Joe Girardi seem to think a 2013 return to the mound is more likely.

"He didn't say he was going to definitely make it back," Girardi said on Tuesday. "He's trying, but my anticipation is it's going to be very difficult because it's a short period of time."

There's no sense in rushing Rivera back considering the

ANXIOUS RIVERA BEING CAREFUL

Closer hasn't ruled out returning this season, but he won't overextend

performance of Rafael Soriano in his absence. Soriano, who signed a three-year, \$35-million deal with the Yankees after the 2010 season to be a setup man and insurance policy for Rivera, had converted 24 of 25 save opportunities this season through Friday

night. "Soriano has done a tremendous job," Rivera said. "The bullpen has done a wonderful job... It gives me a little bit of peace of mind that I can concentrate on what I'm doing much better."

Rivera said he plans to at-

tend the soccer game at the Stadium today and reminisced about playing forward and defense in Panama when he was young. After exchanging jerseys with a few Chelsea players and signing autographs, he was asked how tempted he was to go kick the ball around despite the knee injury.

"Don't ask me that question," Rivera said with a laugh. "I was tempted. But I have to be smart."

NY Post 7/22/12

Rivera not rushing it

By MARK EVERSON

The greatest closer in baseball history says he wants to pitch again this season, but that he's not pushing to make it happen.

"I'd love to," Mariano Rivera said yesterday. "If you're asking me what my wish is, I'd love to play. I'd love to be playing now.

"But you have to be smart. You have to let time do its thing. I cannot rush it."

The 42-year-old tore his right anterior cruciate ligament shagging flies before the Yankees' game May 3 at Kansas City, and underwent surgery June 12. He is undergoing daily rehab to regain strength and stability in the knee, usually a 4-to-6-month process.

Rivera was watching Chelsea practice yesterday at the Giants' training field in East Rutherford. A soccer fan, he exchanged jerseys with Chelsea

captain Frank Lampard, then with John Terry, Ramires, Petr Cech and David Luiz. Chelsea faces Paris Saint-Germain at Yankee Stadium tonight.

The Panamanian right-hander holds baseball's record of 608 saves. He has saved 25 games in a record 15 straight seasons. He also holds the record of 42 postseason saves. He owns a 76-58 record and a 2.21 ERA with 1,119 strikeouts.

Rivera said he doesn't discuss a timetable with his trainers and therapists.

"We don't talk about that. Our main thing is, 'Just get ready,'" Rivera said. "Day by day, whatever happens is going to happen.

"I don't want to rush. I don't want to put something into my thinking that I might come back too soon, when I'm not ready. That's not smart. I want to do the right thing and the right thing is to be patient and take it day by day."

July 21, 2012, 9:12 p.m. ET

Yanks' Rivera not ruling out return this season

Associated Press

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. — Mariano Rivera knows it's not likely, but the New York Yankees closer has not ruled out the possibility of returning this season — just a little over a month after undergoing surgery on his right knee.

The 42-year-old Rivera, baseball's career-saves leader, injured his right knee while running after fly balls in batting practice in Kansas City on May 3. A blood clot in his leg delayed surgery until June 12. A full recovery from ACL surgery generally takes six-to-nine months.

"I'd love to be playing right now," Rivera said Saturday. "I want to be playing, but I have to be smart and let time do its thing. I don't talk about it (a timetable). I just do what I have to do to get ready and whatever happens happens. I don't want to rush it and think I can come back too soon. I have to be patient."

Rivera was at the New York Giants' facility, watching Chelsea Football Club practice in preparation to face Paris Saint-Germain on Sunday at Yankee Stadium.

Yankees general manager Brian Cashman told reporters that Rivera is "totally out" for the 2012 season.

But Rivera, who was 1-1 with a 2.16 ERA with five saves before the injury, doesn't want to think about that.

"We're doing things little by little," Rivera said. "What we're doing with the rehab is great. I don't want to go too fast, do something wrong and hurt it again. It's all part of a process. Once I go back on the mound, I want to be 100 percent ready."

Rivera has not done any running yet, nor has he begun to throw a baseball. But that's not going to deter Rivera, who has earned 608 saves in his 18 seasons with the Yankees.

"It is hard," Rivera said. "I'm doing a lot of moving and stretching. It definitely hurts. I'm not going to lie. It gets stiff if I stand for too long or if I sit too long. In the morning, it's tough. But I feel good and excited about getting back. I'm just taking it all day-by-day. I would love to come back sooner than what (the doctors) say, but I know it takes time."

Rivera said that he doesn't feel pressure to get back sooner, because the Yankees are winning, sitting atop the A.L. East by a considerable margin. The Yankees began play Saturday with a 57-36 record, eight games better than second-place Baltimore.

"The good thing is that the team is doing great," Rivera said. "It makes it easier for me to concentrate on what I have to do. It gives me a peace of mind."

It also helps that Rivera's replacement as the Yankee closer, Rafael Soriano, is having a brilliant season, posting a 2-0 record with a 1.46 ERA and 24 saves. Soriano has blown only one save all season.

"Soriano has done a tremendous job," Rivera said. "The whole team has done well. The whole bullpen has been tremendous. I always talk to Soriano, just like he did when he came to the team. I talked to him about how to pitch in New York. He's done it before (as a closer with Tampa Bay, getting 45 saves in 2010). He doesn't have to prove anything."

Rivera has been going through his rehabilitation in New York and visits with the Yankees during every homestand. Still, it's been tough being away from his teammates on a regular basis.

"I don't want to be here," Rivera said. "I'd rather be with my team. It's part of the game. I have to accept it and I have to move on."

There was some talk of Rivera retiring following this season, but that's not going to happen — especially not after the knee injury.

"I love the game and I love the competition," Rivera said. "I love being on the field. I'm not going out like that. I definitely want to go out on my own terms. I'm just going to do my part and the rest is out of my reach."

Rivera watched Chelsea F.C. practice, then traded jerseys and posed for pictures with some Chelsea players after the session was over.

"I was a soccer player in Panama," Rivera said. "I love the game. I watch soccer all the time. I have a strong passion for it. It's something I enjoy. I could have been a soccer player, but the Lord chose baseball for me. I think it was the best decision for me."

Klapisch: Mariano Rivera holding out hope he can return to Yankees in October

SATURDAY, JULY 21, 2012 LAST UPDATED: SUNDAY JULY 22, 2012, 12:26 AM



By BOB KLAPISCH
RECORD COLUMNIST

Mariano Rivera has spent nearly three months hoping for a miracle recovery from his torn ACL. His therapists agree – if anyone could make it back from such a serious knee injury in the same season, it would be the ageless Rivera, baseball’s Benjamin Button.

But the Yankees’ closer is learning the irrefutable facts about 42-year-old ligaments and how much time they need to recover from trauma. When asked if his knee hurts, Rivera admitted, “it still does. I’d be lying if I said it didn’t. If I stand too long, or I sit too long ... [and] in the morning.”

Rivera spoke to reporters at the Timex Performance Center at the Meadowlands on Saturday, where he watched a practice run by Chelsea FC, one of the soccer teams that’s playing at the Stadium today.

Rivera grew up in Panama loving soccer and said at one point he considered pursuing it over baseball. In fact, the right-hander, who later signed autographs and jerseys for Chelsea’s star players, admitted he was “tempted” to start kicking the ball on Saturday, although he wisely fought the urge.

Looking at Rivera, you’d never know he was on the disabled list, much less walking on a surgically rebuilt knee. His gait is normal, and he appears to be in no pain whatsoever. Rivera undergoes physical therapy five days a week in Manhattan, and with “no setbacks” so far, believes he’s way ahead of schedule.

In fact, medical specialists have left the door open, if only by a crack, that Rivera could be healed by the postseason. Dr. Keith Pyne, who oversees Rivera’s therapy sessions, recently told the New York Post, Rivera “will be in the best position to accomplish that goal [pitching this year]. He’s got everything it takes to accomplish that. ... If I was putting money on it, I would put my money on Mo.”

There are at least two factors that feed such optimism. The first is that Rivera’s ACL wasn’t ruptured – it was only partially torn. Second, it was Rivera’s right knee, on the push-off leg, that was injured.

Had it been his left, the landing leg, where the repeated trauma is greater during the course of a game, doctors would've been more pessimistic.

Additionally, Rivera is benefiting from the three-week delay before he underwent surgery. While doctors worked to dissolve a blood clot they'd found below the knee, Rivera got a head start on his therapy. By strengthening the leg before the operation instead of after, he potentially shaved two-to-three weeks off his recovery time.

Rivera is the first to say he'd love to rescue the Yankees in October, where he boasts a career 0.74 ERA. But the flip side to this pipedream is one Rivera offers up freely. He hasn't been given clearance to run yet. And he hasn't picked up a ball since May 3, the day of his injury in Kansas City. No wonder Rivera says, "I'm taking it one day at a time" and "I don't want to put anything in my mind" about October "and then be disappointed."

Instead, the closer feels more comfortable talking about Rafael Soriano, who had converted on 24 of 25 save opportunities this year entering Saturday. Soriano's work isn't nearly as clean as Rivera's – his 1.27 WHIP, while acceptable, only makes the Yankees yearn for Rivera's career 0.998. Still, the Bombers are relatively safe in the late innings, a fact that Rivera says, "gives me peace of mind, that I don't have to rush back."

We'll see if the Yankees are still dent-proof by the Division Series. Come October, we'll know if Soriano's quiet, brooding style translates into playoff fearlessness, or if it dissolves with the world closing in. It's a gamble the Yankees have no choice but to make – unless, of course, you buy into Rivera's potential for that miracle.

"I would love to be back," he said, smiling a smile that substituted for crossed fingers. "But right now, it's a process. We'll see."

NEWS ITEM: Mets place Johan Santana on the DL.

There've certainly been worse stretches of bad news in Flushing, although this sequence seems especially painful. It was only three weeks ago when the Mets were realistically thinking about a run at the wild-spot spot. But then Dillon Gee was diagnosed with a blood clot in his shoulder, Santana was lit up by the Dodgers on Friday and disabled 24 hours later and rookie prospect Matt Harvey, who potentially could've replaced Santana in the rotation on Wednesday or Thursday, was smoked, too, in a Class-AAA start on Saturday night.

How did it all go south so fast? Only a talent evaluator who's monitored the Mets this year believed, "it was only a matter of time" before the team's core started to unravel. In his words, "the premise [of the Mets' success] was based on a risk."

He was talking about Santana, recovering from major shoulder surgery, making 30 starts this season without injury. The Mets say their ace is being shelved because of an ankle injury incurred two starts ago against the Cubs. While there's no reason to doubt Santana hurt himself in a particular sequence covering the bases, it's hard to ignore the possibility that he's paying the price for the 134 pitches he threw in that June 1 no-hitter against the Cardinals.

This isn't to say Santana or manager Terry Collins did anything wrong on that magical night; the left-hander had to finish that game, even if he was already into the highest pitch-count of his career. But Santana suffered badly in his next two starts against the Yankees and Rays, allowing 10 runs in 10 innings, including four HRs to the Bombers.

All told, after June 1, Santana has a 6.54 ERA, allowing 53 hits in 42 2/3 innings, although that's not to ignore the mini-hot streak from June 19-30, when he allowed just two earned runs in 20 innings. Maybe it's a moot point. The question isn't about when Santana got hurt, but what the Mets do about it from this point forward.

07/21/12 10:55 PM ET

Rivera thrilled to get close look at soccer's best

Rehabbing closer to be in attendance at Sunday's match at Yankee Stadium

By Ethan Asofsky / MLB.com

NEW YORK -- The backdrop of New York City's skyline was the perfect accent to the portrait of greatness on the Timex Center's practice fields at the Meadowlands Sports Complex on Saturday evening.

Five-time World Series champion Mariano Rivera visited the Super Bowl champion Giants' practice facility to watch the English soccer club Chelsea -- this year's champion of the UEFA Champions League -- prepare for its friendly on Sunday against Paris Saint-Germain at Yankee Stadium.

Rivera is a longtime soccer fan, and he used to play forward and defense while he was growing up in Panama before switching exclusively to baseball because of injuries. Despite the urge to relive his playing days and kick the ball around with Europe's finest, Rivera was relegated to watching Chelsea's practice from the sidelines, as the Yankees closer continues to recover from a torn anterior cruciate ligament.

"I was tempted," Rivera said. "But I have to be smart."

After practice, Rivera posed for pictures with defensemen John Terry and David Luiz, midfielders Ramires and Frank Lampard and goalkeeper Petr Cech. He then handed out Yankees jerseys with his number on the back, which Rivera signed for Luiz and Cech upon request, and was presented with a Chelsea one with his name on the back.

While the Chelsea players were excited to meet Rivera during the photo shoot, the Yankees closer couldn't keep his eyes off the pitch during the hour-long practice, refusing to start his press conference until after it had ended. On Sunday, the fun will continue for Major League Baseball's all-time leader in saves, who will return to Yankee Stadium as a spectator of a different game he loves and respects.

"Hopefully, tomorrow they have a good performance in front of the New York fans," Rivera said. "The reporters that cover the Yankees see me. When a soccer game is playing, I'm watching the soccer game. I'm attached to the TV because I love it. I have a passion for it, and I respect the guys that play the game because I understand what it takes to play the game and do it right."

When asked if he'd given any further thought to returning this season, a door his doctor left open because of the 42-year-old's outstanding work ethic in rehabilitation sessions, Rivera once again dismissed the notion as something that could cloud his focus. He doesn't want to get his hopes up.

For now, Rivera is still focusing on range-of-motion exercises and stretches. His eye hasn't quite fixated on the prize, yet. Since the injury, Rivera has not completed a squat, and he still wears a brace around his right knee from time to time.

Still, there's a sense that Rivera is ahead of schedule. Interim closer Rafael Soriano's success this season has given Rivera some breathing room. He doesn't feel the need to rush back from the injury this season, even though he said he'd like nothing more than to return. He remains in contact with Soriano almost daily, offering advice on a regular basis.

There's nobody more serious about Rivera's rehab than Rivera. He's been busy working with his trainer in Manhattan every day, but this week he's gotten a nice mental break. Rivera has found time around his workout schedule to

participate in once-in-a-lifetime events around New York City. In addition to Saturday's practice and Sunday's game, Rivera opened the financial markets on Wednesday by ringing the bell at the New York Stock Exchange.

"It's nice to do something a little different," Rivera said. "It takes your mind off it a little bit, but I still have to do my therapy. It's wonderful what I did with the Stock Exchange and being here today is astounding."

Rivera could've been a difference-maker Friday night in a 3-2 walk-off loss against the A's at the Oakland Coliseum.

Cody Eppley took the loss, with Soriano still in the bullpen. The Yankees are still looking for a consistent replacement for Cory Wade.

07/22/12 1:53 AM ET

Joba expected to pitch Tuesday with Tampa

OAKLAND -- Yankees right-hander Joba Chamberlain's next rehab game will likely come Tuesday, with the Class A Advanced Tampa Yankees for a second straight outing.

Chamberlain's made four rehab appearances so far, and his first above rookie ball came on Friday when he made a two-inning start for Tampa in Bradenton, Fla. He gave up a home run to the first batter he faced, the only run he allowed.

"At this point, obviously you'd like him to get every out you can get," Yankees pitching coach Larry Rothschild said. "But we're aware of what you need to do to get here. And he's got to stay healthy."

Chamberlain is coming back from elbow and ankle surgeries, and his rehab has gone well so far. He will need to pitch on back-to-back days and at one or both of Double-A and Triple-A before returning.

"Everything has went pretty smoothly," Yankees manager Joe Girardi said. "The fact that he's been able to throw two innings has been good. I think he threw 32 pitches yesterday and he used all his pitches, so I don't see how it could have really went any better."

Newsday 7/22/12

YANKEES
NOTEBOOK

JOBA COULD BE TAKING CRUCIAL STEP

BY ERIK BOLAND
erik.boland@newsday.com

OAKLAND, Calif. — The next step in Joba Chamberlain's rehab — and most significant one — probably will come this week.

The reliever is scheduled to throw a side session today and, if he continues to feel well, likely will pitch in what would be his fifth rehab game Tuesday. He could be sent back out Wednesday, marking the first time he would have gone back-to-back in his rehab.

For Chamberlain, who allowed one earned run and two hits in a two-inning start Friday night, making back-to-back appearances is among the last hurdles to be cleared before he rejoins the Yankees.

The Yankees' original time frame, once Chamberlain started pitching in games, was an early August return, but general manager Brian Cashman hasn't ruled out it coming before that.

"Everything's went pretty smoothly," Joe Girardi said of the recovery to this point. "He threw 32 pitches [Friday], used all his pitches. I don't see how it really could have gone any better."

■ Haunted by Cespedes

The Yankees scouted Cuban outfielder Yoenis Cespedes before he was declared a free agent last offseason and were in on the bidding. But the A's signed him to a four-year, \$36-million contract. Cespedes, 26, entered yesterday hitting .304 with 12 homers and 44 RBIs in 61 games. He was 6-for-8, including a homer in the first two games of this series.

"He's strong, he's fast, you can see he's got bat speed," Girardi said.

■ Old friend

Bartolo Colon is turning back the clock again, bringing a 6-8 record — but a 3.89 ERA — for the A's into today's start against CC Sabathia.



Saturday, July 21, 2012

Girardi encouraged by Joba's rehab

OAKLAND, Calif. -- Reports a day after **Joba Chamberlain's** fourth rehab appearance were positive.

"The fact he threw 32 pitches and used all his pitches, I don't see how it could have gone any better," manager **Joe Girardi** said Saturday.

Pitching coach **Larry Rothschild** said Chamberlain will throw a side session Sunday and make his next rehab appearance "probably Tuesday."

Chamberlain, 26, is recovering from elbow and ankle surgeries.

...

Girardi credited the A's pitching for the Yankees failing to draw a walk in the first two games of the series.

"They're throwing a lot of strikes," he said. "They are locating. The last two guys we faced (**A.J. Griffin** and **Tommy Milone**) were command guys. They don't have a lot of walks. It something they are doing a good job of."

The Yankees have only been held without a walk in back-to-back games twice in the past six years, these two games and Sept. 12-13, 2011. against the Mariners.

...

Girardi, who grew up in the Chicago area, went to Northwestern and played for the Cubs, said he's happy to see **Ron Santo** enshrined into the Hall of Fame.

The Cubs icon will be posthumously inducted on Sunday in Cooperstown.

"As a kid I idolized him," Girardi said. "I really miss him, but I'm happy for the family on this day."

YANKEES: Nova in, out of trouble

Continued from Page 1C

homers he's allowed are six away from doubling his home run total from last season.

"You don't want that to be a common theme," catcher Russell Martin said. "That happens every time he's out there, but it's nice to see a guy when he does get in trouble, to pitch out of it. You want him to have more stress-free innings than what he's had, but he kept us in the game well (on Friday night), made some pitches when he needed to. That's what I'm going to remember."

With 10 wins and a 4.10 ERA, Nova's been a good starter for the Yankees. He's had stretches of legitimate dominance — two double-digit strikeout games and a 1.26 ERA in June — but he doesn't always make it look easy.

In his past four starts, Nova has allowed at least nine hits three times. He held the A's to two runs through 6½ innings on Friday, but that required pitching around five extra-base hits.

"That's what's happening," manager Joe Girardi said. "Is there a reason why, when he misses, he gets hit hard-

er than some others? I can't really tell you why that's happening. But when he does make a mistake — he made a mistake to (Josh) Reddick with a slider, and he made a mistake to Coco Crisp with a slider — when you don't get it low enough to left-handers, they can do some damage."

Nova acknowledged the slider mistakes, but also pointed to his fastball.

"My fastball is moving a lot," he said. "So if I go inside, I've got to go way, way, way inside just in case the ball comes up and goes back."

Martin said the moving fastball — often with unpredictable movement — is part of what's made Nova effective, and Girardi said he tries to concentrate more on Nova's ability to get out of trouble rather than his tendency to get into trouble.

Nova said he's still learning, part of the process for a 25-year-old who still sits on the bench, listens to the veterans and tries to get better.

"You're always learning," Nova said. "I hear from a lot of veteran guys that have 10 years in the big leagues that say they're still learning. It's a process I've been going through, and I think I've been doing really good."

Nova solid, but has work to do

High-wire act commonplace for pitcher

By Chad Jennings
cjennings@lohud.com

OAKLAND, Calif. — The conversation took place in Oakland's visiting dugout after Ivan Nova had once again limited the damage late Friday night. Freddy Garcia is supposed to be the veteran full of advice, but this time he was an observer with an obvious question.

"Me and Freddy were talking after I had a man on third with one out," Nova said. "He told me, 'Why don't you throw 94-95 (mph) earlier in the inning, to the first hitter in the inning? Why do you wait until you have men on base to throw hard?' That's something I have to think about, figure out why I do that. I think I'm

ON THE WEB

Saturday night's game ended too late for this edition. For details, go to LoHud.com. Stay up to date on the Yankees with The LoHud Yankees Blog at yankees.lhblogs.com.

trying to throw hard every time, but I have to figure out why I only do it when I have men on base."

In his second full season in the Yankees' rotation, Nova has once again shown a knack for winning games and an ability to pitch in and out of trouble. His strikeouts are up and his walks are down, but Nova has walked a fine line.

He leads the major leagues in extra-base hits allowed, and the 20

See YANKEES, Page 5C



Yankees' Ivan Nova learning to bear down all the time, not just when in trouble

Published: Saturday, July 21, 2012, 8:52 PM Updated: Saturday, July 21, 2012, 9:03 PM



By **Marc Carig/The Star-Ledger**

OAKLAND, Calif. — Ivan Nova knows it shouldn't be this way. But when he's in trouble, when there are runners on base, when they're threatening to make his life miserable, he's able to sharpen his focus in a way he can't seem to replicate when there's nobody on.

Maintaining that sharpness is just one more area in which Nova must grow.

"You're always learning," said Nova, the 25-year-old righty the Yankees hope becomes a rotation stalwart. "I hear from a lot of veteran guys that have 10 years in the big-leagues that say they're still learning. It's a process I've been going through and I think I've been doing really good."

Indeed, plenty has gone right for Nova, who at 10-4 shares the team lead in wins with ace CC Sabathia. And no pitcher on the staff matches Nova's 123 innings.

Of course, Nova is the first to admit that those innings have been more stressful than he'd prefer. His latest start, a no-decision against the A's on Friday night, provided multiple examples.

No pitcher in the league has allowed more extra-base hits than Nova's 64, and against the A's alone, he surrendered five.

But even though he constantly worked with runners on base, many of them in scoring position by virtue of the extra-base hits, Nova left after allowing just two runs in 6⅓ innings.

Once again, Nova had dodged what should have been a much more unforgiving fate.

"I don't know. Maybe it's just the mindset that he has," said batterymate Russell Martin. "He just bears down a little bit when adversity comes to him."

Nova's underlying numbers seem to support the case that his focus might wane.

With the bases empty, opponents are hitting .315 against Nova, with a robust slugging percentage of .581. But as those same opponents turn up the heat, the right-hander rises to the challenge.

With runners on base, Nova's opponents' batting average falls to .243, with a slugging mark of .421. And with runners in scoring position, Nova becomes even stingier, allowing the opposition to hit just .197, with a paltry .311 slugging percentage.

"It's not what you want to do, but it shows you something about him that he's able to get out of those innings," manager Joe Girardi said. "He makes pitches. He makes pitches with all his stuff, whether it's his curveball, his fastball, his slider, he's making pitches when he has to."

But Girardi stops short of offering an explanation. As does Nova, who has also confounded even his veteran teammates, such as Freddy Garcia.

"Me and Freddy were talking after I had a man on third with one out," Nova said. "He told me, 'why don't you throw 94-95 earlier in the inning, to the first hitter in the inning? Why do you wait until you have men on base to throw hard?'"

LoHud.com

Pregame notes: “We’re just not coming up with any runs”

Three days ago, the Yankees were flying high on their way to the West Coast. They’d won five of six since the All-Star break, had just swept the Blue Jays and had the best record in baseball since June 2. They were beginning to run away with the American League East and might have felt like the hottest team in baseball.

But they’ve since run into the actual hottest team in baseball, and the result has been three straight one-run losses here in Oakland.

“It’s disappointing,” Mark Teixeira said. “You got to give them credit. We’ve been scoring a lot of runs (lately), so you’re almost due for a couple days where you’re not scoring. Doesn’t make it any easier. ... Our pitchers are doing a great job, but we’re just not coming up with any runs for them.”

The A’s are 7-1 since the All-Star break, 12-2 in the month of July and they’re staying afloat in the American League West because a largely anonymous pitching staff is leading the American League in ERA. The Yankees might have the best record in baseball since June 2, but the A’s are only a half game behind them in that span.

Following the lead of A.J. Griffin and Tommy Milone, Jarrod Parker was outstanding tonight. He scattered five hits — all of them singles — through eight innings. Phil Hughes only made two mistakes tonight, and those home runs were the difference in the game because Parker let the Yankees manufacture just one run. They scored three runs on Thursday, two on Friday and just one tonight.

“There are some talented kids over there and they’re throwing the ball well,” Joe Girardi said. “Any time you get good pitching, you have a chance to win. You don’t have to score a lot of runs when you get good pitching.”

Hughes didn’t give up many runs, but the home runs to Yoenis Cespedes and Brandon Inge were enough. Hughes allowed just two other hits tonight, but he was saddled with his eighth loss of the season while pitching through the seventh inning for the fourth time in his past five starts.

“Here we have the luxury, when you do pitch like that, we normally win,” Hughes said. “Just didn’t work out tonight.”

- Nick Swisher’s MRI showed exactly what the Yankees expected. He has a strain and will be reevaluated on Monday, which will be the earliest he’ll play again. “Puts your mind at ease,” Swisher said.

- Hughes looked good tonight. He hadn’t started a game in this stadium since 2010 when he allowed one hit and struck out 10 through 7.1 stellar innings. He wasn’t quite as good this time, but he certainly deserved a better result. “I thought he threw the ball really well,” Girardi said.

“He gave up the two solo shots, and usually that’s not going to beat you over the course of a game. We’ve had a tough time scoring some runs out here. He pitched a great game.”

- Between the Cespedes home run and the Inge home run, Hughes allowed no hits and walked two, one of which was erased with a double play. Girardi said he would have brought Dave Robertson in to pitch the eighth had the Yankees taken a lead, but with the game tied, he liked the way Hughes was pitching. Hughes stayed in and gave up the Inge game-winner. “He was still throwing the ball good,” Girardi said.

- Hughes on the Inge homer: “Everybody says you get the ball down, but I kind of like the ball to ride up on him a little more. That one was down. He likes the ball down, and in the past I’ve gotten him out a lot kind of in the belly button region. I don’t want to say it was too far down, but it kind of was. That’s the way it goes.”

- Hughes on the Cespedes homer: “(Trying to go) away. That ball leaked over the plate, and he can really hit. Trying to be careful with him, and anything over the plate, he puts a good swing on. He’s a good player.”

- Hard not to notice that Hughes was having some success with his changeup tonight. “There’s some guys in that lineup that the opportunity presented itself to throw some more changeups,” he said. “I got some big outs with it. It was good. I thought I commanded the ball pretty well tonight. Just two mistakes.”

- Also hard not to notice that Hughes thought the Inge homer was a popup. He pointed to the sky as if giving someone a heads up on where the ball was, then he turned to watch it leave the park. “I thought he just hit it really good and really high, to be honest,” Hughes said. “Looking back on the replay it’s kind of silly because he hit it pretty good. I had no second thoughts about going about that at-bat any other way. I was just trying to get him out with fastballs. I’ve done it before. Sometimes it just doesn’t work out.”

- Parker has a big fastball and a good changeup. He’s a more powerful pitcher than the guys who shutdown the Yankees the previous two nights. “Kept the ball down, kept you off balance just enough with that changeup for lefties,” Teixeira said. “Could get up to 95 when he wanted to, and then if he needed a groundball, he’d throw that 92 mph sinker. That’s really good stuff.”

- Robinson Cano’s hitting streak ended at 24 games. He said it was never one his mind. “Honestly, no,” he said. “I just go out there and try to get a hit every at-bat. I don’t put it in my mind that I’ve got a hitting streak or something like that. But I go out there and try to get on base.”

- Cano was one game away from tying Derek Jeter’s 2006 hitting streak. Cano’s streak was the longest for a Yankee since Jeter’s.

- Final word comes from Girardi, who said he doesn’t fault the Yankees offensive approach during these past three games. “I’m satisfied (with the approach),” he said. “In the first six innings, there wasn’t a lot of offense. I think that had a little bit to do with the shadows, too,

today. It's tough when those shadows are like that in the beginning. I'm not taking anything away from Parker, but as you saw, there weren't a lot of hits. I'm satisfied. Look at the first inning; if that ball goes over Weeks' head, we've got a run right away and probably a guy at second with one out. He makes a great play. You move on."

On the up & Upton

Best for Yanks to target D'backs star in offseason, rather than on deadline

THE Yankees are intrigued by the possibility of obtaining Arizona's Justin Upton.

And they should be. Three of their best trades of the past two decades involved landing twentysomething outfielders who had fallen out of favor where they were — Paul O'Neill, Curtis Granderson and Nick Swisher. And, clearly, Upton is on the outs in Arizona.

Within the industry, there pretty much is zero doubt Upton will be traded, and the feeling recently was that the deal would come before the July 31 deadline.

But in a phone conversation, Arizona general manager Kevin Towers said, "There has been a lot of interest, but it probably is less likely that we would do anything at the deadline. It is something we will look at again in the offseason."

There should be more interested teams then. The Braves, for example, very much want Upton, but Arizona has made it clear it wants to add left-side-of-the-infield players. For the Braves to obtain Upton would mean moving Martin Prado and helping one area of the team while harming another, which they won't do. But they would in the offseason.

It is possible the Mets may even play for Upton in the offseason. They need a righty impact bat to join David Wright and balance the lefty-leaning lineup. Upton actually was the batboy for the AAU Virginia Blasters when his older brother, B.J., and Wright formed the double-play combo.

The Yankees definitely would be in during the offseason. But a deal before the deadline seems unlikely, according to Towers.

"I talk to [Yankees GM Brian Cashman] on a weekly basis. They've kicked the tires [on Upton]. But we have had no significant talks," Towers said, before Yankees right fielder Nick Swisher strained a hip flexor Friday night in Oakland. "[Cashman] is pretty happy with the club he has now. I don't sense he is going to make any big moves [before the deadline]."

Cashman's style, in fact, has become to improve with trades in July (Lance Berkman, Kerry Wood, Jerry Hairston Jr.) and make big deals in the offseason (Granderson, Swisher, Michael Pineda).

In theory, the Yankees could deploy Upton in left now, since Brett Gardner almost certainly is out for the year. But the chemistry and production has been excellent without

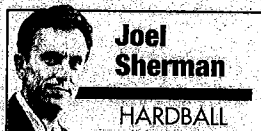
Gardner, largely because the left-field platoon of Raul Ibanez and Andrew Jones has worked superbly.

The Yankees do continue to worry about overexposing that older duo. But that could be addressed by either playing Dewayne Wise a bit more or acquiring a spare outfielder type. If Upton were to be obtained now, the Yankees would greatly diminish the at-bats and playing time of Ibanez, Jones and Eric Chavez, because left field would be locked down with Upton while Alex Rodriguez and Derek Jeter still would be

DHing semi-regularly. And the Yankees don't want to diminish the playing time for that effective veteran trio.

But if obtained in the offseason, Upton would just stay in his natural right field for 2013 with Gardner in left and Granderson in center. Swisher almost certainly is leaving via free agency, largely because the Yankees plan to drop under the \$189 million luxury-tax threshold.

Upton helps in that area because what is counted is the average annual value of a contract. So though Upton will be paid \$9.75 million next year, \$14.25 million in 2014 and \$14.5 million in 2015, he only will cost the annual value of his



Joel Sherman

HARDBALL

long-term contract (\$8.54 million) for luxury-tax purposes.

So the interest is understandable. But why is a player who was viewed as a Diamondbacks cornerstone — Upton finished fourth for the MVP last year and doesn't turn 25 until August — even available?

"What does Towers know that we don't?" one AL personnel man reasoned.

Towers insists he is just honoring his rep as a wheeler-dealer willing to discuss anyone, in attempts to improve an overall roster. Yet there is some worry about the health of Upton's shoulders, especially because he hit 31 homers last year and has seven now.

Also, though his contract is not onerous for a big-market team such as the Yankees, the big-dollar years are coming for an Arizona franchise looking to trim payroll. In addition, there was a whispering cam-

paign, that reportedly originated from within the D'backs organization, questioning if Upton is a winning player and if he plays hard all the time.

Upton also has a four-team no-trade provision that reportedly includes the Yankees; but a person with ties to the outfielder said he does not see the clause being a huge hurdle because Upton is "pretty ready to go."

Upton has been a key player on two playoff teams, has been a two-time All-Star and has avoided outfield trouble. Yet he is annoyed that he is booed at home.

"Maybe he is only 85 percent of the player they thought they were getting (with the 2005 overall No. 1 pick)," the source said, "but he is treated like he [stinks]."

The Reds and Tigers pretty much traded the homegrown O'Neill and Granderson, respectively, for the same reasons: Organizations got emotional believing the players were falling to fulfill superstar expectations.

They wanted great and couldn't appreciate very good. Swisher had a personality

clash with then-White Sox manager Ozzie Guillen.

Upton has career statistics somewhat similar to those produced by O'Neill, Granderson and Swisher before their Yankees arrivals but is several years younger than those players were at the time of their trades. He almost certain is to exceed 3,000 career plate appearances before this, his age-24 season, is complete. Historically, almost all players who have done that have had long careers that, at minimum, were above average (Jones and Rodriguez are in that group, and so are players such as Adrian Beltre, Roberto Alomar, Robin Yount and Ruben Sierra).

In fact, through their age-24 seasons, Robinson Cano and Matt Kemp had stats similar to where Upton is now and, like the Diamondback outfielder, also were beset by underachiever questions. They, of course, have blossomed into superstars.

There is obvious risk in Upton. He may be trending the wrong way. His power is down dramatically, and his OPS is 82 points lower than his career average. But O'Neill, Swisher and Granderson had an OPS between 48 and 62 points lower than their career norms in the season before being dealt to the Yankees. The dip is why they were available.

My suspicion is to get Upton would take a value package similar to the Austin Jackson/Ian Kennedy/Phil Coke group necessary to land Granderson from Detroit when, coincidentally, Arizona was the third team involved in the deal.

For the Yankees, I think it would take, at minimum, one of their best prospects, plus someone who can play shortstop now and a pitcher who could help immediately. So something like Mason Williams, Eduardo Nunez and David Phelps. Remember, Towers is pals with Cashman and knows the system well, having worked as a Yankees special assistant in 2010.

"It is hard to make these matches with clubs," Towers said. "But it would be ridiculous not to listen."

joel.sherman@nypost.com



Justin Upton

Getty Images

Yankees 'in on everybody,' ask about Justin Upton, Victorino, Span

By Jon Heyman | Baseball Insider

July 21, 2012 6:31 pm ET

In their search for an outfielder with Brett Gardner likely out for the year, the Yankees "are in on everybody," says a rival executive. That means they've checked in on Shane Victorino, Justin Upton and Denard Span, and presumably others.

But so far they have nothing going with any of those guys for a variety of reasons. Here's a rundown.

1. Victorino. Although the Phillies-Victorino marriage is unlikely to go into next season, the Phillies are shopping no one and instead concentrating on trying to keep star pitcher Cole Hamels with a long-term deal. One competing exec said he sees the Phillies even keeping Victorino through the season, then taking a draft choice when they lose him in the winter. (To get the draft choice, the Phillies would have to make a qualifying offer of about \$12 million, but the exec thinks they'd make the offer if only because he sees Victorino getting a three-year deal elsewhere.) The Yankees do like Victorino, so if Philly starts to sell after settling the Hamels situation, they'd be happy to take the call.

2. Upton. He isn't going to the Yankees anytime soon for a many reasons, though not necessarily because they are one of four teams on his no-trade list. Other teams seem to like him more is one reason. Another is the growing sense that an Upton trade, a major undertaking, may wait for the winter.

3. Span. The Yankees like him, too. But one source said "the Twins are asking for a ton." That's probably not a shock considering the interest all-around in center fielders. The Twins seem more open to dealing him than Josh Willingham, for instance, but that doesn't mean they're completely open to it.

Andruw Jones and Raul Ibanez have played well for the Yankees but there is concern with their age as their playing time piles up. With Nick Swisher a free agent after the year, it wouldn't hurt to add an outfielder, anyway.

Of a more minor nature, the Nationals have called to see if the Yankees have interest in Rick Ankiel, who was recently designated for assignment. The Yankees are considering that.

MIKE LUPICA



Shooting from the LIP

Yanks rollin' in the deep

Maybe the New York Yankees will be one of those rare teams, at least lately, that start hitting home runs and don't stop and lead the world and end up hitting enough of them to win the World Series. Maybe they are one of those teams, you can't pitch to them, the batting order is too long, all the way to Russell Martin, who is hitting .180 and still hit No. 10 as the Yankees tried to come back on the A's Friday night.

It is why you wonder what happens to this team if Alex Rodriguez stops being such a soft cleanup hitter, a soft hitter sitting in the middle of that lineup who can't even produce the number of RBI that Ike Davis has for the Mets in a year when Davis spent so much time under .200 he must have felt as if he were underwater.

Put it another way: The Mets probably wish their main concern could be whether or not they rely too much on the long ball.

The Yankees have hit, oh baby have they hit, and not just in their fancy Little League park on 161st St., where that wall in right-center looks like you could clear it with that 64-degree lob wedge Phil Mickelson carries. They have hit them from the right side and left side, and even Raul Ibanez and Andruw Jones have combined for 24 home runs and 67 RBI. Maybe the most amazing thing of all is that even as great as Robinson Cano has been, you don't have the sense that anybody in the Yankee batting order is actually over-producing.

It is why they are running away with the division, even with Mo Rivera gone and Andy Pettitte out until who-knows-when and CC just off the disabled list.

And yet.

And yet the first three games of the A's series looked a little — or maybe a lot — like games you

play in October. It doesn't mean three games are more relevant than all the games the Yankees have played, especially lately, another one of those rips when you wondered how they ever lose. It doesn't mean everybody can pitch the way the A's can pitch, as somehow Billy Beane seems to have loaded up again.

The Yankees have been tough, and the word you hear about them is the one Nick Swisher uses a lot:

"Resiliency."

They led the world in home runs in 2009 and won it all and maybe they can do it again. But there have also been scary Yankee lineups over the past 10 years that couldn't get out of the first round of the playoffs because they stopped beating people up and played close, low-scoring games and lost too many of them.

You only have to look as far as the last playoff game they lost, Game 5, at home, Detroit Tigers, 3-2. The Tigers hit just enough home runs that night, two in the first inning off Ivan Nova, and Doug Fister and the Tigers bullpen made them stand up, and the Yankees didn't go play the Rangers again in the American League Championship Series, they went home.

This team scores better. This team is deeper. Brian Cashman's role players have been terrific: Ibanez, Jones, Chavez, Nix, even Dewayne Wise. It is why they have been able to have Rodriguez hiding in plain sight in the fourth spot. And if you don't think he's hiding, go look at all the players who have more RBI than he does.

So now we approach the trade deadline, told things will be quiet, which makes you think they might not be. Everybody wants pitching, everybody always wants pitching, everybody always thinks there might be one arm that could make all the difference in October.

But even the way the Yankees have scored

and even the way they have hit home runs so far, you wonder if they really are thinking about adding another outfielder, if they do want some version — maybe even a better one — than Brett Gardner, gone for the year, but a guy who could get on base and scratch out the kind of run that doesn't require "high, far, gone."

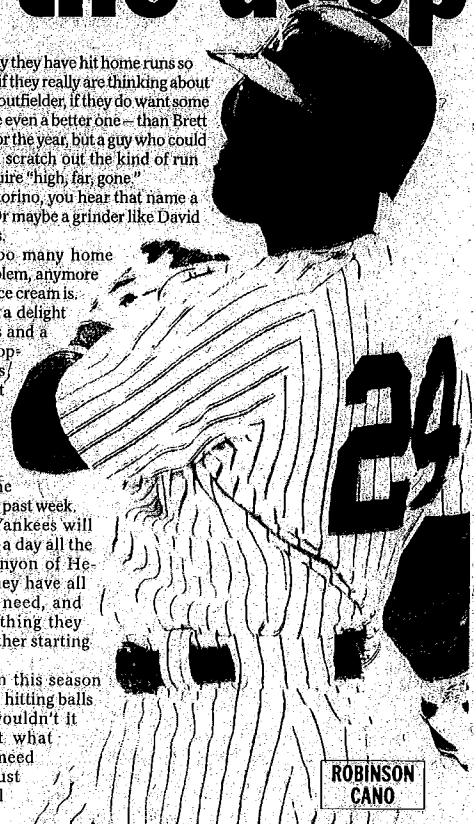
A Shane Victorino, you hear that name a lot these days. Or maybe a grinder like David DeJesus of Cubs.

Of course too many home runs isn't a problem, anymore than too much ice cream is.

Home runs are a delight for Yankee fans and a nightmare for opposing teams, and if you don't think so, ask the Toronto Blue Jays how they enjoyed their trip to the big, bad city this past week.

Maybe the Yankees will hit two homers a day all the way to the Canyon of Heroes. Maybe they have all the stick they need, and should do anything they can to add another starting pitcher.

Or maybe, in this season when they keep hitting balls out of sight, wouldn't it be ironic that what they really do need is a guy who just sprays the ball around?



ROBINSON CANO

The insanity of gun laws, can't wait for Eli & watch out for the Tigers ...

● It is nice to know that in a country where you are not allowed to buy all the prescription meds that you want, anytime you want, that there is no safeguard against somebody like James Holmes buying up enough ammo to invade British Columbia.

The President of the United States is always filled with remorse after another gun tragedy like the one in Aurora, Colo., and you keep hoping that will help him show some backbone the next time he is asked to stand up to the National Rifle Association, and their lobbying goons.

Even in an election year. Then he would be doing something more than talk a good game about guns and violence.

You can talk about 20 different things that have happened to the Red Sox this year, but if Josh Beckett and Jon Lester don't pitch

like scrubs, the Red Sox are fighting it out with the Yankees for the division.

● I don't much lose my mind anymore about pitchers and catchers, just because spring training is way too long.

So I certainly don't circle the day when pro football training camps start, even as big as pro football has gotten around here, as big as baseball now.

But I'm not going to lie. I can't wait until I see Eli under center again.

Santonia Holmes knows as much about the media as he does about molecular biophysics.

Just when I thought my cable television menu was totally full for the summer, how I've got to start catching up on "Splits."

● Well, if Anthony Weiner is thinking about running for mayor, you have to say that the old

texter hasn't lost any spunk in his time away from the spotlight.

And say this about him, when you look at the rest of the field: You'd sure know the guy was in town.

You watch Tiger Woods struggling to dominate par-5s, and you see the way he is still clearly afraid of his driver the way people I know are afraid of snakes, and then you remember the days when people said that a course like Augusta National was par-68 for him.

● Look out for the Detroit Tigers the rest of the way, because Jim Leyland — great manager — seems to finally be getting his pitching in order.

And because his team is as tough to pitch to as the Yankees. Or the Rangers.

Or anybody. People have to give it up now: off Lin.

By the way?

It is supposed to be some sort of basketball footnote now that when Raymond Felton had the ball in the same system — Mike D'Antoni's — that Jeremy Lin did, he scored 17 a game and had nine assists and didn't turn the ball over as much and had people talking about him as a borderline All-Star before he had to leave town for Carmelo.

● I actually start to get dizzy thinking about how much money David Wright has made for himself this season.

We always talk about how ball players deliver when the money is on the table.

Well, how's No. 5 of the Mets doing with that so far?

I just think Rex Ryan lost the weight because he sees more movie roles in his future.

You really think the Jets can

ground it and pound it all the way to the Super Bowl?

Let me get something straight: We're supposed to give Darrelle Revis the game ball if he honors this contract and shows up for training camp on time?

Mets fans keep hoping that this stretch for Johan Santana, who is now on the DL, is just a normal part of his comeback, and that it is not somehow linked to the night he threw what felt like 500 pitches getting that no-hitter.

Finally: Happy birthday, tomorrow, to my sister Susan, a shining light of my whole life.

And to my friend, J.D. Imus, out at the Imus Cattle Ranch, once again doing God's work for kids with cancer.

■ ■ ■ The Mike Lupica Show can be heard Monday through Friday at noon on ESPN 98.7.

Yankee Stadium, Like Its Predecessor, Is a Home to Soccer

NYTIMES 7/22/12

By JACK BELL

The new Yankee Stadium will host its first soccer game Sunday night — an exhibition match between European champion Chelsea and the French power Paris Saint-Germain — but soccer has had a long history at the first House That Ruth Built.

Next month, the Spanish league champion Real Madrid and A.C. Milan of Italy will play at Yankee Stadium. Both games are part of the World Football Challenge.

"It's a wonderful opportunity to play in Yankee Stadium," Ron Gourlay, Chelsea's chief executive, said last week during a conference call promoting the game. "It's such an iconic sports organization and it's great to be playing football at Yankee Stadium. Playing in Yankee Stadium is such an honor for the guys. They follow the Yankees, and this is a real pinnacle."

In addition to being the onetime home of the N.F.L. Giants, college football, a site of major boxing matches and papal visits, the original Yankee Stadium was long a favored site for soccer.

Eight years after the Stadium opened, Glasgow Celtic of Scotland completed a four-game trip to New York when it played the first major soccer game at the ballpark in the Bronx against a collection of American Soccer League all-stars on June 28, 1931. (Earlier, Celtic played a game at Ebbets Field and two games at the Polo Grounds, one against Horace Stoneham's A.S.L. team, also called the New York Giants.)

Over the years, the Stadium has hosted teams like the Maccabees of Palestine (a team of Jewish all-stars), clubs from England like Tottenham Hotspur and Manchester United, Italian powers like A.C. Milan, Inter Milan and Napoli, as well as teams from Greece, Switzerland and Germany — all in a bid to appeal to the vast immigrant populations in the New York metropolitan area. Some things never change.

In addition, the stadium showcased national team matches, perhaps most notably a rematch of the United States' upset of England in the 1950 World Cup in Brazil. In the "rematch," a game that also commemorated the coronation of Queen Elizabeth, England (playing its first night game) exacted revenge with a 6-3 win on June 8, 1953, in front of only 7,721 fans.

In the 1960s, the impending demolition of Ebbets Field, once home to the Brooklyn Dodgers, and the Polo Grounds, the past home of the Giants, put the soccer spotlight on Yankee Stadium. It was home to the New York Generals of the National Professional Soccer League and the New York Skyliners of the United Soccer Association. (The U.S.A. was a strange customer indeed — its teams were transported intact from Europe and South America for the summer months and assigned to cities in the United States and Canada.)

For two children of the city, one from the Bronx (Shep Messing), one from Brooklyn (Stephen Flamhaft), soccer at Yankee Stadium opened a win-

dow to an unknown and exotic world of the global sport.

Flamhaft, 73, a lawyer and former assistant district attorney in Brooklyn, was enlisted to run the lines as a ball boy by his father, Jack, the president of the United States Soccer Federation, when Manchester United came to town in 1952.

"My father told me to get my friends from Brighton Beach to be ball boys for \$15 a game; it made me a hero to my friends," Flamhaft said. "But for all the games played there, we knew Yankee Stadium didn't belong to soccer. We knew soccer was a temporary tenant."

On Sept. 1, 1968, Pelé, one of sport's first global superstars, made his third appearance of the year at Yankee Stadium when his Santos club, clad in white, took on soccer's other big star, the Black Pearl of Mozambique, Eusebio, and Benfica of Portugal in the second game of the doubleheader. (The forgettable opener was between the New York Generals and the Detroit Cougars of the North American Soccer League.) The scintillating game between the two global powers ended in a 3-3 tie before a crowd of 43,002, some of whom sat in bleachers set up along one sideline in the baseball outfield, exiting after the game through the Yankees' bullpen in right field.

Playing for the Boston Minutemen of the N.A.S.L. in 1976, Messing faced the Cosmos and their newest player, Pelé, at Yankee Stadium.

"As a kid, I would sneak into Yankee Stadium for baseball games, and it was the place I saw my first pro soccer game," said Messing, now a color analyst on Red Bulls television games. "For me to walk into Yankee Stadium to play Pelé and the Cosmos was just too much. I had to really take a deep breath and calm myself down. I remember making a save on him on a penalty kick. I got a finger on the ball, but he said it hit the crossbar. During the game, I came out for a cross, fell on the pitcher's mound and hurt my back. Two weeks later, I got traded to the Cosmos. For the rest of the season, it was just the coolest thing in the world. To run out of the dugout, park in the player's parking lot. I was more excited just going to the game than playing in them."

Though the layout of the soccer field varied over the years, in Messing's day, one goal was placed on the first-base line, with one sideline running down the third-base line. Removing the pitcher's mound was always an issue. For Sunday's game, sod has been laid over the infield, and the near sideline skirts but does not include the mound.

The Cosmos played home games at the Stadium in 1971 and 1976 before leaving the city for good and moving to Giants Stadium in East Rutherford, N.J.

After the last soccer game at Yankee Stadium, when the Cosmos beat the Miami Toros, 8-2, on Aug. 10, 1976, Messing said that he and his teammates Werner Roth and Bobby Smith each scooped up some infield dirt and put it in plastic bags.

"Now it ticks me off that I don't know where the dirt is," Messing said.

**One of
baseball's
historic sites
has welcomed
the world.**

July 20, 2012, 8:37 p.m. ET

An Endless Soccer Experiment

Yankee Stadium is converted to a soccer pitch Thursday. Chelsea FC faces Paris-Saint Germain on Sunday in the first match there.

When Chelsea squares off against Paris Saint-Germain at Yankee Stadium on Sunday, the patch around first base, normally Mark Teixeira's domain, will be a goalkeeper's six-yard box. The area around second base might belong to Frank Lampard or Zlatan Ibrahimovic. And the third-base corner, for once, will be completely irrelevant, away from a soccer field that runs from the first-base dugout to the left-field bleachers.

It's certainly not what Yankee Stadium was designed for, but by cramming in soccer for the first time since it opened in 2009, the ballpark will enter a long history of New York venues' welcoming the beautiful game. In fact, at least 13 major professional venues in the New York area have hosted soccer, including various iterations of Yankee Stadium and the Polo Grounds. That means that soccer has had more homes here than baseball, football, basketball and, it seems, boxing—even if the arenas were often an awkward fit.

Ecuador took on Greece at Citi Field last year.

"I think the energy and the passion of the fans transcends whatever architectural objections there are," said former Cosmos goalkeeper and current Red Bulls announcer Shep Messing.

Obviously, places like Red Bull Arena in Harrison, N.J., and MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford are natural hosts for soccer. One is the first purpose-built MLS venue in the area and the other was designed, at least in part, with major international games in mind. This summer's wild Brazil-Argentina game stands out as the highlight.

But soccer has been in plenty of less natural venues too, from Madison Square Garden to Citi Field to the city's oldest, long-departed ballparks. Soccer was even played at Ebbets Field after the Brooklyn Dodgers left for the West Coast.

"It was just normal for these venues to take on every sport imaginable, because they were just trying to fill the seats and make money," said Jeffrey Kroessler, author of "The Greater New York Sports Chronology." "There was no nobler goal to it all."

The Ballparks

The earliest high-profile match at a major baseball venue on record seems to be a 1905 contest at the Polo Grounds between a New York all-star team and a visiting side from England known as the Pilgrims.

Before that game, the New York World had announced that all 11 of the New York players were absolutely "confident of besting the Britishers at their own game of 'socker.'"

In front of 3,000 fans, the Pilgrims won, 7-1.

But the score wasn't what made the headlines the next day. The newspapermen were more impressed by how much safer the English version of football was compared to its American cousin, a brutal college sport that many critics wanted abolished.

"'Socker' is Fast, Not Murderous," screamed a World headline the next day. "Athletes Wore Light Costumes, Kicked Ball Only, Refraining from Mayhem." The New York Herald pointed out that "not a man of the twenty-two was carried off the field; not an ambulance call sounded."

Something beyond the lack of blood must have appealed to ballpark owners, though, because they just kept bringing it back, weaving it into the fabric of the city's most storied venues. Today, that history has been largely forgotten.

Ebbets Field, which opened in 1913, hosted a New York Export

Madison Square Garden hosted an indoor soccer match between all-star teams in 1981.

League championship game as early 1914. And the Polo Grounds and Yankee Stadium were both announced as the regular homes of local clubs in 1923. Indeed, with deep roots in New York and New Jersey's immigrant communities, soccer was an ideal candidate to fill empty seats during the baseball offseason.

"I believe soccer is the coming fall-to-spring outdoor sport of the nation," Giants President Charles Stoneham told reporters at the time. He added: "I am confident the game's presentation under suitable conditions in the big-league ballparks will vastly increase its public following, which has grown to goodly proportions in recent years."

The attendance figures for soccer games in ballparks in the 1920s were enough to convince some columnists that Stoneham was right. In 1926, for instance, 46,000 people packed the Polo Grounds to watch a New York all-star side take on the Hakoah Sport Club, an all-Jewish team out of Austria.

"Though it be lese majesty [treason] to voice the thought, the day may come when the diamonds will be transformed into soccer fields," the New York Sun's George Trevor wrote. "We hope we won't live to see this eventuality for, to our way of thinking, baseball is the infinitely more attractive game."

Trevor, then, would have been disappointed to see that major foreign squads continued to visit the city's three ballparks on an almost yearly basis for the next four decades.

And of those dozens of teams, the cream of the crop was the Real Madrid side that beat Austria's Graz Sports Club at Ebbets Field in 1959.

Chelsea may arrive at Yankee Stadium as defending European champions, but that Real Madrid team—which featured legends like Alfredo di Stefano and Ferenc Puskas—had just won the European Cup, too. Four times in a row.

The International Soccer League

New York, however, was not only a destination for European soccer royalty. An annual tournament called the International Soccer League invited a raft of not-always-popular sides to the city between 1960 and 1965.

Take the league's 1965 edition, which saw this motley assortment descend on Downing Stadium on Randall's Island and the newly opened Shea Stadium: a local club called the New Yorkers, Portuguesa of Brazil, Varese of Italy, Kilmarnock of Scotland, Ferencvaros of Hungary, West Bromwich Albion of England, Polonia Bytom of Poland, and Dukla Prague of then-Czechoslovakia.

And no one seemed to care. Much like the MetroStars would do in Giants Stadium four decades later, those teams played to vast expanses of empty seats, failing to arouse the excitement of 1930s and 1940s.

When Portuguesa beat a West Ham side that boasted Bobby Moore, who later captained England to its only World Cup title, only 5,130 of Shea's 55,000 seats were occupied.

The Cosmos

A decade later, the Cosmos were getting to know that echoing empty-stadium feeling all too well.

Though they started at Yankee Stadium in 1971, they spent the next four seasons on the fringe of the scene. There were two seasons at Hofstra and then two more at Downing Stadium, a place The Wall Street Journal described in

1975 as a "dilapidated arena, dating from the Works Progress Administration of Franklin Roosevelt, with a bumpy, patchy field and lighting so uneven as to leave the four corners of the playing area in darkness."

It took Pelé to change everything.

"Before he came, we had played there with crowds of 3,000, 4,000 or 6,000 people," said Messing. "The field was like dirt and rocks and they spray-painted it green."

Pelé made his debut in the summer of 1975 in front of 300 reporters and 21,278 fans at Downing Stadium—not quite a sellout. Surprisingly, the attendance figures did not improve much the next season when they moved into Yankee Stadium, where the Cosmos averaged 18,227.

Their regular season finale there in August 1976 was the last time soccer was played at the Stadium, in any of its incarnations.

The following season, after a brief playoff stint at Shea, they finally hit the big time with a brand new venue to match. As the Cosmos grew into the toast of the town, their games at Giants Stadium became one of the hottest tickets around.

That year, the Meadowlands drew more than 75,000 to Cosmos games on three occasions. And Pelé called the last one, his farewell game, the "greatest moment of my life." This from a man who won three World Cups and scored 1,281 career goals.

The Indoor Experiment

From the very beginning of Madison Square Garden's 1941 experiment with indoor soccer, everyone could tell it was a huge mistake. The surface the organizers had picked for their tripleheader of fast-paced, 7-on-7 games was terrazzo.

And on that marble-like flooring, the players' soft-soled shoes had all the grip of a Teflon pan. "Minor dizzy spells caused by skulls banging the floor were too numerous to count," according to one newspaper. Not to mention the free-for-all fight that broke out in the middle of a game and sent two players to the hospital.

Yet, somehow, the evening was not seen as a complete fiasco: more than 8,000 fans had turned out for the simple reason that they enjoyed sports and, well, this was a sporting event.

"There were minor league hockey teams that consistently had successful runs in the Garden, too, and even minor league boxing cards that would sell out," Kroessler said. "It was a sporting town. And you had a large enough fan base in New York that could sustain it."

Other New York-area arenas would give it a shot in the decades that followed, too. From 1978 to 1984, the Nassau Coliseum was home to the New York Arrows of the Major Indoor Soccer League and, briefly, to a team called the New York Express.

More recently, the New Jersey Ironmen played at Newark's Prudential Center before the Xtreme Soccer League suspended operations in 2009.

yankees.com

07/22/12 1:53 AM ET

Girardi reflects on relationship with Santo

OAKLAND -- Like so many from and in the Chicago area, Yankees manager Joe Girardi holds Ron Santo in the highest regard. Santo, who passed away in 2010, will be enshrined into the Hall of Fame in a ceremony Sunday.

"As a kid, I idolized, went to the ballpark, ate Ron Santo pizza," Girardi said Saturday at the Oakland Coliseum. "Had a chance to really get to know [him] since I was a player and he was a broadcaster. We'd go out in the winter, him and his wife Vicky, go out for dinner. He would throw BP to me at Northwestern. Got in trouble one day for bringing his dog. ... I really miss him, but I'm happy for the family on this day."

Girardi, was born in Peoria, Ill., and played for the Cubs from 1989-92 and 2000-02.

NY Post 7/22/12



'ALL STARS FOREVER'
Yankee great in the mail.

Joe D. stamp a big hit

Mail is about to get a jolt from the past.

The US Post Office got a positive Bronx cheer yesterday as it issued the Joe DiMaggio "All Stars Forever" stamp.

Local pols, celebrities and relatives of the Yankee legend held a ceremony at the borough's General Post Office on the Grand Concourse.

Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. even declared July 21 to be Joe DiMaggio Day.

Louis Pagan, a retail sales and service associate at the Hellgate Station, on East 110th Street in East Harlem, created the postmark while participating in a contest for postal workers.

"Polin' Joe" first donned the Yankee pinstripes in 1936. He would go on to lead the team to 10 American League pennants and nine World Series titles. He was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1955 and died in 1999 at age 84.

Other stars on the "Forever" stamps include Hall of Famers Ted Williams, Larry Doby and Willie Stargell.

Fans can order the stamp by mail or phone or drop by the nearest Post Office branch.

Gary Buiso

Daily News 7/22/12

DiMaggio stamp unveiled by USPS

Pre-order sales surpass other baseball stamp greats



Joe DiMaggio lives on in a forever stamp, courtesy of the USPS.

BY DAVID CRUZ
Another home run for a Yankees great. Joe DiMaggio, already immortalized in history books, will live on forever thanks to the US Postal Service.

A forever stamp bearing his name will be unveiled on Saturday, July 21 at the Bronx General Post Office at 558 Grand Concourse.

And DiMaggio's legend has hit a grand slam with pre-order sales surpassing 420,000, the most out of the other baseball stamps in circulation.

The Borough President's office will join officials with the United States Postal Service in presenting the stamp to the public at a ceremony described as a "double-header".

On top of the new stamp, Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. will also proclaim July 21 as Joe DiMaggio Day in the borough.

"On behalf of all Bronxites, we will cement the 'Yankee Clipper's' place in Bronx history," said Diaz Jr., himself a lifelong Yankees fan.

The postal service's customer advisory coun-

cil chose DiMaggio to be placed on the stamp after reviewing hundreds of proposals.

The stamp features DiMaggio at home plate ready to hit a ball out of the park.

Stamp sheets will be available the same day of the unveiling in the Bronx with limited quantities going on sale nationwide on July 23.

DiMaggio fans are welcome to stop by the Bronx General Post Office to have their items signed by special guests including members of the DiMaggio family, though officials warn that space will be limited.

"It's a great honor for New York City and a homage to the Bronx," said Raschelle Parker, USPS New York District Marketing Manager.

Nicknamed "Joltin' Joe" and "The Yankee Clipper", DiMaggio dedicated his entire 13-year career as center fielder for the Bronx Bombers.

Known for his 56-game hitting streak in 1941, DiMaggio led the Yanks to ten American League pennants and nine World Series champion-

ships. Retiring in 1951, the three-time MVP winner and 13-time All-Star was inducted to the Baseball Hall of Fame four years

later. He died in 1999, but his legend lives forever.

Reach reporter David Cruz at 718-742-3383 or dcruz@cnglocal.com.



The real Joe at home plate in Shibe Park, Philadelphia, on June 27, 1941.

Photo by the Associated Press

NYTIMES
7/22/12

An Artifact, or a Payday

Donors Seeking to Monetize Memorabilia Put Museums on Guard

By TIM SULLIVAN

After nearly half a century as a museum's priceless artifact, the Yankees uniform that Don Larsen wore while pitching the only World Series perfect game will soon have a price.

Though administrators at the museum, the San Diego Hall of Champions, believed the historic pinstripes were a gift rather than a loan, its former president, Al Kidd, said they lacked both the paperwork to prove it and the inclination to contest ownership. When Larsen decided to reclaim the uniform he had entrusted to the hall around the time of his 1964 induction, management put up no more of a fight than the Brooklyn Dodgers did on Oct. 8, 1956.

"I felt I wanted to do something with it," said Larsen, who will turn 83 in August and plans to auction the uniform this fall. "I'm not getting any younger."

Given the potential seven-figure proceeds from the sale, other athletes whose salaries never approached that may wonder whether they have a windfall waiting behind panes of museum glass. The Larsen case could also have broad implications for museums in possession of items of significant value but no conclusive proof of ownership. The curator of one prominent sports museum said he was reluctant to address the subject for fear that donors might seek to monetize their memorabilia.

"Unfortunately, it happens from time to time — too often, really," said the museum consultant John E. Simmons, whose book "Things Great and Small" endeavors to standardize collections management policy. "It happens in the world of art, too. It almost always happens with an item of a high dollar value."

He added: "I don't think the museum has an obligation to the family of the owner generations later. If there's no good record of the gift, the museum should consider giving it back to the family."

But the Hockey Hall of Fame in Toronto has dug in its skates, refusing to return the USA sweaters of the only father-and-son Olympians to win gold medals in the same Winter Olympic sport, Bill Christian in 1964 and Dave Christian in 1980.

As recently as 20 years ago, Simmons said, memorabilia was commonly accepted on a handshake. Marie Malaro, formerly the legal adviser to the Smithsonian, said the absence of professional record-keeping remained a thorny issue for museums.

The San Diego Hall of Champions houses the Breitbard Hall of Fame, each established in the 1950s by Bob Breitbard, a boyhood friend of Ted Williams's. The museum was typical of its time in accepting donations informally. But Breitbard's lack of formal accession procedures left his institution vulnerable to a 2006 legal challenge by Claudia Williams, Ted's daughter.



BERETO MATTHEWS/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Don Larsen is auctioning his 1956 perfect game uniform to pay for his grandsons' education.

She filed suit in San Diego County Superior Court seeking the return of several mementos of her father's baseball career, notably his 1946 and 1949 Most Valuable Player awards and his 1991 Presidential Medal of Freedom. Through mediation, Claudia Williams reacquired the M.V.P. awards but agreed to leave the Medal of Freedom on display at the museum. The 1949 M.V.P. plaque sold for \$299,000 during an April auction at Fenway Park.

Larsen's request for the return of his uniform did not reach the courts in part because he has been a loyal supporter of the museum. As compensation for the uniform, he presented the Hall of Champions with three items: a signed jersey from the Yankees' 2006 Old-Timers' Day, a limited-edition crystal trophy commemorating the perfect game, and a photograph signed by him and Yogi Berra, his catcher for the perfect game.

The loss of precious pieces has prompted the museum to take steps to protect its collections for posterity. In a statement, its new president, Denise Cooper, said, "The San Diego Hall of Champions recognizes the value in donor contributions and strives to maintain excellent practices with respect to memorabilia acquisition, retention and loan agreements to best enhance our museum."

That means, primarily, that documents meant to clarify intent and consent are binding forever.

"What most museums do is that there's always a clear line of provenance — where it came from, how it was obtained, and then legal paperwork to indicate ownership," said Joe Horrigan, a vice president for communications at the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio.

"In case of donation, you always want to have a strong paper trail."



JARED WICKERHAM/GETTY IMAGES

Ted Williams's daughter Claudia, left, with Linda Ruth Tosetti, a granddaughter of Babe Ruth, has sued over memorabilia.

The Hockey Hall of Fame's standard agreement, adopted years after it acquired the Christians' sweaters, requires donors to renounce all rights, title and interest in an object "absolutely, unconditionally and forever."

"We don't take loaned artifacts," said Kelly Masse, the hockey Hall's spokeswoman. "It's not something we do. Our artifacts are all donated."

At the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, N.Y., the acquisitions policy is slightly less stringent. It accepts certain items on loan if a particular exhibit is short on alternative artifacts.

"The lifeblood of any museum is its collections," said Jeff Idelson, the president of the Hall. "Our policy is that artifacts that we acquire are donated. We have some items that are on loan, and the only time we have an interest in accepting a loan item is when we can't tell a story because we don't have anything to tell the story."

A prominent example is the glove Willie Mays used to make his famous back-to-the-plate catch in the 1954 World Series. It has been on loan to Cooperstown since 1992.

But the cap Bobby Thomson wore when his 1951 playoff home run clinched the National League pennant for the New York Giants, which had been in the museum's care for more than 27 years, was returned to its owner. In May, it was auctioned for more than \$173,000.

Though much of its permanent collection is not on exhibit, the baseball Hall pledges to care for those items it accepts in perpetuity. Other museums sometimes sell objects from their collections and reinvest the proceeds in new acquisitions, as industry ethicists recommend, or to pay operating expenses.

A spokesman for the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in Springfield, Mass., citing that museum's emphasis on relationships as opposed to objects, said it had returned at least two items at the request of donors or their families, one of them a uniform of the referee Earl Strom, who died in 1994.

"In the marketplace, it's considered memorabilia," said Brad Horn, the senior director of communications and education with the baseball Hall. "In our world, it's considered artifacts."

He added: "The ability for the Hall to educate its donors on the

life cycle of the artifact is critically important. Unfortunately, you're dealing with items where individuals pass on, mental capacity changes, and relatives want to step in."

For athletes who retired decades ago like Larsen, significant souvenirs can be worth many times their career earnings. According to an incomplete database at Baseball-Reference.com, Larsen's major league salary may have peaked at \$20,000 in 1965. But the value of his uniform has risen sharply. Brandon Steiner, whose sports marketing company will conduct the 56-day auction beginning Oct. 8, the 56th anniversary of Larsen's perfect game, said it could sell for "close to a million."

Steiner added: "It's special. It's a once-in-a-lifetime situation.

It's not like it's going to happen again, a perfect game in the World Series."

Dan Imler, the managing director of SCP Auctions, estimated the uniform's value at \$200,000 to \$250,000.

"Lately there's been such euphoria with really high-end, iconic pieces," he said, adding, "I've been proven to be conservative in recent times."

The best comparable piece, Imler said, was Berra's perfect-game uniform, which sold at auction for \$565,000.

"Obviously, Yogi's a Hall of Famer and fits into some other collecting categories," Imler said. "Larsen is known for this feat, one of the great single-game performances in baseball history."

Andrew Levy, who is representing Larsen, said he would be willing to pay \$250,000 for the uniform based on the offers he had received. Scott Stimell, who owns a Long Island memorabilia business called Cardboard Memories, said he expected the uniform to sell for "north of \$500,000."

He added: "You're going to have somebody who has to have it; it's the only one. In the baseball memorabilia world, in the Yankee world, it means a lot. I really believe you're going to see a bidding war, and this is going to wind up at someone's home for \$1.5 million."

Larsen has declined to predict what the uniform will fetch but says he plans to use the proceeds to pay for his grandsons' college education.

"If anything's left over," he said, "maybe I'll take a trip."



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Ty Cobb, right, had 4,191 hits and a major-league-record .367 career batting average to go along with 892 stolen bases.

Hitting and Running

Entering the weekend, Mike Trout of the Angels was leading the American League with a .352 average and 30 stolen bases. The last player to lead his league in both statistics in the same season is Ichiro Suzuki, who did it in 2001 with Seattle. Only six players have achieved the feat since 1901.

YEAR	PLAYER	AVG.	SB
1904	Honus Wagner, Pittsburgh	.349	53
1907	Honus Wagner, Pittsburgh	.350	61
1907	Ty Cobb, Detroit	.350	53
1908	Honus Wagner, Pittsburgh	.354	53
1909	Ty Cobb, Detroit	.377	76
1911	Ty Cobb, Detroit	.420	83
1915	Ty Cobb, Detroit	.369	96
1917	Ty Cobb, Detroit	.383	55
1922	George Sisler, St. Louis Browns	.420	51
1945	Snuffy Stirnweiss, Yankees	.309	33
1949	Jackie Robinson, Brooklyn	.342	37
2001	Ichiro Suzuki, Seattle	.350	56

Sources: Baseball-Reference.com; MLB.com

For some collectors, it's not about the money



Phil Reisman

When I was a kid, there was a quiet old man who lived on my street in an equally old house that hadn't been painted in years.

The man had a white brush mustache and always wore a straw boater, which was considered a cool lid around the time of the McKinley assassination. He even had an old-fashioned-sounding name: Mr. Bisset, or something like that, but I think I got the name right.

In the rear of his property was a garage that may have originally been used as a shed for a horse and carriage. Anyway, it had a second-story loft filled with cobwebs, dust and junk.

After Mr. Bisset died, a young family moved into the house. This was great news because it meant there would be more kids to play with on a block that was already teeming with children.

One summer day, the oldest boy in the family decided to explore the spooky garage loft. Using a flashlight, he rummaged through the long-forgotten flotsam of Mr. Bisset's life and found a box that contained dozens and dozens of vintage

baseball cards, the kind that came with tobacco and were printed in the dead ball era.

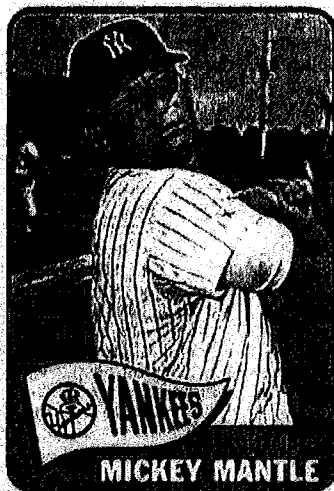
He showed them to me. I can't recall the names of the players, but I do remember thinking he had struck gold, and I also remember being envious.

My friend and his family eventually moved away, but the old house and garage are still there, at the top of Preston Hill in the Town of Mamaronck. On the rare occasions when I drive by, I invariably think about the amazing discovery of those baseball cards that had miraculously survived over a period spanning decades.

Rarity, of course, is the key to value. And when it comes to baseball cards, the rarity index is pegged to a couple of factors, the first and most obvious being the number of cards printed. For instance, the Holy Grail of baseball cards is the American Tobacco Co.'s Honus Wagner, of which only 200 were printed. Less than one-third of those are known to be in existence today. Five years ago, hockey great Wayne Gretzky sold a 1909 Wagner card to an anonymous buyer for the record-breaking price of \$2.35 million.

Mothers have traditionally played a role in controlling the market.

Indeed, it is impossible to calculate the number of grown men who have



This 1965 Mickey Mantle card survived Mother's scourge.

piteously cried like babies over the loss of supposed fortunes because their overworked mothers, in a fit of house-cleaning frenzy, tossed out the baseball card collections of their youth.

Somehow, my 1965 Topps cards survived not only the Mom Factor but also cardboard chewing pets and my own tendency toward carelessness.

I remember trying to get as many of them as I could. A pack cost 5 cents and came with a stick of brittle bubble gum that tasted like soap. Those I didn't buy, I got through either trades or a kind of street gambling known as "flipping."

None of the cards that came out that year is con-

sidered especially valuable. The 1965 Mickey Mantle card may be worth as much as \$600 in mint condition.

I've got two Mantles that are far from mint condition, but cherished nonetheless.

There's a 29-year-old baseball card collector in Baltimore by the name of Kevin Brotzman, who has made it his mission to collect, of all things, the entire 598 Topps cards from 1965.

He calls it "The Great 1965 Topps Project" and regularly reports his progress on a blog. This blew my mind because his obsession with that particular set of cards mirrored the single-minded quest of my long, lost child-

hood.

I had to call Brotzman to plumb the depths of his eccentricity.

"As a kid, I didn't really have any vintage cards, so I thought I might try to collect a set," he explained.

But why the 1965 set? "I liked the design of the cards with the colorful frame and team names and logos," he said. "And as a fan of vintage sets, I read up on that one a bit and found out it wasn't one of the more challenging sets as far as their worth."

In other words, he isn't in it for the money. Brotzman told me that the most he's spent was about \$15 for a Hank Aaron card with a crease down the middle.

He's still four cards short. One card he still needs is Mantle's. He's not getting either of mine, but then he didn't ask either.

Brotzman figures that his entire collection of 1965 Topps cards is worth "a few hundred dollars."

That's far from the value of the mother lode in the town of Defiance, Ohio, where two weeks ago, a 51-year-old man found a cache of 700 mint-condition, 1910-era cards.

The cards belonged to the man's late grandfather, who had stored them in his attic in a cardboard box that was shoved under a wooden dollhouse and forgotten. In total, the cards are said to be worth

\$3 million, but a select group of 37 are expected to bring \$500,000 at auction.

In the world of baseball card collectors, this was akin to discovering the Mona Lisa.

Naturally, the news from Defiance reminded me of the kid in my neighborhood who long ago found those old cards in Bisset's garage loft.

I hope they were worth real money.

But I'll never know.

And another thing:

I want to note the passing of one of the truly great sportswriters and gentlemen, Robert W. Creamer, who died July 18 at the age of 90 in Saratoga Springs, N.Y.

Bob was born in Bronxville and grew up in Tuckahoe, where he raised a family and lived most of his life. He was the author of the Babe Ruth biography "Babe: The Legend Comes to Life," among other fine books.

In the early years of writing this column, Bob generously lent me his time and expertise whenever I turned to the subject of baseball. I never did get the chance to repay him for lunch. Nor did I ever really thank him for giving me something that was priceless—his encouragement.

Thank you, Bob. Rest in peace.

Reach Phil Reisman at preisman@lohud.com or 914-694-5008.

[DIAMOND REPORT]

Cain, Hamels go deep

Matt Cain and Cole Hamels matched each other with better performances at the plate than on the mound.

The two All-Star pitchers hit homers in the same inning, and Gregor Blanco drove in the tie-breaking run with a drag bunt single in the 10th to lead the San Francisco Giants to a 6-5 victory over the Philadelphia Phillies yesterday.

This was hardly the pitching duel expected from two of the elite starters in the majors. Both allowed three homers and five runs. But they did their job with the bat.

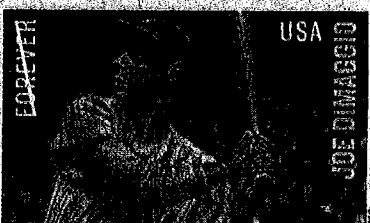
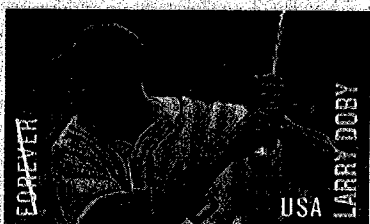
"I figured he'd try to put one out," Cain said. "The most frustrating thing you can do is give up a homer to a pitcher."

It was the first time pitchers homered off each other in the same game since Atlanta's Kevin Millwood and Colorado's Denny Stark did it May 18, 2002. The last time it happened in the same inning was May 14, 1990, when Montreal's Kevin Gross and Los Angeles' Fernando Valenzuela went deep in the third inning.

"It was nice," Hamels said. "I enjoyed it more after giving up my first ever homer to a pitcher."

All-Star Game MVP Melky Cabrera hit a tying homer off Hamels in the eighth and Buster Posey hit a two-run shot for the NL West-leading Giants, who are 7-1 since the All-Star break.

Ryan Howard hit a three-run homer and Chase Utley went



COOPERSTOWN CLASSICS

New stamps honoring Hall of Famers Ted Williams, Larry Doby, Willie Stargell and Joe DiMaggio were rolled out Friday in conjunction with Hall of Fame weekend.

deep for the Phillies, who've lost seven in a row at home.

Hamels allowed 10 hits in 7 2/3 innings on a career-high 128 pitches. Cain gave up five hits in eight innings.

Sergio Romo (3-1) retired the two batters he faced in the ninth for the win.

Braves 4, Nationals 0: Ben

Sheets pitched six shutout innings, Brian McCann and Chipper Jones homered and visiting Atlanta won the opener of a day-night doubleheader.

Orioles 3, Indians 1: Jim Thome's two-run homer in the seventh led visiting Baltimore.

Tigers 7, White Sox 1: Rick Porcello (7-5) pitched brilliantly

into the ninth inning, and host Detroit took over first place by a half game. Brennan Boesch hit a three-run homer and Austin Jackson drove in the other four runs.

Rangers 9, Angels 2: Mike Napoli homered twice and Yu Darvish (11-6) struck out 11 in seven innings for visiting Texas.

—AP

WHITE SOX ADD MYERS TO BULLPEN

The Chicago White Sox acquired Houston reliever Brett Myers yesterday for two minor league pitchers and a player to be named.

Myers had 19 saves and a 3.52 ERA for the Astros this season and will try to bolster an inexperienced Chicago bullpen. Addison Reed, Chicago's 23-year-old closer, has 15 saves but a 4.24 ERA. Rookie Nate Jones has a 3.57 ERA in 35 appearances.

White Sox general manager Kenny Williams said Myers would not be Chicago's closer.

"In no way, for manager Robin Ventura or myself or in any way, is there a lack of confidence in Addison Reed," Williams said.

The White Sox entered yesterday's game in Detroit with a half-game lead on the Tigers atop the American League Central.

"It's time to make a push," Williams said. "Here, an intense competitor makes our bullpen better."

The Astros are in first place in the NL Central but had little need to keep Myers, a 31-year-old right-hander. Houston receives right-hander Matt Heidenreich and pitcher Blair Walters. Chicago also receives cash considerations from Houston in the deal.

■ Harper injured

Bryce Harper led the Nationals' 4-0 first game loss against the Braves because of a bruised left ankle.

X-rays were negative, according to manager Davey Johnson, who was uncertain if the 19-year-old would play in the finale of yesterday's day-night doubleheader.

Harper fouled out on his ankle in the bottom of the first inning. He operated limping and doubled over in pain for several moments, he completed the at-bat by striking out.

The first time All-Star turned to center field in the second inning, but Roger Bernadina replaced him on defense for the top of the third (with the Nationals trailing).

Harper is batting .269 with eight home runs and 26 RBI in 71 games this season.



Meet 65 Long Island high school baseball stars who made it to the pros at newsday.com/mlbli

NY Post 7/22/12

Reggie can't get Bert's goat

COOPERSTOWN, N.Y. — The first thing Bert Blyleven did when he pulled into town was to hurry over to the National Baseball Hall of Fame and check on his plaque.

Blyleven was inducted last summer and had seen his plaque put in place with his own eyes. But, this time, he felt he had reason to wonder if everything was how he left it.

"I just wanted to make sure it was still there," he said yesterday. "I wanted to make sure Reggie didn't take it down or anything."

Although Reggie Jackson may have been clear about whom he believes should be allowed into the Hall, Blyleven said he didn't place too much stock in what the former Yankees slugger said about him being among those who didn't belong.

"God gives us many holes in our body," a smiling Blyleven said, "and he just spoke out of the wrong one."

— Don Burke

BLYLEVEN ZINGS REGGIE OVER HOF SHOT

COOPERSTOWN, N.Y. — Bert Blyleven was relaxed, a year after his induction into the Hall of Fame. He did not have to worry about making a speech, and he sure wasn't worried about remarks made about him by fellow Hall of Famer Reggie Jackson.

Blyleven had been at the top

of Jackson's list of inductees who don't belong in the Hall—a list the former Yankee slugger gave in an interview with Sports Illustrated. When he was asked at the Hall of Fame golf outing yesterday what it was like to return and see his plaque, Blyleven said, "I just wanted to make sure

it's still there, make sure Reggie didn't take it down or anything."

So what did he really think about Jackson's comment? "I didn't," the former pitcher said. "I just said God gives us many holes in our body and he just spoke out of the wrong one."

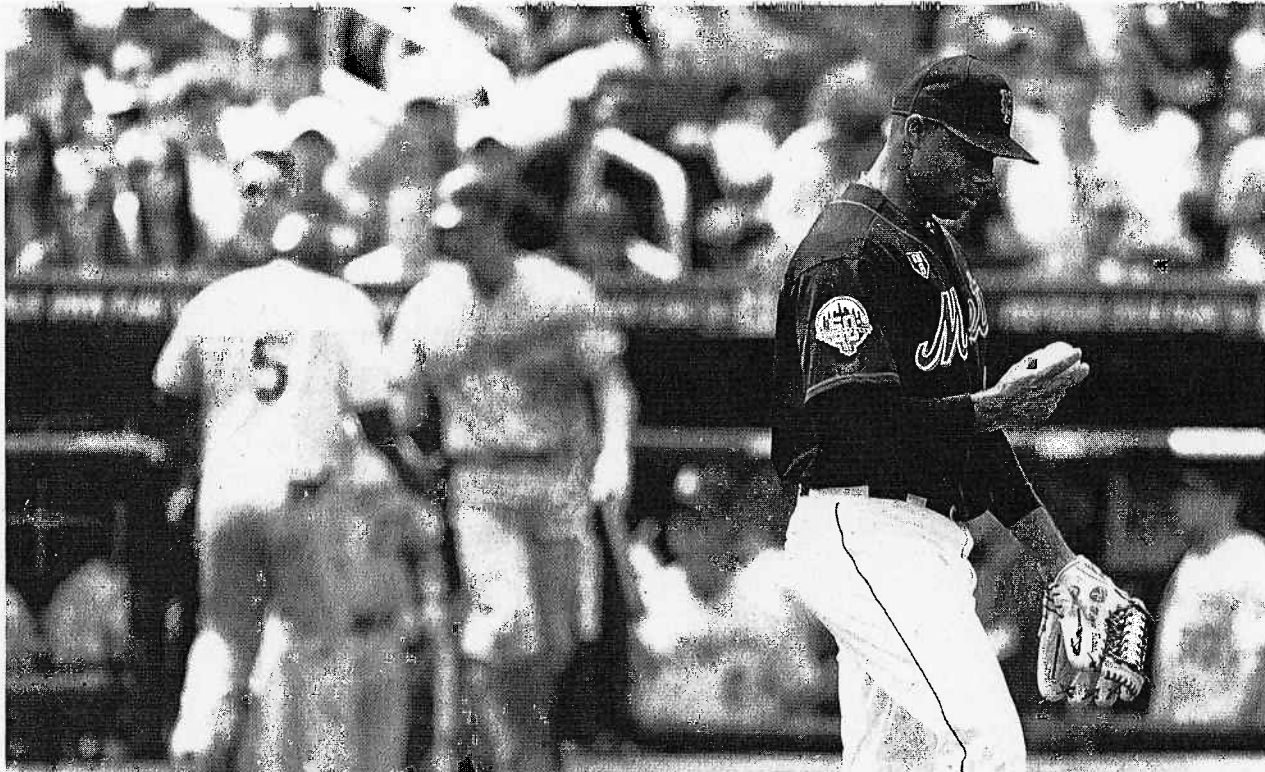
— MARK HERRMANN



Bert Blyleven

AP FILE PHOTO
NEWSPAPER, SUNDAY, JULY 22, 2012

NYTIMES
7/21/12



KATHY KMONICEK/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Miguel Batista, starting for the first time since May 19, allowed Juan Uribe (5) to score in the third inning of the Mets' loss Saturday. He left after the inning.

In Fall to .500, Mets Are Running Out of Pitchers to Fall Back On

By ZACH SCHONBRUN

The flicker of a hopeful first half is fading quickly. For the Mets, the All-Star break feels like eons ago.

DODGERS 8 Before that
METS 5 July 10 mid-way point to the season, the team's distress was characterized by R. A. Dickey's not being named the All-Star Game starter. Now the Mets are scrambling to fill two holes in their rotation -- the most prominent being that left by their ace, Johan Santana, who was placed on the disabled list Saturday -- and redirect momentum that has steered them drastically off course.

The Mets lost to the Los Angeles Dodgers on Saturday afternoon, 8-5, their seventh defeat in eight games since the break. More symbolically, it brought the team back to .500 for the first time since May 4.

"It's no fun going through what we're going through," Manager Terry Collins said. "We're doing the best we can right now, and it's just not good enough."

The skid took another turn for the worse before Saturday's game, when the Mets put Santana on the 15-day disabled list with a sore right ankle. The news came 11 days after the Mets lost the right-hander Dillon Gee, who had surgery to repair a damaged artery in his shoulder, and it leaves them in dire need of viable replacements.

Gee's immediate substitute, the pliable 41-year-old Miguel Ba-

tista, on Saturday started for the first time since May 19 and did not fare well.

The Dodgers scored a run in the first on two walks and a hit, and the fans at Citi Field, perhaps sensing a long afternoon, began booing. Batista issued a third walk before he struck out Luis Cruz to end the inning.

But he quickly got into more trouble in the third. Juan Uribe hit a two-run double, and Cruz

drove him in with a single to give the Dodgers a 4-0 lead. Batista needed 81 pitches to get through three innings, allowing five hits and four runs.

"I haven't started a game in 61 days," Batista said. "It's going to take a little time to get acclimated to throwing more than one inning again."

With the Mets in need of arms, it seemed like something of a cru-

el twist that they would be facing Chris Capuano, a left-hander whom they let leave after last season. Capuano struck out nine in seven innings and improved to 10-5 with a 2.81 earned run average this year with the Dodgers.

The Mets managed to chip away, scoring two runs in the third as Scott Hairston and Jason Bay delivered back-to-back run-scoring singles. Ronny Cedeno hit his second homer of the sea-

son in the sixth to cut the lead to 6-3, and Daniel Murphy and Kirk Nieuwenhuis drove in runs in the eighth.

The Mets brought in Dickey to pitch the ninth, his first relief appearance of the season. But with two outs and a runner on, Uribe hit a two-run homer to left, giving the Dodgers an 8-5 cushion.

The Mets attempted one last rally, putting two on with two outs in the ninth before Kenley Jansen struck out Hairston.

"Every year, there are streaks," Dickey said. "We've had our losing streaks; we just haven't had the winning streaks. Hopefully we can hang on."

General Manager Sandy Alderson said Santana's injury would not change the team's approach toward the July 31 nonwaiver trade deadline. He said he still did not consider the Mets sellers at this point.

"It's what we see on the field that causes us not to be buyers," Alderson said. "The presumption is that we're buyers, and it has been. But realistically, the next 7, 8, 10 games become important for us."

Alderson left open the possibility of using the top prospect Matt Harvey to fill one of the vacant rotation spots. There are not many options left before the promise of the season vanishes.

"At this time of year, they all become the most important game each and every day," Collins said. "We've got to keep fighting, and the clubhouse is filled with guys who understand that."

Struggling Santana Is Put on the Disabled List

By ZACH SCHONBRUN

The Mets placed Johan Santana on the 15-day disabled list Saturday because of soreness in his right ankle. The team said that the ankle, which Santana hurt July 6 against the Chicago Cubs, was the primary source of his recent struggles.

"We sat for quite a while this morning in discussion with Johan and the training staff, and pretty much determined that the ankle issue was bigger than anybody had realized," Manager Terry Collins said. "Ever since he had the ankle injury, his command has not been there, due to the fact that he can't land properly, that he's using all arm to pitch, causing some fatigue in his shoulder."

Santana, who has a 6-7 record and 3.98 earned run average, fell awkwardly while covering first base after the Cubs' Reed Johnson stepped on his ankle in the fifth inning of the game in Chicago. Although Santana stayed in the game, he gave up five runs in the inning. In his next two starts, after the All-Star break, Santana allowed 12 runs in eight innings.

Santana said the ankle, and not any arm problems, was the cause of his lack of command. He was quick to dismiss notions that his struggles were related to his throwing 134 pitches in his no-hitter on June 1. Since the no-hitter, he is 3-5 with a 6.54 E.R.A.

"It happened to be my ankle," Santana said. "Everything else is fine. I'm just going to recover and go back to competing."

General Manager Sandy Alderson said that Santana's ankle had sustained no structural damage and that the plan was for him to use the 15 days only to rest it.

Santana's absence is the second hole to form in the Mets' rotation in the last two weeks. On July 10, Dillon Gee was placed on the disabled list with a blood clot in his right shoulder. He is expected to miss the rest of the season.

Miguel Batista started Saturday in Gee's place but struggled. The Mets have been cautious about calling up the right-handed prospect Matt Harvey, who was scheduled to start Saturday night for Class AAA Buffalo. But Alderson acknowledged that his promotion was now a possibility.



FILE PHOTO BY PAUL J. BERESWILL

Tim McCarver in TV booth during his 16 seasons with Mets.

McCarver's past an Amazin' time

BY MARK HERRMANN
mark.herrmann@newsday.com

COOPERSTOWN, N.Y. — Considering that Tim McCarver played major league baseball for 21 years and won two World Series, it really says something when he reflects this way, as he did on his 16 seasons in the Mets TV booth: "That was the most exciting time in my professional life."

McCarver the broadcaster and the Mets as a franchise both hit their strides in the 1980s, when the latter won the 1986 World Series and the former gained stature that led to him being honored yesterday at the Hall of Fame with the Ford C. Frick Award for broadcasting.

The former catcher has called network games for three decades and has worked on telecasts for other teams, including the Yankees, but his signature years were in Queens.

"I arrived in 1983 and they were a bad team," he said, adding that it was a pivotal year, with the promotion of Darryl Strawberry from the minors and the acquisition of Keith Hernandez from the Cardinals (general manager Frank Cashen conferred with McCarver before the latter deal and the announcer said Hernandez was the best fielding first baseman he had ever seen).

"Doc Gooden was in the process of striking out 300 in 190



NEWSDAY FILE PHOTO

Tim McCarver also played in major leagues for 21 years.

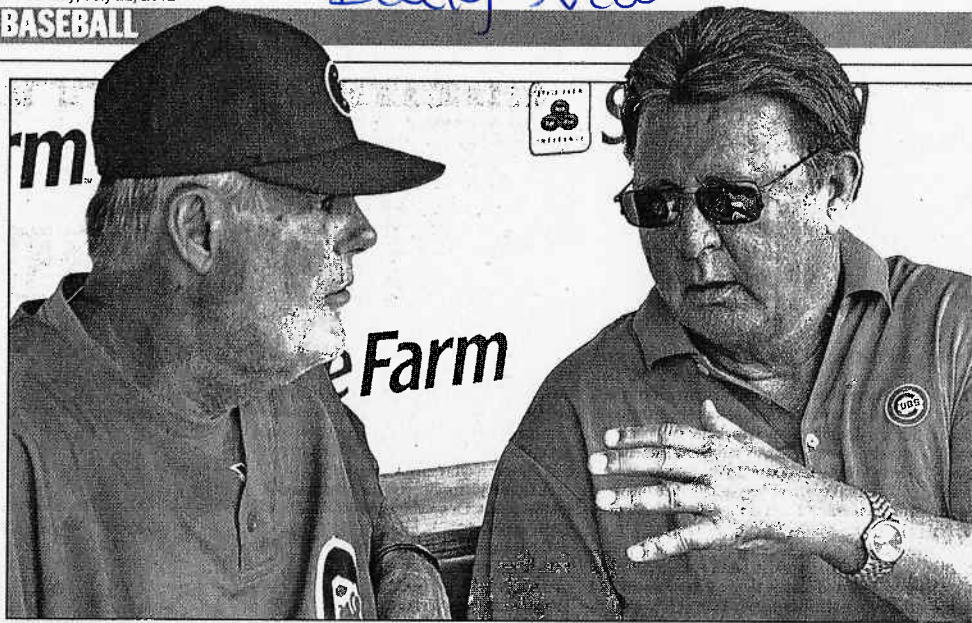
innings at Lynchburg," McCarver said, alluding to the results of those developments. "Believe me, that team owned that town for about 10 years. And I mean owned that town. It was a very, very exciting time for New York baseball fans who were waiting for the consistency of play from the Mets."

Plus, it was a joy to go to work every day with Ralph Kiner. It was fun even — or especially — when Kiner mispronounced his name, like the time he called his partner "Tim MacArthur." The latter joked that he must have been thinking about Gen. Douglas MacArthur. At the end of that game, a big Mets loss, McCarver recalled that the general was famous for having said "chance favors a prepared man." Retelling the story yesterday, McCarver added, "And Ralph said, 'Douglas MacArthur also said 'I shall return,' and we'll be right back after this.'"

newsday.com NEWSDAY, SUNDAY, JULY 22, 2012

Daily News

BASEBALL



Lou Piniella (l.) will be in Cooperstown to celebrate late Ron Santo (r.) and Barry Larkin (below), both of whom will enter Hall today. AP

GOOD TO SEE LOU!

BY BILL MADDEN
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

Piniella makes first trip to Hall to honor friends Larkin & Santo

COOPERSTOWN — In the absence of Reggie Jackson, the 1977-78 Yankees will still be well represented at the Hall of Fame induction ceremonies Sunday in the person of Lou Piniella, when Barry Larkin and the late Ron Santo are ushered into baseball's most exclusive club.

For unlike Jackson — who has resumed his special adviser duties with the Yankees in Oakland after touching off a firestorm with his criticism in Sports Illustrated about Alex Rodriguez's admitted steroid use and his stated opinions that Kirby Puckett, Gary Carter, Bert Blyleven, Don Sutton, Phil Niekro and Jim Rice were unworthy of the Hall of Fame — Piniella had a special relationship with Larkin and Santo.

During Piniella's stint as manager of the Cincinnati Reds from 1990-92, Larkin was his best player, batting .302 with 39 home runs and 69 stolen bases over those years. Larkin also hit .353 in the Reds' four-game sweep of the favored A's in 1990 World Series. And when Sweet Lou took over the Chicago Cubs, Santo, who was one of the team's broadcasters and a Cub icon, became one of his closest confidants.

"This is my first time to Cooperstown," Piniella said, "but this year I had to be here. Barry was one of the best players I ever managed, and Ronnie was just a dear, dear friend. I only wish he were alive to get this honor in person. He wanted it so very badly."

Larkin, a 12-time All-Star shortstop who hit .295 lifetime with 198 homers and 379 stolen bases, won three Gold Gloves and the National League MVP award in 1995 when he hit .319 with 15 homers and 51 stolen bases. He was the only candidate elected by the Baseball Writers Association this year. Santo, a nine-time All-Star third baseman from 1960-74 who hit .277 lifetime with 342 homers, was elected by the Golden Era Veterans Committee. He died

at age 70 in December of 2010 from complications from diabetes.

"Ron made my four years in Chicago very enjoyable," Piniella said.

"He'd come into my office or sit with me on the planes and just want to talk baseball. And he loved to laugh. He wore that Cub emblem on his sleeve and in his heart. We'd go out to dinner on the road and he'd tell me his concerns about the team and what he thought we could do to rectify some problems. He had strong opinions, but never forced them on me. You had to listen to a guy like Ronnie."

When he came to the Reds in 1990 after two terms as manager of the Yankees, Piniella immediately sought out Larkin and Eric Davis, the unofficial team leaders, in an effort to quickly familiarize himself with the team.

"I knew I had good talent over there," Piniella said, "but I needed someone to lead in that clubhouse and Barry took on that role. He was the one who called team meetings and he took on the responsibility of getting something done. I needed to

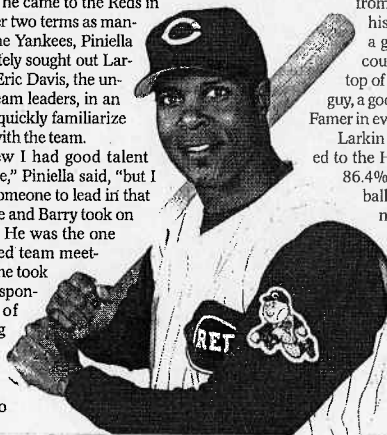
get done in the clubhouse."

In his managerial career, which in itself may one day be deemed Hall of Fame-worthy, Piniella managed a lot of great players — Don Mattingly and Niekro with the Yankees, Ken Griffey Jr., Randy Johnson and Rodriguez with the Seattle Mariners, and Larkin with the Reds. Like Griffey and A-Rod, he said, Larkin was the complete package of power, speed and defense.

"Barry played shortstop as well as anyone I ever saw," Piniella said. "And offensively, he was a guy I could hit anywhere in the lineup, from leadoff to fifth because of his speed and power. He was a great gap-to-gap hitter who could run — rare qualities. On top of that, Barry was a real classy guy, a good family man, a true Hall of Famer in every way."

Larkin is the 22nd shortstop elected to the Hall after he was named on 86.4% of the Baseball Writers' ballot, well surpassing the 75% necessary for induction. In

15 years on the writers' ballot, Santo never came close to induction, peaking at 43%. But Santo did receive 93.8% on the 16-member Veterans Committee ballot. His widow, Vicki, will deliver the acceptance speech for him.



☆☆☆

CLAIMS TO FAME

Hall of a show as MLB's best gather

By DON BURKE

COOPERSTOWN, N.Y. — The early morning haze finally lifted, revealing yesterday to be a beautiful day on the shores of Otsego Lake.

At the Leatherstockings Golf Course adjacent to the Otesaga Hotel, where the Hall of Famers, here for today's induction of Barry Larkin and the late Ron Santo, are headquartered, the annual golf tournament was in full swing. Up on the hotel's veranda, the sun dappling the tables and chairs, a late breakfast was being served and baseball royalty was all over the menu.

Whitey Ford and his family sat at one table, Brooks Robinson at another. Over there was Ferguson Jenkins. In came Robbie Alomar, inducted only last summer into a fraternity that will swell today to 299 members.

Tony La Russa, who was honored yesterday along with Whitey Herzog and Red Schoendienst as Cardinals managers who each led a St. Louis team to a World Series title, walked over and took a seat at a table with Schoendienst and Bob Gibson. At another table, Steve Carlton tapped away on his smartphone.

Inside, way in a back corner overlooking the water and the sixth hole of the golf course, Dave Winfield and Eddie Murray swapped stories.

Welcome to Hall of Fame weekend in Cooperstown, where time stands still and baseball is king, but it's OK to mix in a little golf.

"It's been 20 years since me and Tom [Seaver] have come in and it seems like yesterday," said Rollie Fingers, Class of 1992. "I came here in 1965. I was playing American Legion ball then and I came back when I was inducted and it hasn't changed a bit — same streets, same stoplights, same buildings.

"It's just a great little town and I love coming here."

Fingers is not alone. Forty-five of the 65 living Hall of Famers were expected back for the weekend. While many chose to play golf yesterday morning,

others just relaxed or signed autographs at some of the many stores along Main Street that had tables set up inside or out.

"Although we didn't play with some of these guys — they were in the American League — when you become a Hall of Famer you become teammates," said Billy Williams, a teammate of Santo's with the Cubs and a member of the Class of 1987. "It's a joy to come back and see the guys. It's just a great time."

"It's always a new day here, another day furthering the importance of the Hall of Fame which is connecting [baseball's] generations," said Lou Brock, Class of 1985. "Believe it or not, a lot of players, when they come here for the first time, actually get a feeling for what that's all about."

Al Kaline, Class of 1980, said he believes baseball is the most difficult game to play and called being considered one of the best to have played it "a huge honor."

"It's the ultimate club," Kaline said. "I really don't understand why more players don't come back ... You can come here and see old friends and people you may never see again in your lifetime and reconnect. It's just a great weekend."

It's this village in the northern Catskills that makes the Hall of Fame and induction weekend what it is, according to George Brett.

"I've never been to any of the other Hall of Fames' ceremonies, but this one is special," said Brett, Class of 1999. "And I think part of it is the location. What a wonderful city Cooperstown is. It's just so much fun to come back here and reunite yourself with some of the guys you see once a year. And it's really a tight-knit group of guys."

"I wonder every year whether they'll let me come back," said Carlton Fisk, Class of 2000. "You come back and see all the guys who were icons of the game. You just never consider yourself an icon."

"By the time the weekend is over, I feel a little more comfortable, I feel like I belong."

dburke@nypost.com

ALL OF FAME



BARRY HAPPY: Former Reds shortstop Barry Larkin talks with the media yesterday, ahead of his induction today into the National Baseball Hall of Fame along with late longtime Cubs third baseman Ron Santo. — Reuters

Larkin Red-y to be enshrined

By DON BURKE

COOPERSTOWN, N.Y. — Barry Larkin never would have gone into the Hall of Fame today as a Met, even if he had approved a trade to Flushing during the 2000 season.

After 15 mostly stellar seasons with the Reds, the shortstop — who will be inducted today along with the late Cubs star Ron Santo — had a chance to join the Mets that season. But Larkin vetoed the move when Mets general manager Steve Phillips said he wasn't interested in signing Larkin to a three-year extension.

So, today, Larkin, born and raised in Cincinnati, will be inducted into the Hall of Fame having spent his entire 19-year career with his hometown team.

"In retrospect, I'm certainly happy I didn't go to the Mets," Larkin said on the eve of his enshrinement. "It wouldn't be the same situation for me if I had played my last few years for another organization."

"Part of the story is me being a lifer, a Cincinnati Red. My last three years in Cincinnati weren't the best years. Maybe they would have been better if I had gone to the Mets. But being

from Cincinnati and playing my entire career there is very, very unique."

Larkin, 48, was elected in his third year on the ballot. The 1995 NL MVP had a lifetime .295 average, three Gold Gloves and was an 11-time All-Star.

Santo, who retired in 1974, was elected last December by the Hall's Golden Era Committee just 12 months after his death at the age of

70. A lifetime .277 hitter with 342 homers and 1,331 RBIs, Santo becomes the fourth member of the 1969 Cubs, who famously lost the NL East race to the Miracle Mets, to be enshrined in Cooperstown, joining Ernie Banks, Billy Williams and Ferguson Jenkins.

"It's 10 years too late," Jenkins said. "I just think that Ronnie deserved better."

BASEBALL

The litmus test

PED controversy will be answered in Cooperstown



Mark Herrmann

mark.herrmann@newsday.com

This is a charming, quiet weekend in a charming, bucolic town. As one Hall of Famer put it, the streets and stoplights are the same as they were when he played American Legion ball here in the mid-1960s.

Just don't let that fool you. The Baseball Hall of Fame is not a quaint little vestige, like pregame infield practice (when was the last time you saw a big-league club do that?) or ball-park organ music. Baseball's Hall is one of the weightiest and most relevant institutions in sports, as we will see next year, and probably years after that, when it has the final word on the steroid era.

Actually, the voting members of the Baseball Writers Association of America will decide on first-year eligible icons Barry Bonds, Roger Clemens and Sammy Sosa — standard bearers for the controversy over performance enhancing drugs — as well as other players who never have been named in court papers or official testing documents, but have been suspected nonetheless. Mike Piazza is on the ballot, too, along with holdover Jeff Bagwell.

But it is the Hall of Fame itself that has the stature. The Hall is baseball's version of what the Supreme Court is sup-



Visitors view plaques of inductees into Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum in Cooperstown.

posed to be: The last resort, the ultimate authority. Let's face it, Hall of Fame status will determine the legacies of Bonds and Clemens more than any courthouse judge's ruling will.

The public has made it that way. The Baseball Hall of Fame simply matters to people, for whatever reason. Newspapers, websites and radio stations see marked spikes — to use an old school baseball word — whenever they report on who is going in, who is out and who should or shouldn't get in.

No question, the American public would rather watch pro football than major league baseball. But it is just as clear that people don't argue over who merits a bust in Canton the way they haggle over who deserves a Cooperstown plaque.

"It's really exclusive," said Bob Elliott, the baseball writer who yesterday was given the

J.G. Taylor Spink Award. He grew up, lives and works in Toronto, home of the Hockey Hall of Fame, and he sees the difference. "With the Hockey Hall of Fame, it's more a case of 'That guy shouldn't be in, where here, it's more a case of 'Why isn't that guy in?'"

"I think this is a much more exclusive place for a player to make it," Elliott said.

Tim McCarver, who was presented the Ford C. Frick Award for broadcasting (and whose solid career as a player wasn't Hall of Fame caliber), said, "I equate the Hall of Fame with the All-Star Game. I think baseball's All-Star Game is the best of all the sports, and I've always thought that about the Hall of Fame, too."

Basketball Hall of Famer John Havlicek was a wide-eyed fan when he came here to see Phil Niekro, his old Ohio high school

buddy, get inducted in 1997.

Hall of Fame player George Brett said yesterday, "I've never been to any of the other Hall of Fames' ceremonies but this one is special. And I think part of it is the location." He acknowledged Cooperstown is out of the way, but added that in the not-too-distant future, today's current wealthy players will be arriving in private jets.

What voters will decide, and fans will debate, is how much many of those players' statistics were inflated by chemicals — and whether that matters. "It's going to be interesting to see who you guys vote for," Pete Rose told a member of the BBWAA Friday.

Rose, who is banned from baseball for betting on games, would dearly love to get in the Hall of Fame. So would everyone.

That is the place's greatest charm.

AP FILE PHOTO

newsday.com

Balancing Results And Potential

By TYLER KEPNER

Chris Sale is a tall and lanky left-hander, 6 feet 6 inches and 180 pounds, so naturally, his childhood idol was Randy Johnson, the 6-10 lefty who won 5 Cy Young Awards and earned 303 career victories.

"He was by far my favorite pitcher, just the way he went about his business, the pitcher he was and person he was," said Sale, an All-Star for the Chicago White Sox. "It was fun to watch."

When Johnson was 23 — Sale's age now — he was pitching in Class AA and throwing 140 innings. Johnson eventually became one of the most durable pitchers of his generation. But it was a gradual build.

Managing the workload of starting phenoms is a source of great debate now, and Sale is an interesting case. The White Sox are trying to hang on to first place in the American League Central with the veteran starters John Danks and Gavin Floyd on the disabled list. They need Sale and Jake Peavy to stabilize the rotation, but they also want to maximize Sale's long-term potential.

The White Sox are keenly aware of Sale's physical condition, even moving him to the bullpen briefly in early May after Sale experienced tightness in his elbow. When the condition quickly resolved itself, Sale returned to the rotation and resumed his strong season.

Manager Robin Ventura said he had no plans to shut Sale down if the team makes the playoffs. The pitching coach, Don Cooper, said the White Sox would find ways to limit Sale's workload so he can pitch a full season.

"Extra days whenever possible," Cooper said. "To a large degree, he's kind of pitching in many of these games like a college schedule, where they're pitching every Friday night. The innings are getting up there because this kid's good enough to stay out there for seven or eight innings. But we've taken care of him, and everybody we've got, as well as we can. It's about managing everything that they do."

Sale came into the season with 94 1/3 innings in his major league career. Washington's Stephen Strasburg, also 23, came into the season with 92 innings. But the Nationals are taking a different approach.

Unlike Sale, Strasburg is coming off reconstructive elbow surgery. Nationals General Manager Mike Rizzo plans to shut Strasburg down at a certain point, widely believed to be around 160 innings, even if it means that Strasburg will miss the postseason. As long as he is active, though, Strasburg will be used like any other starter, without extra rest or limits.

"I'm not going to treat him any differently, because that would be unfair to him," Manager Davey Johnson said. "It may look good on paper, but it would be very unfair to change what his work ethic wants to do. He needs to pitch every fifth day. Any disruption in that, as far as I'm concerned, could lead to possible injury."

"The only restriction is that I've been a little quicker to hook him than I really need, to save his innings. But the decision is made by people a lot smarter than me."

The advantage the Nationals have, compared with the White Sox, is the depth of their rotation. Even without Strasburg, Washington can rely on Gio Gonzalez, Edwin Jackson and Jordan Zimmermann, who provides a case study for handling Strasburg.

Zimmermann had Tommy John elbow surgery in August 2009, a year before Strasburg, and was limited to 161 1/3 innings last season. This year, he has been among the National League's best pitchers, ranking among the league leaders with a 2.35 earned run average.

"I definitely feel stronger another year after surgery," Zimmermann said after beating the Mets last week. "The whole year I've felt great; haven't had any

aches or pains."

Zimmermann has not worked more than seven innings in any start this season, but his consistency has been commendable. He is one of only three pitchers in the majors who have been in a rotation all year and logged at least six innings in every start. The others are Justin Verlander of the Detroit Tigers and Ryan Vogelsong of the San Francisco Giants.

Slumping in Seattle

The Seattle Mariners entered the weekend ranking 13th among 14 American League teams in runs a game, at 4.01. Their production at first base and right field — two vital offensive spots — has been especially absent.

Only two first basemen or right fielders had a combined on-base and slugging percentage of .650 or lower, with a minimum of 300 plate appearances, and both play for Seattle: first baseman Justin Smoak and right fielder Ichiro Suzuki. One productive major leaguer, who plays both positions, is a Mariners reject.

He is Bryan LaHair of the Chicago Cubs, who has cooled off lately but entered the weekend with a .276 average, 14 home runs and an .850 O.P.S. LaHair played seven seasons in the Mariners organization, getting 3,050 plate appearances in the minors but only 150 in the majors.

He hit .250 in that brief look, in 2008, and Seattle let him leave as a minor league free agent after 2009. LaHair was 27 and labeled a fringe prospect, and the Mariners, who were coming off a good season, signed the veteran Casey Kotchman to play first base.

"I just used it as fuel," LaHair said. "I wanted to prove to them that they made a bad decision, a wrong decision, and I wanted to prove to the Cubs that they made the right decision. It's all things mentally that push me to move forward."

A 39th-round draft pick in 2002, LaHair acknowledged that his ascension has surprised even himself. His O.P.S. improved each season at Class AAA from 2007 through 2011, and he finally won a starting role with the Cubs this spring.

"I keep working hard and good things happen," he said. "Right now, I'm just doing what I've always done, having quality at-bats, long at-bats. There's adjustments I need to make, and a lot of room for me to get better at the major league level. Hopefully like in the minors, I'll get better each year."

Suzuki is facing free agency after this season, his 12th with the Mariners and by far his worst. Jay Buhner, a former Mariners right fielder, gave a blunt assessment when asked on Seattle radio last week if the team should bring back Suzuki with a three-year contract in the range of \$35 million to \$40 million.

"I'd vomit," Buhner told ESPN 710. "I mean, really, no offense. No offense, we've got to get this organization turned around. You can't be spending all the money on one guy."

As the Mariners head for their seventh last-place finish in nine seasons, some hopeful signs, at least, can be found in their local minor league affiliates. The left-hander Danny Hultzen, the second overall pick in the 2011 draft, had 30 strikeouts in 23 innings in his first five starts for Class AAA Tacoma. Catcher Mike Zunino, the third overall pick in the draft this June, was 10 for 22 with three home runs in his first six games for Class A Everett.

At the Futures Game this month in Kansas City, Mo., Hultzen seemed eager to pitch at spacious Safeco Field.

"When I went out there to sign the contract, I got to watch a game and got to watch batting practice," he said. "It was pretty crazy because these guys would absolutely crush balls, and there would be an outfielder 10 feet in front of the track catching it. So that kind of put it in your head that, yeah, it could be a pitcher's ballpark."

NYTIMES
7/27/12

FOXSports.com

Despite start, Tigers half-game out



UPDATED JUL 21, 2012 3:09 AM ET

DETROIT

Barely more than one month ago, the **Detroit Tigers** were five games under .500 and six games back in the American League Central. With the division's largest payroll and World Series expectations, they were called the most disappointing team in baseball.

Then, it was fair.

Now, it is untrue.

If the Tigers beat the **Chicago White Sox** Saturday (MLB on FOX, 3:30 p.m. ET), they will find themselves in a position once thought to be their birthright.

First place.

"People start talking about a team because we're winning some games," Detroit manager Jim Leyland said Friday, after a 4-2 win behind ace **Justin Verlander**. "Before, they were all over us, (calling us) underachievers — and we were.

"Whatever you've got coming, you've got coming. Now, people are going to say we're playing pretty good. It's pretty exciting. You accept that. When you're not doing what you're supposed to be doing, you accept that."

Publicly, at least, Leyland was careful not to assign added importance to this series. His strategy suggested otherwise. Given the opportunity to reset his starting rotation coming out of the All-Star break, Leyland slotted Verlander third. That put the reigning MVP on track to start Friday's series opener, opposite **Jake Peavy**, before a packed house of 44,572 on a cloudless, 80-degree night.

No accident, on a weekend when talk of the Tigers' disappointing first half could vanish for good.

"You could say the slow start's over," Verlander observed. "Whether we have a strong finish or not, that's yet to be seen. But I like the way we're playing."

Leyland, to his credit, maintained a steady hand when the Tigers were in danger of falling behind the **Kansas City Royals** not that many weeks ago. He seems equally calm about his team's AL-best 14-5 record since June 28. This is the team he knew he had all along.

What's different?

"We're just scoring more runs," **Prince Fielder** said Friday.

As a matter of fact, he's absolutely right: The Tigers entered the weekend with 83 runs in July, tied with the Yankees for most in the AL. **Miguel Cabrera** and Fielder have been consistent run producers all year — they rank second and third among AL hitters, respectively, in RBI — but the bottom half of the order is finally showing up.

Delmon Young, who delivered Friday's game-winning double, is having his best month. So is shortstop Johnny Peralta.

Verlander has been Verlander. He splintered **Gordon Beckham's** bat Friday with a 100 mph fastball *on his 115th pitch*. On a checked swing. Ho-hum.

In some respects, the catalyst of the Tigers' resurgence is a 27-year-old journeyman who didn't make the team out of spring training: outfielder Quintin Berry.

Berry toiled in the minors for seven seasons, playing nearly 700 games for four organizations before debuting May 23 when center fielder **Austin Jackson** landed on the disabled list. Leyland installed him as the fulltime No. 2 hitter roughly one month ago. During Berry's 24 games there, the Tigers are 17-7. He has become, in short order, an indispensable contributor to one of the most formidable lineups in baseball.

Last month, Leyland lamented publicly that his star-studded team lacked panache. He used a few different terms to describe it: cockiness, swagger, a "mean streak."

Whatever he was talking about, Berry has it. Berry sparked Friday's decisive rally when he was hit by a pitch with two out in the third inning, then provided a crowd-pleasing coda with a sprinting, sprawling catch in left field for the final out.

Berry hollered at the crowd, punched the air and basked in the moment. Superstars don't necessarily react that way. And that's kind of the point. Maybe the Tigers' veterans — accomplished and wealthy — needed to see a player of Berry's ilk. As with the best things in Detroit, his combustion is evident.

"Definitely," Fielder praised. "When Jack got hurt, it was unfortunate, but I think it was actually a blessing. (Berry) wouldn't have gotten a shot to do this for us if Jack wouldn't have gone down. When Jack came back, it helped that we had an extra spark. He just works hard.

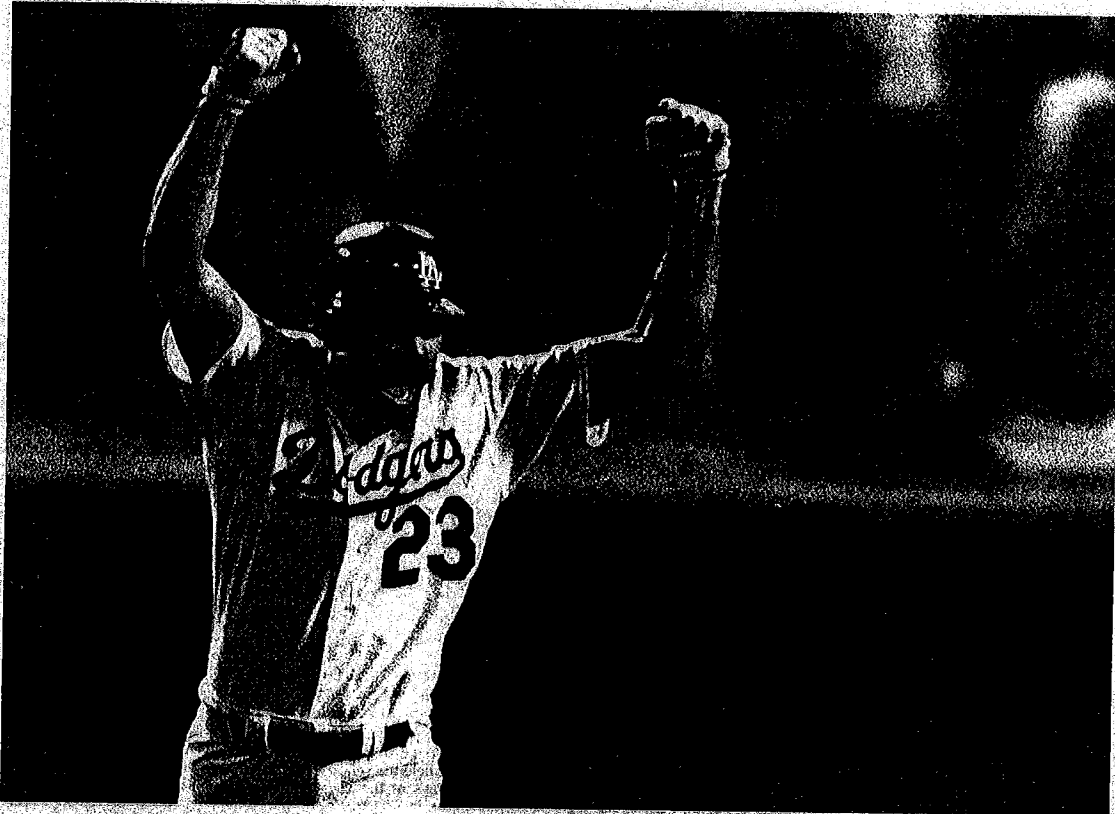
"He's playing superb defense. He needs to be out there for his defense. He works hard at it. Hard work is always rewarded. If someone's working hard, you can never say anything about him — ever."

The Tigers aren't perfect — even though they looked that way while **Doug Fister**, **Max Scherzer** and Verlander reeled off efficient starts in succession this week. **Rick Porcello's** inconsistency, paired with the rookie combination of Drew Smyly and Jacob Turner in the No. 5 spot, suggest that the Tigers could use a veteran starting pitcher. (That is why they had a scout watching James Shields' start for Tampa Bay Friday night.)

Right now, though, this is a very good team. Soon, it might be a first-place team. That would send a strong statement to the rest of the league — if only the Tigers were interested in that sort of thing.

"I don't believe in statements," Fielder said. "Too many more games left. A statement is when you win the World Series. That's a statement."

Box Seats



Retroactive rooting allows fans to change their minds about the exploits of Kirk Gibson, above, whose home run gave the Los Angeles Dodgers a victory over the Oakland Athletics in Game 1 of the 1988 World Series, and of Michael Jordan, who won six championships in his career.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOHN SWARTZ/ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHEERING SECTION

Self-Correcting Mechanism for Fans With Regret

By ROBERT WEINTRAUB

Although I am a lifelong Yankees fan, I became captivated by the Oakland Athletics and the Bash Brothers, Jose Canseco and Mark McGwire. I wanted the A's to crush the Los Angeles Dodgers when they met in the 1988 World Series. So when a hobbled Kirk Gibson hit his Game 1-winning home run, I hit the roof—in anger. The Dodgers went on to win in five games.

Needless to say, the revelations that some of the mighty A's had used performance-enhancing drugs embarrassed me. I was on the wrong side of history.

But now, whenever I see Gibson's shot replayed, I smile and give my nearly 3-year-old son, Marty, a fist bump, secure in the knowledge that I was really pulling for the Dodgers all along. That's thanks to the magic of a concept I call retroactive rooting, or retro-rooting for short.

Retro-rooting allows for hindsight in backing teams and athletes. It doesn't replace blindly supporting favorite teams, and opposing their archrivals. Blood feuds are off limits. Retro-rooting is a more quotidian device, one that allows any fan to be, years later, on the side of righteousness, if not victory.

For example, Michael Jordan and his Chicago Bulls won N.B.A. supremacy by defeating Magic Johnson and the Los Angeles Lakers in 1991. At the time, I was happy with the result. Magic and Showtime were long past their sell-by date, and it was clearly Jordan's time to ascend to the throne.

But had I known that His Airness

would win five other titles, often at the expense of my Knicks in excruciating fashion, and become humorless and spiteful on top of it, I would have donned a purple-and-gold jersey and pulled for Los Angeles as if I were Jack Nicholson. Because of retro-rooting, I now contend that I was rid-

ing with Magic the whole time. Sure, I lose the appeal of having backed the champions, but at least I can live with myself.

There is no doubt in my mind that the recent N.B.A. finals, in which LeBron James of Miami at last captured a title, will be the subject of much retro-rooting two decades hence. The petty, post-Decision loathing pointed James's way will be a distant memory, and many will look back and remember pulling for the Heat, and cheering as LeBron fulfilled his destiny with a performance for the ages.

The coming Olympics will doubtlessly provide all manner of future retro-rooting opportunities. I now embrace some of the gold medalists I pulled against at the time. Like the United States women's soccer team in 2004 (I had written an article predicting their defeat), the great Cuban heavyweight boxer Teófilo Stevenson in the 1970s (Castro—enough said), the track star Carl Lewis (rooting against him was mandatory, especially after he botched the national anthem in 1993)—even Mary Lou Retton.

And the door swings both ways, as Dr. Peter Venkman says in "Ghostbusters." I now retro-root against plenty of champions I had wanted to win at the time. I pull in vain for Bruce Jenner to come up short in the 1976 decathlon and for the 1996 United States basketball team to be stunned by Yugoslavia. Events lost in the fog at the time are now open to passions as well. I retro-rooted hard for the Facebook Winklevoos twins to come in last place in the pairs rowing event in Beijing.

Painful as it is to admit, I also occasionally retro-root against ultrapopular winners, just to be contrarian.

Eight was more than enough for Michael Phelps in Beijing. So I spend my days hoping that someone will admit that Omega, maker of the Olympic swimming timing pads, fixed the results for Phelps, whom it sponsors, and that Milorad Cavic actually beat him to the wall in the 100-meter butterfly. I marvel at the excellence of the Soviet Olympic hockey team and root for it to bludgeon that plucky band of United States upstarts at the 1980 Lake Placid Games.

And yes, I look back and hope Jeremy Lin misses a few of those twirling layups and buzzer-beating 3-pointers.

While retro-rooting is necessarily personal, I recently had the opportunity to spread the joy. Many tennis fans in my circle, especially my wife, Lorie, were caught up in the tale of Andy Murray's quest to be the first British man to win a Wimbledon singles championship since 1936. She despaired when Roger Federer disposed of Murray to win the tournament for the seventh time. Overkill, she said.

But then I showed her an article about a gambler who years ago placed a wager that Federer would win seven Wimbledon before 2019. The man died before he could see his winning bet come in, and he left the ticket to the international antipoverty confederation Oxfam, which collected about \$155,000 as a result of Federer's victory this month. Now Lorie wants to claim that she was behind him the whole time.

Because of retro-rooting, she can.



BASEBALL

By Bill Madden

COOPERSTOWN – Whatever happened to summer? Was it something we said?

Here we are, barely a week after the All-Star break, and both the Yankees' and Mets' seasons have all but been decided. For different reasons, neither of them has any reason to be participants at the trading deadline. The Yankees' 5-1 home stand coming out of the break against the L.A. Angels and Toronto Blue Jays increased their AL East lead to double digits and further demonstrated how they are so much deeper and better able to sustain injuries than any club other than maybe the Texas Rangers, and why they can spend the rest of the summer counting home runs and pondering their postseason starting rotation once Andy Pettitte comes back.

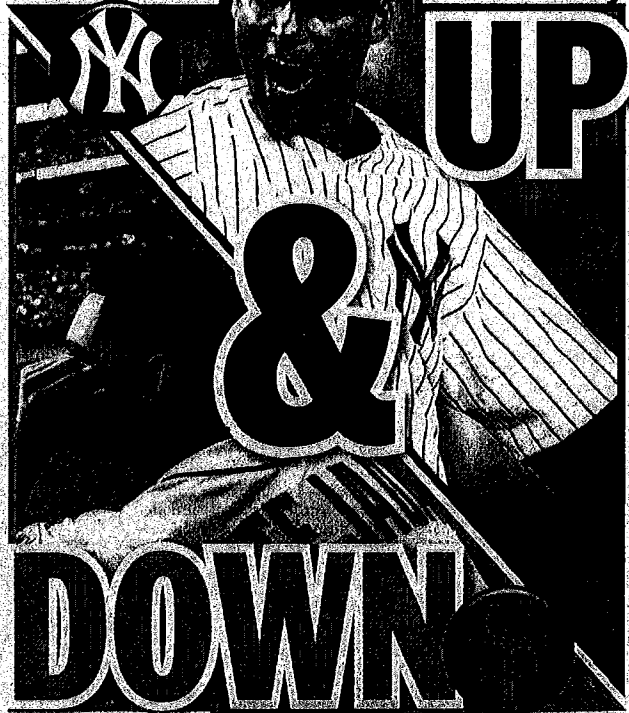
By contrast, the Mets' five straight losses after the break merely served to magnify their many flaws and reinforce the notion that they were first-half pretenders whom Terry Collins was able to get to play over their heads while the consensus preseason NL East favorites, the Phillies and Miami Marlins, consistently played under theirs.

As the trading deadline looms, the Yankees will be having meetings this week, during which they will decide what – if any – moves they should make to fortify themselves for the postseason. Other than Pettitte's broken leg, which should be healed by the end of August, there are no issues with the starting rotation. And despite the loss of Mariano Rivera, the Yankee bullpen – with Rafael Soriano, whose 2011 signing looks like a wise \$11 million insurance policy, with his 24 out of 25 save opportunities entering the weekend – has proven to be the one of the deepest in baseball and could be made even deeper by Joba Chamberlain's anticipated return next month: If there is any concern at all among the Yankee high command it is whether they can expect Brett Gardner's replacements in left field, 40-year-old Raul Ibanez and 35-year-old Andrew Jones, to give them the same kind of production (24 homers, 66 RBI) all the way to October.

Indeed, the Yankees' superior depth further emphasizes GM Brian Cashman's most important offseason deal was shipping A.J. Burnett to the Pittsburgh Pirates in order to free up \$5 million to sign Ibanez, Jones and Eric Chavez for the bench. In recent days there has been a lot of speculation about the Yankees trying to acquire Shane Victorino from the Phillies to replace Gardner's speed in left field and spell Curtis Granderson in center. This is not going to happen, for no other reason than the Phillies, even if they become

It's late July but N.Y. races...

... are all but over already



buyers at the deadline, are going to want to get a return for Victorino equivalent to a first-round draft pick – which they will get as compensation if he leaves as a free agent next winter after being offered arbitration. The Yankees are not about to part with any of their top prospects in a deadline deal for what would amount to a temporary extra player, especially when it's questionable how much of an upgrade that player would be over Dewayne Wise.

The Mets, on the other hand, find themselves with just too many deficiencies that can't adequately be addressed at the trading deadline. The bullpen, worst in baseball by far, needs another total overhaul

with Bobby Parnell, in particular, casting further doubt about his ability to be a closer. Lucas Duda and Kirk Nieuwenhuis were never considered top prospects coming up through the system and their declines in June and July are showing why. The hierarchy's decision not to promote prospect pitchers Matt Harvey and Jeurys Familia – both of whom are working on command issues – to replace Dillon Gee in the rotation was indicative of its private contention the Mets are still a ways away from being legitimate pennant contenders. That's why they'd be crazy to sacrifice any of their top chips below Harvey and pitching phenom Zack Wheeler such as outfielder Matt

Denn Dekker, shortstop Wilmer Flores, both suddenly on the fast track at Double-A Binghamton, or emerging lefty reliever Adam Kolarek at Port St. Lucie – for a possible quick fix like Huston Street or Brett Myers in the bullpen.

As the Yankees can now be content to pile up wins against all the undermanned AL teams while watching the rest of their division rivals scramble desperately for that one-game wild-card playoff, the Mets must be content to assess what they have with an eye on next year, hoping their proven strengths – starting rotation, MVP candidate David Wright and vastly improved shortstop Ruben Tejada – can at least keep them respectable. In both cases unfortunately, all the suspense has gone out of this New York baseball season.

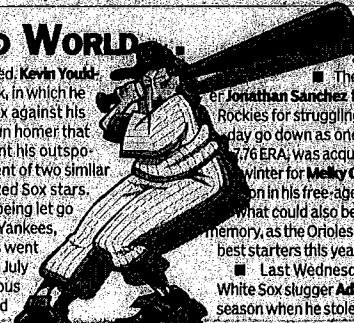
RUMOR MILL

Baseball's "Silly Season" – those two weeks leading up to the July 31 no-waivers trading deadline in which wild rumors, almost all of which are either completely unfounded or never come to fruition – is in full swing. Last week, Bob Nightengale of USA Today touched off a firestorm in the baseball community by reporting the Marlins were interested in acquiring Carl Crawford and his seemingly untradeable \$142 million contract from the Red Sox, and that Miami let it be known it would be willing to give Boston third baseman Hanley Ramirez and struggling \$27 million closer Heath Bell in return. The report had credence because Marlins' VP of player personnel Dan Jennings, who originally signed Crawford for the then-Tampa Bay Devil Rays, was in Boston scouting the Red Sox and confirmed his interest in his old prodigy, who has missed most of the season with a wrist injury and may need Tommy John surgery on his elbow. It is also common knowledge that Marlins president David Samson is constantly carping to associates about the underperforming Ramirez, who is owed nearly \$40 million through 2014. Still, there is no way Marlins owner Jeffrey Loria is going to take on a contract like Crawford's, especially with his injury uncertainty.

Meanwhile, Red Sox president Larry Lucchino, in also discounting the Crawford rumor, further stoked the trade fires by saying the Sox intend to make some bold moves at the deadline, presumably for starting pitching. However, their No. 1 target, the Cubs' Ryan Dempster, who has 5-10 no-trade rights, has made it clear his preference is to stay in the National League. In that respect, the Dodgers have been actively engaged in talks with the Cubs.

IT'S A MADD MADD WORLD

■ Hell hath no fury like a Red Sox star scorned. Kevin Youkilis' spectacular return to Fenway Park last week, in which he went 3-for-4 in his first game for the White Sox against his old team and then the next night hit a three-run homer that proved to be the difference to further torment his outspoken detractor, Bobby Valentine, was reminiscent of two similar sweet-revenge returns to Boston by purged Red Sox stars. In his first game back at Fenway in 1993 after being let go by the Sox and signing as a free agent with the Yankees, five-time Red Sox batting champ Wade Boggs went 4-for-4 against his old mates in a 7-2 loss. And on July 12, 1997, Roger Clemens, disgraced the previous winter as being in the twilight of his career by Red



Sox GM Dan Duquette, returned with the Toronto Blue Jays and proceeded to strike out 16 Red Sox in a 3-1 win.

■ The Kansas City Royals designated struggling lefthander Jonathan Sanchez for assignment last week before dealing him to the Rockies for struggling Jeremy Guthrie, thus putting to bed what may one day go down as one of the worst trades in history. Sanchez, 1-6 with a 7.76 ERA, was acquired by the Royals from the San Francisco Giants last winter for Melky Cabrera, who is presently having an MVP-caliber season in his free-agent walk year. In addition, Guthrie represented half of what could also be one of the more one-sided deals in recent baseball memory, as the Orioles received Jason Hammel – who has been one of their best starters this year (8-6) before going on the DL – for him.

■ Last Wednesday against the Red Sox, burly, 6-foot-6, 285-pound White Sox slugger Adam Dunn added another dimension to his comeback season when he stole his first base since Aug. 16, 2008.

SAY IT AIN'T SO...

"You can't replace experience and he doesn't have a lot of it. This is a different game for him. They stole off him last night. He threw some wild pitches. I could chalk it up to he needs more seasoning."
– D-Backs manager Kirk Gibson in explaining why he was sending 21-year-old blue-chip prospect Trevor Bauer back to the minors after he'd gone 1-2 with a 6.06 ERA in his first four major league starts.

THE SONS ALSO RISE



TONY GWYNN JR.

Outfielder
Dad: Hall of Famer Tony Gwynn, below, a career .338 hitter. An outfielder and 15-time All-Star, he played 20 seasons for the Padres (1982-2001) and hit better than .350 in seven seasons, including .394 in 1994.

Dodgers have turned playing in the majors into a family tradition

BY JAMES CREPEA
 james.crepea@newsday.com

NOW ONLINE
 Meet more famous father-son baseball duos, plus superstar sports siblings at newsday.com/dodgers

Champagne, sprayed throughout the Chicago White Sox clubhouse on Sept. 17, 1983. Fans stormed the field to celebrate as the Southsiders defeated Seattle, 4-3, on a walk-off sacrifice fly and clinched their first post-season title in 24 years.

Amid the reveling in the cavernous locker room of old Comiskey Park was 7-year-old Jerry Hairston Jr. watching as his father celebrated with the likes of Carlton Fisk, Harold Baines, third-base coach Jim Leyland and manager Tony LaRussa.

"I remember champagne splashing everywhere and I knew then how important winning was," recalled Hairston, who went 2-for-4 with an RBI against the Mets Friday night but didn't play on Saturday. "Even at a young age I was like 'wow, how important these guys worked extremely hard and how great it is to win.'"

That fateful Saturday night

in his bubbly-soaked clothes Hairston knew he wanted to be a major league baseball player.

"You saw grown men kind of acting like kids and knowing how important winning was," he said. "I knew I wanted to do that."

The 36-year-old Dodgers infielder and brother of Mets outfielder Scott Hairston has done that, carrying on a family tradition with nine teams over the last 15 years, including the 2009 World Series champion Yankees. A third-generation major leaguer, Hairston Jr. is one of six Dodgers carrying the figurative torch for their major-league lineages.

In addition to Hairston, the Dodgers have outfielder Tony Gwynn Jr. (son of the San Diego Padres Hall of Fame outfielder); shortstop Dee Gordon (son of 21-year reliever and former Yankee Tom); and current minor-league second baseman Justin Sellers (son of Jeff) and Ivan De Jesus Jr. (son of 15-year shortstop) and outfielder/first baseman Scott Van Slyke (son of five-time Gold Glove outfielder Andy).

"All of us really grew up in



GETTY IMAGES/PHOTO

AP PHOTO

BASEBALL

the clubhouse and being around the baseball field and players," Gwynn Jr. said. "I think it comes into play as far as knowing how to conduct yourself in the clubhouse, knowing how to be a good teammate and I think us six guys share those similarities."

Living in the shadow of a member of the 3,000-hit club and a 338 career hitter is part of Gwynn Jr.'s day-to-day life on and off the field.

"It's something that you can let be a distraction or something you can kind of embrace and go with it and I've chosen to embrace it," he said. "Obviously it's easier to embrace it when you're not quite on the level that your father was and that's all good by me."

Beyond the obvious perks of spending much of his early life in major league clubhouses, Gwynn Jr. said his most memorable experience was going to the 1998 All-Star Game in Colorado and listening to his dad, Barry Bonds and Curt Schilling talk baseball in the clubhouse.

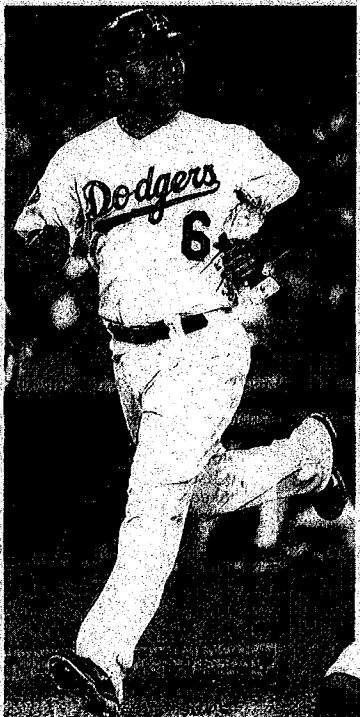
It was like a big roundtable pitchers, hitters, all just talking about what makes each other tick," said Gwynn Jr., who was 15 at the time. "How they try to attack each other, offensively and defensively. I'm like 'are you kidding?' I thought that was pretty cool."

The Dodgers are continuing their trend of multi-generational players, having drafted shortstop Jesmuel Valentin, son of 1996 pitcher Jordan Hershiser, son of Orel; and shortstop Jose Vizcaino Jr. this year.

The Hairston baseball bloodlines trace to Hairston Jr.'s grandfather Sam, a Negro leagues catcher who played one season with the White Sox. Sam had two sons, Jerry Sr. and Johnny, who also made it to the big leagues. The five Hairstons are tied with the Delahanty brothers for the most members of one family to play in the majors.

"I feel very privileged and very fortunate that we've had so many people come out of our family and to play major league baseball," Hairston Jr. said. "I know how hard it is to get to this level and obviously to stay. We're just a family that really loves baseball. We were never the superstars like the Bonds or the Griffey's. We weren't all 6-3, 210 or 225 [pounds] but we just have a passion for the game."

"We love playing the game and it's really been good for our family."



JERRY HAIRSTON JR.

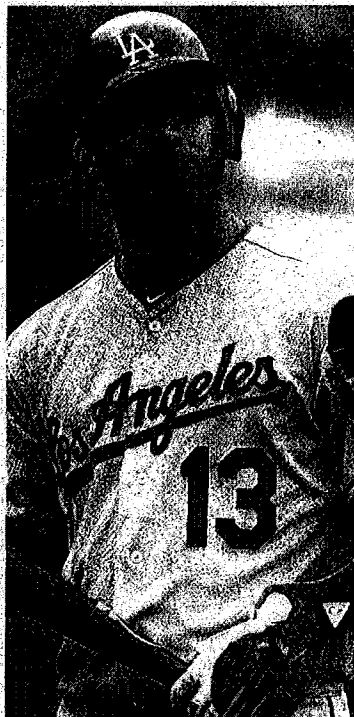
Infielder-Outfielder

Dad: Jerry Hairston played 14 seasons (1973-89), mostly for the White Sox. Used mostly as an outfielder and pinch hitter, he was a .253 lifetime hitter.

Grandfather: Sam Hairston spent more than 50 years as a in baseball as Negro League player, scout and coach. He played four major league games for the White Sox in 1951, the team's first American black player.



Jerry Hairston in 1985.



IVAN DE JESUS JR.

Infielder

Dad: Ivan De Jesus played 15 seasons (1974-88) at shortstop, hitting .254. His teams included the Cubs, Dodgers, Phillies and seven games for the 1986 Yankees.

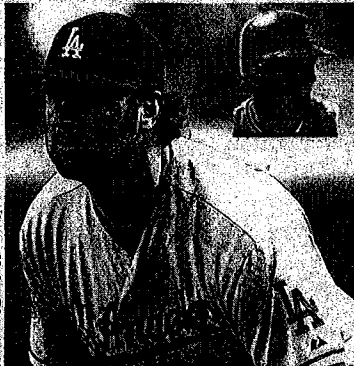
Ivan DeJesus in 1983.



DEE GORDON

Shortstop

Dad: Tom Gordon, below, pitched for 21 seasons (1988-2009), first as a starter for the Royals and Red Sox, and later as a reliever for the Yankees and several other teams. His career record was 138-126 with 158 saves and a 3.96 ERA.



SCOTT VAN SLYKE

Outfield-First base

Optioned to Triple-A Albuquerque last weekend
Dad: Andy Van Slyke, inset, played 13 seasons (1983-95), mostly for the Cardinals and Pirates. A career .274 hitter, he led the NL with 199 hits in 1992, when he hit .324.



JUSTIN SELLERS

Shortstop

Optioned to Albuquerque in May
Dad: Jeff Sellers, inset, pitched for four seasons for the Red Sox (1985-88), compiling a 13-22 record and a 4.97 ERA.

GETTY IMAGES PHOTO

GETTY IMAGES PHOTO

AP PHOTO

GETTY IMAGES PHOTO

GETTY IMAGES PHOTO

NEVSON FILE PHOTO

GETTY IMAGES PHOTO

DAVID LENNON'S DEADLINE

As of yesterday, with 10 shopping days left before the July 31 non-waiver trade deadline — it's at 4 p.m., so no midnight drama — 19 of the 30 teams either owned the division/wild-card lead or were within five games of a playoff spot.

That's a bunch. And with so many clubs still alive, sorting out the buyers and sellers isn't easy, even for GMs, who remain on the fence wondering what to do.

"Right now, it's a pretty limited number of teams that are really talking," said a front-office executive from a club still in contention. "I guess I take that to mean there's not a lot of teams that are willing to sell. There are only a couple of clear-cut sellers. But that can change pretty quickly as we get closer to the deadline."

It usually does. Complicating matters this year, however, is the additional wild card,

which can affect deadline activity on a few fronts. By making the division title more critical than it's ever been since the playoffs expanded in 1995, the top teams may go to greater lengths to separate themselves and avoid that one-game, do-or-die playoff.

Also, with so many clubs in the running, that means less talent will be available on the market, which could drive the asking price up as well. And don't forget this new CBA nugget — no compensatory picks for the team that trades for a player in-season and then loses him to free agency this winter. That should make some GMs think twice about two-month rental options.

Now that you know the ground rules, let's take a look at what we'll call this year's Deadline Dozen, the most talked about trade chips — but not necessarily ones that will be playing somewhere else come August.

(Odds are to be traded by July 31 deadline).

1 Ryan Dempster (2-1)

The rebuilding Cubs have no reason to cling to a pending free agent that could bring back a future star or two to the North Side and the perception is he could be gone by the end of this weekend. Dempster has a 1.86 ERA in 14 starts, and a strong playoff showing could always enhance the possibility of him staying with his next team.

2 Grant Balfour (7-1)

With a stacked bullpen of their own, the resurgent A's can afford to trade Balfour, and they probably will given the demand for relievers. Balfour has roughly \$2 million left in salary, and a minimal \$350,000 buyout on next year's \$4.5-million option, so he's one of the more cost-efficient arms.



AP PHOTO



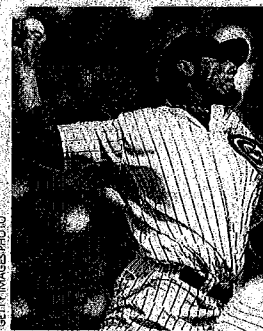
AP PHOTO

3 Shane Victorino (8-1)

With surgery scheduled for Brett Gardner, Victorino would be a nice replacement in leftfield, as well as being the threat on the base paths the Yankees have lacked — but not really missed — to this point. Victorino also has knocked heads with management, so they could be ready to part ways.

4 Matt Garza (8-1)

Any team would love to have Garza and Dempster in the same rotation, but first-year GM Theo Epstein has the pressure of trading them and his career with the Cubs could be defined by the return on these deals. Unlike Dempster, Garza won't be a free agent until after the 2013 season, which should be a plus for any big-money suitors.



GETTY IMAGES/PHOTO

5 Francisco Liriano (10-1)

While not on the same level as the elite starters available, the lefthanded Liriano is an attractive complement to any playoff-thinking rotation. The Yankees have scouted him as a fill-in for the injured Andy Pettitte, but he's been on the radar of just about every contender looking for a Plan B if deals for the top arms fall through.



AP PHOTO

6 Francisco Rodriguez (15-1)

A Mets' reunion made a lot of sense when they lost their own closer, Frank Francisco, as K-Rod already has shown he can be comfortable in New York — on the field anyway. If the Brewers go into full-on sell mode, they've got to dump Rodriguez, if only to pocket half his \$8 million salary.

DOZEN

7 Zack Greinke (18-1)

The question with Greinke centers on how the Brewers' view their current situation — on the outer fringe of the playoff hunt. He's already made 20 starts in the first half, which could be a red flag for late September. And can a team gamble on Greinke's social-anxiety disorder if he's uprooted from his comfort zone in midseason?

8 Cole Hamels (22-1)

The top prize for any deep-pocketed contender that won't be satisfied with simply making the playoffs. The aging, bloated Phillies could use a reboot and Hamels, who is a free agent after this season, would bring back at least one elite prospect as a jumping off point. In looking beyond this season, Phillies might benefit more from trading Hamels than signing him long-term.

9 Justin Upton (25-1)

What a strange place to be for the 24-year-old outfielder, now on the block just a year after finishing fourth in the NL MVP voting. Upton is signed through 2015 and still due a prorated \$42.5 million, but that's a bargain if he can return to his MVP ways. Could be better for D-Backs to wait until winter.

10 Hanley Ramirez (30-1)

With the Marlins' under-achieving mix, and too many combustible personalities — including manager Ozzie Guillen — it's apparent that someone has to go to stabilize Miami's mess. Shortstops are in demand, and Ramirez could switch back to the position if dealt. He probably won't be the only Marlin traded.



11 James Shields (35-1)

With the wild card still in reach, the Rays can't consider themselves sellers at this stage. But GM Andrew Friedman is among the best in the game at doing more with less, and that can mean reloading a roster when the time is right. Shields (4.39 ERA) has been a disappointment, but with only half of his \$7 million salary left, and two more option years, there's plenty of pitching hungry teams that could step up. Will the Rays bite?



12 Cody Ross (50-1)

Despite almost no chance of catching the Yankees atop the division, the Red Sox are likely to stay in the wild-card race, and it would appear they need Ross to do that. Still, might be worth getting a decent young player back as Boston must continue its on-the-fly transition phase.



AP PHOTO

GETTY IMAGES PHOTO

PHOTO

LINSANITY: PRO & CON SOUND OFF

WRITE ON! Do you have a sports opinion? Write to:
Sound Off, New York Post Sports Department, 1211 Avenue of the Americas,
New York, NY 10036. Fax: (212) 930-8777. Email: sports@nypost.com
Please include your name, address and phone number.
The Post reserves the right to edit and condense all letters.

● After a lifelong love affair with the Knicks, I stopped rooting for the team in 1998 after they traded my favorite, John Starks, for a thug named Latrell Sprewell. I swore I would never root for them again. But after a decade of sticking to my guns, I got caught up in Linsanity like everyone else. Jeremy Lin was a guy you could really root for. So what do the idiots who run the team do? They let Lin go to the Rockets. Yet they re-signed another miscreant named J.R. Smith and acquired lowlife Jason Kidd, who almost immediately got arrested for drunk driving. When you add in greedy loser Carmelo Anthony, who in their right mind could root for these guys?

MICHAEL DEAN
Kearny, N.J.

● Congratulations to the Knicks for not caving in to the ridiculous salary demands for Jeremy Lin, a point guard who played less than half a season for them, is unproven, injury prone and refused to play against the Heat in the playoffs. The Knicks brass saw right through this egomaniac who, for such an intelligent person, acted like an greedy idiot and now has to pay the consequence of playing in Houston rather than the biggest stage in the world in New York. ... Good luck, Jeremy. You'll need it.

JOHN J. DeRENTIS
Manhattan

Disinterested Dolan

● I feel as if Knicks owner Jim Dolan shows the door to anyone the crowd falls in love with. Look at David Lee, Danilo Galinari, Jeremy Lin,

Landry Fields, etc. All of them were good guys, exciting players and fan favorites. Dolan got rid of all of them. It's such a weird feeling, being a fan of a team whose owner couldn't care less about the fans. The worst part is, I'm going to spend a lot of time watching them, reading about them, and going to the Garden. What else can I do?

ADAM RASKIN
Larchmont, N.Y.

Johan vs. CC

● Johan Santana is a winner and I am certain he'd be much better had he stayed healthy while with the Mets, but since signing his \$137.5 million contract, he has gone 46-32 and is now on the disabled list. The Yankees chose to not trade for Santana, and missed the playoffs in 2008. But during that offseason they signed CC Sabathia. Imagine if the Yankees had traded for Santana, and the Mets had signed Sabathia. By the way Sabathia's record thus far with the Yankees is 69-26 ... and counting.

STEVEN ALENGAKIS
Brooklyn

The Wise move

● All this talk of the Yankees acquiring Shane Victorino from the Phillies is unnecessary. The Yankees have a player who could step in and replace Brett Gardner. He is extremely fast, plays a great defense, and can steal bases. I also believe, that given a starting position, can hit for average as well as Gardner. His name? Dewayne Wise.

CHUCK ECKSTEIN
Brooklyn

SPORTS

SPORTSWATCH

THE BEST OF NEIL BEST

newsday.com/sportswatch

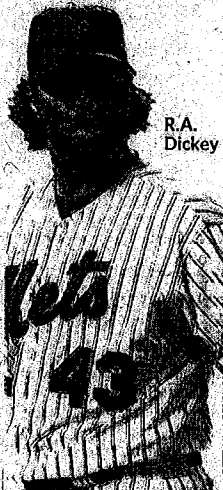
R.A. doc ready for a close-up

The makers of the well-timed documentary "Knuckleball" which prominently features the Mets' **R.A. Dickey**, announced it will be available on digital and VOD platforms Sept. 18, with a theatrical debut set for the next day at the IFC Center in Manhattan.

The film is worth a look, even though it spends too much time on Dickey's dour counterpart, **Tim Wakefield**. But it would not crack my list of all-time best sports documentaries.

No. 1 for me: HBO's "When It Was a Game" (and its two sequels), whose use of home movies, mostly in color, of mid-20th century baseball caused a sensation when the original debuted in 1991, and rightly so. No one had ever seen anything quite like it before.

Speaking of baseball documentaries, RIP **Robert Creamer**, the famed Babe Ruth and Casey Stengel autobiographer, who was among the talking heads in Ken Burns' "Baseball." He died Wednesday at age 90.



R.A. Dickey

A real head-scratcher

There is no time like the dog days of summer to catch up on bizarre, psychedelic 1960s movies, so recently I watched "Head," the famously incoherent Monkees movie featuring cameos by everyone from **Frank Zappa** to **Victor Mature** to **Annette Funjello** to... **Sonny Liston** and **Ray Nitschke**?

Yup, sure enough, there was Liston boxing **Davy Jones** and Nitschke repeatedly tackling **Peter Tork** in two of many nonsensical scenes. Although not as well known as, say, **Joe Namath** visiting the artificial turf backyard of "The Brady Bunch," they certainly rank among the strangest sports movie or TV cameos of all time.

Nitschke later appeared in "The Longest Yard," and Liston somehow turned up in an episode of the TV show "Love, American Style" that appeared five weeks before he died in 1970. (That episode also



Clockwise from top left: Ray Nitschke, Sonny Liston and Davy Jones.

featured the television debut of 24-year-old **Diane Keaton**. But I digress.)

So, to review: Is this a great country, or what?

ESPN covers Tebow, both coming and going

Strap yourselves in, everyone; the ride is about to begin. ESPN will offer viewers special, in-depth coverage of the training camps of both **Tim Tebow**'s former and current teams beginning later this week.

It starts with "SportsCenter: Training Days With the Broncos," with reports from three correspondents with **Peyton Manning** and the Broncos in Englewood, Colo., from Thursday

through Sunday.

Then, July 30 through Aug. 2 **Hannah Storm**, **Ron Jaworski** and **Sal Paolantonio** will hit Cortland to chronicle New York's newest backup quarterback and his teammates on "SportsCenter: Training Days With the Jets."

The material will include what ESPN described as "lengthy, live cut-ins on practices" in addition to interviews.



Tim Tebow

Oh, almost forgot: The network also will offer a one-hour Jets camp-related special this Friday at 8.

Meanwhile, in Albany... the defending Super Bowl champs also open camp this week.

NBC puts SI on TV

HBO and later ESPN have adapted the concept of a TV newsmagazine to sports. Now the nation's most prominent sports magazine will try to adapt its approach to TV.

Beginning Tuesday on NBC Sports Network, "Sports Illustrated" will appear as a monthly show, sometimes on the cable channel and others on NBC itself.

How will it differ from the "Real Sports" and "E:60?" **Ian Orefice**, executive VP for SI Video, said the idea is to bring the "uniqueness" of SI and its storytelling approach to television.

Writers will tell their own stories for the camera, with one piece on every show tied to a story in that week's print edition. In Tuesday's case, that will be a profile of Orioles minor-league pitching phenom **Dylan Bundy**. Said Orefice, "Our goal is to right out of the gate compete, and we will, and create a product we're proud of."

Wake-up call for the NFL Network

The way **Mark Kriegel** explained it to his 12-year-old daughter, he is about to "morph into a cross between a daddy and a vampire."

Sounds about right. Starting July 30, he will be a commentator on "NFL AM," the NFL Network's plunge into the deep, crowded morning talk pool.

It is a four-hour show

built around football, with doses of pop culture blended in, live from 6 to 10 a.m.

One catch: It will originate from Los Angeles, where the network is based. Do the math. Cue the vampires.

Kriegel said after two days of rehearsal, he felt "like I was walking out on the moon." After four, he began to "feel vaguely human."

But the former New York

columnist (and author of biographies of **Joe Namath** and **Pete Maravich**) said he is happy for the opportunity, particularly given the lure of the show's primary subject matter.

"When you leave New York, you realize the whole country is about football," he said, "and I am not sure there is any line of demarcation at this point between football and the rest of popular culture."

Victor Cruz talks about his newly released memoir at newsday.com/media

MEDIA

By Bob Raissman

In addition to the obvious, Jeremy Lin and James (Guitar Jimmy) Dolan have something else in common — they were the media's bridge to the start of NFL training camp.

With the Yankees running away with the AL East and the Mets teetering on a second-half swoon, there might not be much juice to squeeze out of baseball until the Bombers hit October.

History suggests a defending Super Bowl champ, such as the Giants, faces major distractions the following season. Big Blue won't have that problem. As far as the media are concerned, Albany sets up to be a snoozefest. Or as one scribe said: "Expect plenty of stories about the gutsy third-string offensive tackle trying to make the team."

This must please Tom Coughlin. A controversy-free, quiet training camp may not go over big in the Valley of the Stupid, but it works wonders for a coach and his staff.

This won't be the case in Cortland, where the media will descend on Camp Chaos starring Tim Tebow, Mark Sanchez and Santonio Holmes, the Jets' official media ombudsman. Then there's anyone else who shoots off his mouth.

It promises to be so whacky, so dysfunctional, even ESPN can't cover it with one reporter. So the faculty at Bristol Clown Community College is dispatching three mouths — Hannah Storm, Ron Jaworski and Sal Paolantonio — to Jets' camp. Beginning Thursday, they will offer live, continuous coverage on "SportsCenter."

No doubt "VOS" pontificators will make the scene too. Gasbags, like Jets de facto general manager Mike (Sports Pope) Francesa and maybe even football expert Stephen A. Smith will show up looking to match wits with Mike Tannenbaum, the human fountain of misinformation.

Seriously though, Jets training camp will give us all the first look of how the interaction between Sanchez and Tebow will be covered. Every move, every nuance will be dissected and analyzed.

All sights will be set on finding the first sign of a "controversy." And it will be immediately blown out of proportion. It would not be surprising if someone hooks up a Noise Meter to see which QB the fans cheer loudest for. Then, there's our fave: When the boss scribes chart every

pass the QBs throw during practice.

Also, will all that weight Rex Ryan lost affect his ability to run his mouth? And what about tough guy Tony Sparano? How will he handle the crush? This ain't Miami. The Ryan regime has already been marked by controversy. Now, things are going to get seriously crazy.

SOFTBALL ON NFL.COM

Not that he needed any help in playing the fool while bashing the media, Holmes got a huge assist from Dave Dameshek, the guy who chatted with him on an NFL.com podcast. This "interview" was an ultimate Twinkie Munch. Dameshek lobbed leading questions, such as when he "asked" Holmes to "turn that on the media." And after Holmes' riff on the NY media ended, Dameshek said:

"I love that."

It wasn't all bad. Dameshek did manage to get in one probing question when he asked: "Pittsburgh or Jets? Better uniform?" We'll leave it at that.

SAY YES TO NETS!

One of the major benefactors of the Nets' move to Brooklyn, the coming of Joe Johnson and the return of Deron Williams, is the Yankees Entertainment & Sports Network.

Since YES acquired Nets TV rights, the ratings have not been eye-opening (that's being kind). But airing games from a sold out arena in Brooklyn USA, featuring a team capable of playing compelling basketball, should help mightily.

YES suits should jump on this opportunity and beef up the coverage. They have a keeper in

play-by-play voice Ian (The Bird) Eagle, but may want to add some parts around him — new TV faces who know the NBA inside out.

Bring a new-look telecast to Brooklyn. Shake things up.

MORE RING GIRL LAPS

This week, the Association of Boxing Commissions will hear a proposal from NBC Sports to increase the break time between rounds from 60 to 67 seconds.

The Peacock has reinvested in the Sweet Science in 2012, televising a handful of boxing cards on its NBC Sports Network cable channel. NBC suits have committed to more boxing on NBCSN in 2013.

But NBC Sports honchos believe extra time is needed when returning from two 30-second commercial spots in order to recap the previous round and/or set up the ensuing round.

Hey, considering the break time TV networks get in MLB and NFL, this ain't so outrageous.

STAN'S YOUR MAN

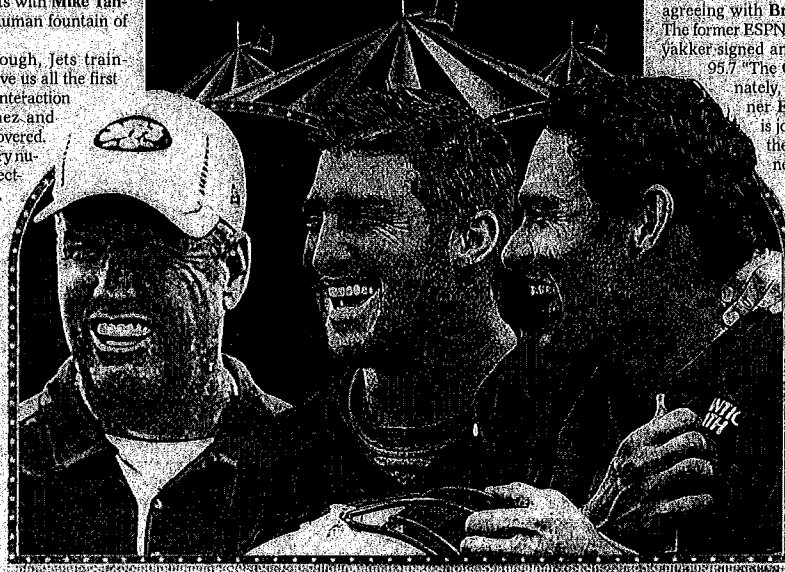
Judging by what's gone on the past few summers, the NBA remains highly relevant in the minds of fans during the offseason. Is it on the minds of ESPN suits, too? Are they thinking about fixing their studio show? When last we heard, Stan Van Gundy hasn't landed anywhere. He sure could stir things up on a studio panel, right? He may not dress the part, but threads don't make the analyst. That was painfully obvious watching the studio show this season. . . Charles Oakley had some interesting things to say last Monday on WFAN with Steve Somers. Oakley said he'd like a gig with the Knicks. "I tried getting a meeting with Dolan," Oakley said. "They won't even let me in the Garden."

San Francisco is agreeing with Brandon Tierney. The former ESPN New York/SNY Yalcker signed an extension with 95.7 "The Game." Unfortunately, he lost his partner Eric Davis, who is joining the cast of the NFL Network's new early morning show, which debuts on July 30.

ESPN-98.7's "The Michael Kay Show" will add an hour (sign-off will be at 7 p.m.) beginning Monday. Question: Will Michael Kay even be on the show from 6 p.m.-7 p.m.? That's when he usually takes care of YES biz.

Twitter.com/nydnralss

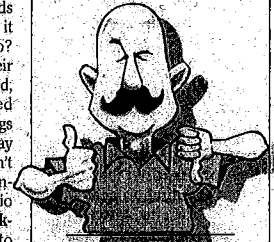
PUT TENT ON THIS CIRCUS
Media throngs will make spectacle of Jet camp



DUDE OF THE WEEK

TIM MCCARVER

For his induction Saturday into the broadcasting wing of baseball's Hall of Fame, his ticket, the Ford C. Frick Award, should have been punched long ago. Through all the years, Tech combined a unique ability to explain the game with a fearless quality. This is a one-two punch rarely unleashed by any voice in any sport. It didn't matter if he was working a local telecast, as he did for 16 seasons with the Mets, or on the national stage (Fox, NBC, ABC, CBS). McCarver's pointed, thought-provoking critiques stir emotions. His analytical skills often reveal fresh insights. Almost as important as all this stuff is the fact that Tim McCarver has given me plenty to write about. Thanks and congratulations!



DWEB OF THE WEEK

SANTONIO HOLMES

For telling a Twinkie Muncher from NFL.com that if the media "want to be part of our team and want to feel so important, be there to support us, not break us down," Holmes envisions Jets' beat reporters slipping into cheerleaders uniforms and shaking pom-poms. He is delusional. Worse still, Holmes is a hypocrite. Did he want to be "part of" the Jets when he quit on that final drive in Miami? Or when he ripped the offensive line? Holmes lost his "C," but replaced it with a new title: De facto dean of the Woody Johnson School of Journalism.

DOUBLE TALK

What (Rockets owner) Leslie Alexander said: "I made a mistake the first time (I got rid of Jeremy Lin)." What Leslie Alexander meant to say: "I'm paying millions for my mistake and pray I haven't made another one."

Kick starting life

Former addict finds salvation in NYC soccer program

DONNIE Nicholson thought there was no way out. He was alone, stranded at the intersection of Homelessness and Hopelessness, held hostage by a cocaine addiction that stripped him of his will to live and drove him to attempt suicide, more than once.

"I lost my mother in 2003," Nicholson told the Rumble. "Lost my grandmother in 2005. Felt like I'd lost other members of my family because of my addiction. I could do two eight balls in a night by myself ...

"I think I attempted suicide like seven times. Ended up in ICU twice. I was really at my wit's end. Something really needed to happen to change what was going on."

Thankfully, something did happen.

Nicholson up and left Harlington, Texas, and boarded a bus for Norfolk, Va., not far from where he had served in the Navy.

"I was on medication for bipolar disorder," Nicholson said, "and, I think, about two months before I just decided to just hop on

the bus, I had stopped taking the medication. I think my mind started to clear up a little bit, I started to register some memories from my mother, from my sister, conversations — "You can do more. You can do anything you want to do. You can be anybody you want to be." And it just kind of started to play over and over in my head."

Nicholson stayed in a shelter there for a month and hopped on a Greyhound bus for the Port Authority with a duffel bag and two changes of clothes. He wound up at Keener on Wards Island for two weeks.

"I saw a little bit of everything at Keener," Nicholson said. "You have people that have disorders. You have people that don't. You have people that have habits, and they'll do anything to support that habit ... That wasn't an environment where I could do something better for myself."

"That's when help arrived. That assistance

came from Help USA, which helps find jobs and homes for the homeless, and Street Soccer USA, a non-profit national league of sport for social change programs in 20 cities. SSUSA was started by 33-year-old Lawrence

Cann. Teams train and compete in local leagues and work through a special curriculum of life and job skills, where players commit to change their lives.

His new home: the Supportive Employment Center (Wards Island).

"I had seen some banners for soccer, and I had played that as a kid, and got invited to come to a practice, and just kept on with it," Nicholson said. "I didn't have anything else to do. And I didn't want to get into trouble. I didn't want to go back to cocaine. I needed something to do."

He participated in the Charlotte Invitational in North Carolina early last year and was hooked.

"I see all of these other teams that are in a situation just like ours or similar to ours,

where they were homeless at one point, or still are," Nicholson said. "They're on a soccer team, they have families, they have friends, they've built relationships, and they're there to play a game. I was like 'Wow.' I really felt like I was a part of something. So I was like, 'OK, so I can't let this go. I got to keep going with it.'"

He left the shelter 16 months ago and moved to Rockaway, Queens, where he works these days at the 101 Deli.

Next weekend, Nicholson will be part of an eight-man team (rated on off-the-field and on-field achievement) that will be representing New York in the Street Soccer USA National Cup.

Cann, a former Davidson soccer player, in 2007 began making a difference with his younger brother Rob running a program that serviced the men's shelter and soup kitchen and social services in the Charlotte community.

The SSUSA National Cup began in D.C. in 2008. The year's tournament begins Thursday and Friday inside a mini-soccer stadium at Broome and Christie Street at Sarah Roosevelt Park. There is also an Open Cup where any team is welcome to sign up and compete. The semifinals and finals are Sunday in Times Square at the 46th, 47th Street Plaza.

"A lot of people will watch the games and say, 'Wait a minute, are these people really homeless?'" Cann said. "They're playing for bigger goals. They're trying to improve their lives."

For Nicholson, 36, there is light at the end of his tunnel at last.

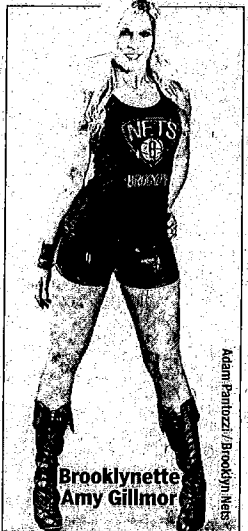
"The way Street Soccer works is it's a long-term commitment to the relationship we form with everybody," said Cann, an MBA candidate at Columbia. "To see Donnie get out of the shelter, stay out, stay a part of the team, actually give back and help as a coach and be a mentor to others, it's admirable and inspiring to me."

THE RUMBLE

AN OFF-THE-BALL LOOK AT YOUR FAVORITE SPORTS CELEBRITIES

Brooklynettes dance overseas

Six dancers from the Brooklynettes are in Naples, Italy, this weekend for the NBA 3X Tour. The event features performances by the Brooklynettes and an autograph session. The inaugural NBA 3X Tour, which blends competitive 3-on-3 basketball with interactive activities, will provide thousands of young basketball players across Italy with the chance to experience the NBA firsthand.



Camp kids make ring around Weatherford

Players are protective of their hard-earned championship rings after winning a title. Giants punter Steve Weatherford naturally is proud of the Tiffany-inspired, diamond-encrusted ring he earned for winning Super Bowl XLVI, and he had no problem sharing his valuable piece of jewelry with kids at Coleman Country Day Camp in Merrick, L.I.

During his appearance at the camp last Monday, Weatherford happily allowed any camper who asked to not only see the ring, but also hold it, try it on, pose for pictures with the ring and show it off to friends. Ross Coleman, the camp director, made sure the ring didn't stray too far from Weatherford, who was remarkably calm about lending the ring out for others to see and touch.

"If they lose that or flush it down the toilet, that would never change the fact I'm a Super Bowl champion," Weatherford said. "That's just an item that signifies what I've been able to attain. Nobody will be able to take that away from me."



STREET SMART: The Street Soccer USA organization, founded by Lawrence Cann (left), helped former drug addict Donnie Nicholson get his life on track.

GOT A TIP FOR US? EMAIL [THERUMBLE@NYPOST.COM](mailto:therumble@nypost.com)

Daniel Shapiro

Adam Panizza/Brooklyn Nets



Phil Mushnick

phil.mushnick@nypost.com

EQUAL TIME

HOW many screwballs does it take to bulb up a light? American sports TV is in the throes of a mindless epidemic: The bigger the event, the less we're shown.

Networks spend millions, billions for exclusive rights. Next, they beg us to watch.

Finally, they do whatever it takes to minimize the live coverage. It's nuts.

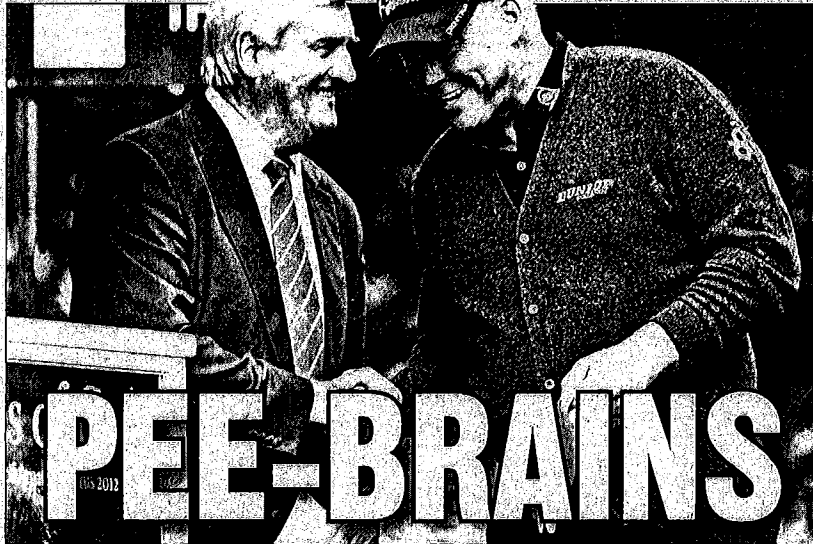
Heck, FOX now is nationally recognized for its superior achievement in live coverage of fans watching the World Series. Patience, grasshoppers, the games are in there, someplace.

How many viewers, do you suppose, tuned to ESPN's live coverage of British Open eager to watch players warming up on the range, to hear lengthy on-camera interviews and essays, to watch features and hear/see assorted chats among commentators and analysts and to watch repeated promos to watch the one-of-a-kind British Open live on ESPN?

One? None?

So, then, why does all of that become loaded into the coverage?

Thursday, it wasn't enough to simply tell us that Open starter Ivor Robson stands at the first tee, introducing every player, never abandoning his position, not even to hit the head — by this time an old, annual story — ESPN abandoned live coverage to present a feature on the man and his bladder.



BLADDER DAY HERO: Ivor Robson (left, with Darren Clarke) introduces players at the first tee at the British Open all day without a bathroom break, a fact ESPN finds more interesting than live golf. Getty Images

ESPN robs viewers of live coverage for silly features

Friday, as it began to rain, ESPN's Scott Van Pelt noted that the rain "does nothing to deter the thousands who line the fairways and fill the grandstands."

If that's the case, why should

those watching on ESPN be deterred by ESPN from watching? What happened to TV's goal of providing "the best seat in the house"? When did the removal of that seat become part of the plan?

Even Tiger Woods acolytes would acknowledge Friday's senselessness of repeatedly leaving the course where a major is being played to show Woods on the practice green before he played, then on the practice range after he played.

It's not that ESPN destroyed coverage of the first two rounds, it's more that it gave it a real good shot. And that's nuts.

**Newsflash:
After today
comes
tomorrow**

ESPN's dishonest habit of taking credit where none is due has become so apparent that those it's designed to impress (fool) are left laughing.

Last week, ESPN reported the Knicks had until Tuesday to match the Rockets' offer to **Jeremy Lin**, crediting ESPN's **Marc Stein** with that scoop.

But as **Carlos Burgos**, a reader from Virginia suggests, ESPN also should have credited Stein with the scoop that "Wednesday will follow Tuesday," as the NBA's three-day deadline to match such offers is a matter of common knowledge.

➤ Even newer golf commentators parrot the goofiest TV-talk. Friday, ESPN's **Tom Rinaldi** asked **Rory McIlroy** about a shot that "found its way into a bunker" — as if it wasn't McIlroy's fault, as if he didn't hit into the bunker, as if it was the ball's decision.

➤ A former WWE/WWE content man wonders if, in the coming 1,000th episode of "Raw," **Vince McMahon** will present a roll call of WWE/WWE TV performers who didn't live past 45. "Or would that take too long?"

➤ Reader **Bill Jerome** has a question: If **Michael Kay** called **Derek Jeter's** 3,000th hit — a home run — "History, with an exclamation point!" (a good call, too) how will he handle PED-empowered **Alex Rodriguez's** next historic homer? Jerome suggests, "History, with a question mark!"

Expect replay delays late in NBA games

WE ALL have squirmed our way through the last two minutes of close NBA games, all suffered through their endless endings. Well, they're about to grow longer.

The NBA has approved two replay rule additions, both to be invoked only in the final two minutes or throughout OT, and both to inspect judgment calls. Oy!

One wonders if the NBA has thought this one through, or like the NFL's "instant" replay rule, will it be a 25-years-and-counting work in progress.

The NBA will use replays late in games to examine "restricted zone" block/charge calls and

goaltending. Both are often calls that could go either way, thus the likelihood of changing calls in such cases often will become a matter of "perhaps" or a second opinion rather than an unequivocal fact.

In the case of a goaltending call, such a rule addition opens a can of crazy. If the call is ruled to have been wrong, then what? Restart the game from that point? Whose ball is it? Jump ball? Draw straws? How much time on the shot clock?

Given that a goaltending that isn't called can't cause a whistle, do you just ignore that side of the same coin?

It's one thing to try to rein-

vent the wheel, another to try to perfect the flat tire.

➤ More golf, more ESPN, more ridiculous: For years, ESPN has been neglectfully destroying golf highlights by covering the hole with its "Bottom Line" graphics. It just doesn't take care to take care, thus it's safe to assume by now that ESPN just doesn't care.

To make matters worse, ESPN Classic's programming, designed to hype its coverage of the U.S. and British Opens by showing tapes of past Opens, destroys much of those telecasts by doing the same — covering the cups with that crawl.

Last month ESPN Classic wrecked old U.S. Open tapes by covering the holes, last week ESPN Classic did it to old British Open tapes. ESPN has repeatedly been encouraged to demonstrate some common sense — foresight and quality control — on such telecasts, but nothing changes.

➤ Despite all of the sweet, hopeful spin by Western journalists, perhaps Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Brunei look at it this way:

Now that they will allow their women to compete in the Olympics, it creates more opportunities for their athletes to be ordered to demonstrate

their back-turning on Israeli competitors.

And this being the 40th anniversary of the massacre of 11 Israeli Olympians and one German policeman by Arab terrorists at the Munich Games, my guess, given the IOC's long track record for capitulation and appeasement, is that Arab countries were assured that no official memorial would be conducted — an assurance given before the IOC made that official for the London Games.

We're sure that NBC will examine this and other IOC sell-outs and payola artists in detail during its coming Olympic coverage. Fat chance.



Mike Vaccaro

michael.vaccaro@nypost.com

OPEN MIKE

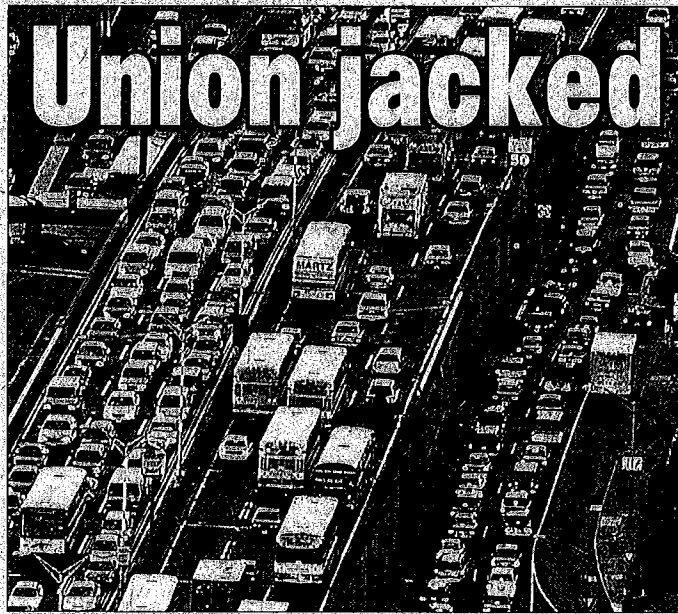
Glad Games in London, not NYC

SUSPECT for most of you, the next three weeks will be a familiar ride along the crests and rabbit holes that define our relationships with the Olympics. There are some events — some swimming nights featuring Michael Phelps or Ryan Lochte, some track-and-field events (specifically Usain Bolt), some basketball — that will be must-see TV for you.

There are some athletes you never have heard of playing some sports you rarely think about who will capture your imagination, and because of the helpful time difference, NBC will find ways to nudge you to the front of the TV on those given nights. Maybe there will be a reason to follow modern pentathlon. Or synchronized diving. Or that weird bike race where they just kind of stare at each other for a while before speeding home.

And there will be some nights when even the prospect of Kate Upton, Scarlett Johansson, Bar Refaeli and Mila Kunis playing a game of pickup beach volleyball won't get you off the Yankees game. We are absolute creatures of summer habit, after all.

But that's OK. Because thanks to our neighbors and friends across the pond, you will be able to



JAM SESSION: Just in case you thought the Olympics would have been great in New York City, The Post's Mike Vaccaro suggests you think again. N.Y. Post: Luiz Ribeiro

enjoy the Olympics the way you enjoy the Olympics, the way you're supposed to enjoy the Olympics — on your terms, following your own agenda, your own schedule, your own timetable. I do hope you reserve a little time on the subway or over breakfast to see what Marc Berman, Mark Cannizzaro and I have to say each day from the Games, but even that will require only a modest investment on your part.

We can thank our old

landlords for that. We can thank the good people of the United Kingdom who, 231 years after conceding us the winning putt at Yorktown, did us another solid by stepping up and swiping these Olympics from New York City. Because this will be my sixth Olympics, and I've talked to plenty of residents of Sydney, Salt Lake City, Athens, Beijing and Vancouver while I've been there, and there is a familiar ring to how they feel

about having the Olympics invade their towns.

1. The volunteers in the official shirts and hats smile and say, "Isn't this great!"

2. The regular folks who spent the morning besieged by traffic and feeling overrun say, "No offense but when do you go home again?"

Yep. This all could have been ours.

Remember? This was one of Mayor Bloomberg's babies that made his assaults on smoking and soft

drinks seem like a thumb-wrestling match. There certainly were some who were excited at the prospect of turning Greater New York into the world's most intricate Olympic Park. The Jets certainly liked the idea of that old West Side stadium that would have been the main vessel of the Games and then become their very own stadium afterward.

Later, after the thought of stopping up the West Side Highway for three years was mercifully chucked, it was the Mets who nearly wound up with what they got anyway, a new place to play in Queens ... although the master plan was for the park to open in 2009, let them play for three years, then spend this year at Yankee Stadium, and how do you suppose that would have gone over?

Beyond that, though, just imagine what life would be like around here the next three weeks. Actually, if you're really that morbidly curious, have fun when the 2014 Super Bowl comes to town ... then multiply that by 50.

You know how I know that would have been a bad idea? I wrote about it constantly back then, and I kept thinking someone would write in with a vehement disagreement. And no one — not that I remember anyway — ever did. Proving New York's relationship with the Games: a good thing to visit.

But we wouldn't want them to live here.

VAC'S WHACKS

Jeremy Lin leaves New York City on Tuesday. Hallstorms hit New York City on Wednesday. Thank goodness **Tim Tebow** starts training camp soon so we don't have to worry about an influx of locusts.

► **Santonio Holmes** really should try being better at his job before he tries helping me to be better at my job.

► **Bobby Parnell** reminds me of my very first cell phone. I couldn't wait to take it out of the box. And soon enough, couldn't wait to mail it back to Buffalo.

► **Madison Square Garden** stock reportedly lost \$93 million in value in the days after the Knicks let Linsanity leave the building, but that was all before the Garden agreed to bring the NIT back for three more years. So let's wait on those final figures.



Santonio Holmes

John Lovisolo: A brief list of things Knicks fans need right now: a) evidence Raymond Felton is sipping wheat grass from time to time; b) a car service for Jason Kidd; c) plenty of Ensure for Marcus Camby/Kurt Thomas; d) X-ray proof that Iman Shumpert's knee doesn't look like Marvin Webster's; e) proof J.R. Smith isn't studying World B. Free's highlight reels; f) proof Amar'e Stoudemire and Carmelo Anthony are studying

WHACK BACK AT VAC

LeBron James/Dwyane Wade highlight reels; g) Tyson Chandler is still the man; h) Jeremy Lin taking his \$25M and holing up in Vegas with Charlie Sheen and Dennis Rodman.

Vac: I would add: i) complete inactivity at the trading deadline by the Mets, so the conversation shifts

back to the Wilpons again.

@Aisotti: I think Gary Cohen and Ron Darling have reached that part of the season when they just try to say nice things about Jason Bay in hopes that will turn him around.

Vac: I'm not sure even James Lipton could say enough nice things for

that to happen at this point, alas. **Mark Markarian:** Guess what I did last winter? I tuned into a Knicks game. That's something I haven't done since the early '70s, and that was all about Jeremy Lin. Now Jeremy is gone, and with him so is the excitement. I guess my next email to you will be in 2052 or the

day after the Dolans are gone. Thank God George never sold the Yankees to them.

Vac: This is as good a time as any to remind everyone that there was a time, not too long ago, when George Steinbrenner made both the Dolans and the Wilpons look like Wellington Mara. And, by the way, a time not so long before that when Wellington Mara made Giants fans every bit as furious as Dolan makes Knicks fans. True story.

EVERY SUNDAY MIKE VACCARO RESPONDS TO READERS' QUESTIONS AT VAC@NYPOST.COM AND @MIKEVACC ON TWITTER

THE SCORE YOUR AD HERE

WE WATCH A PREGAME show sponsored by Kia Motors, and the NBA champion Miami Heat plays at an arena that has the words "American Airlines" plastered all over the place. The Giants no longer play in Giants Stadium — it's MetLife Stadium now, folks — and the historic Garden in Boston is now the TD Garden.

So maybe the NBA's upcoming fashion faux pas won't bother us one bit. But it will annoy.

Late last week, the NBA announced that, come 2013, jerseys will include advertising patches. No, they won't be of NASCAR proportions (yet), but a 2.5-inch-by-2.5-inch square patch will be placed on every team's jersey.

Teams will go find their own sponsors, and the league could earn as much as \$100 million from the entire arrangement.

Truth is, no one will ever notice, and this isn't some deal with the devil. No, NBA Commissioner David Stern had Lucifer over for lunch a long time ago.

This is, after all, the league that let Blake Griffin jam over a Kia Optima (weak dunk, by the way), in last year's NBA Slam Dunk contest sponsored by Sprite, which was part of an All-Star Weekend sponsored by Sprite and Taco Bell and T-Mobile and yes, Kia, too.

The way Stern and the NBA suits see it, why not add a few more ads to an ad-filled three hours, right? They've sold the rights to the pregame show and the postgame show, sold off the All-Star Weekend, gotten paid to insure that Erik Spoelstra can get only a championship Gatorade bath.

So now, they head to that final piece of real estate. You see Carmelo Anthony, 6-8 high-scoring

forward. Stern sees Anthony, 6-8 human billboard running around with nine other sweaty billboards on live TV on the NBA on TNT, sponsored by Sprint.

And where there are billboards, there are dollar signs for Stern and the league, even if the Burger King logo that will land on King James' jersey in two years never ever convinces me — or anyone — to buy a big greasy heart attack.

Really, can you remember the last time you saw Tony Stewart exit his No. 14 racecar, stared at the Office Depot decal across his chest and went out a bought a desk lamp? Does this advertising even work?

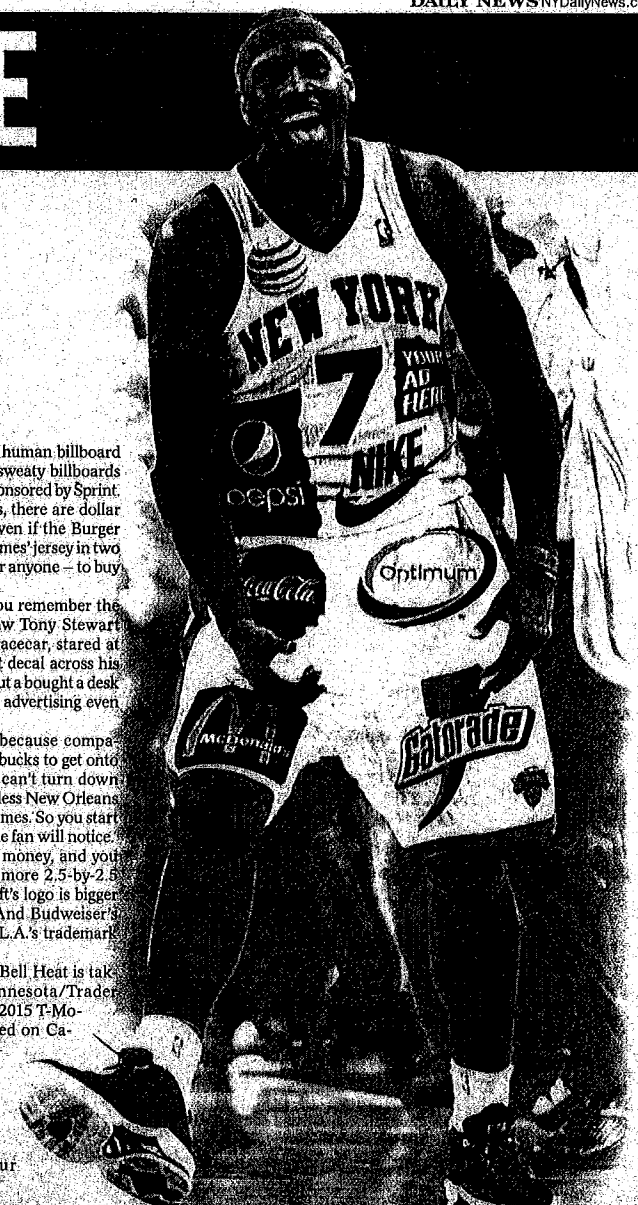
Never mind, because companies will pay big bucks to get onto jerseys, and you can't turn down money, especially if you're the starless New Orleans Hornets who can barely sell out games. So you start with one tiny patch that not a single fan will notice.

Then Samsung shows you the money, and you want more, so you sell off a few more 2.5-by-2.5 patches. Then, suddenly, Microsoft's logo is bigger than Deron Williams' number. And Budweiser's script on the Lakers' jersey, with L.A.'s trademark scrawl relegated to sneaker detail.

And LeBron's Miami/Taco Bell Heat is taking on Kevin Love's Minnesota/Trader Joe's Timberwolves in the 2015 T-Mobile NBA Finals and played on Cablevision Court at Madison Square Garden, a neutral site sponsored by Sony.

On the bright side, Blake Griffin's not dunking over a Kia anymore.

And now a word from our sponsor.



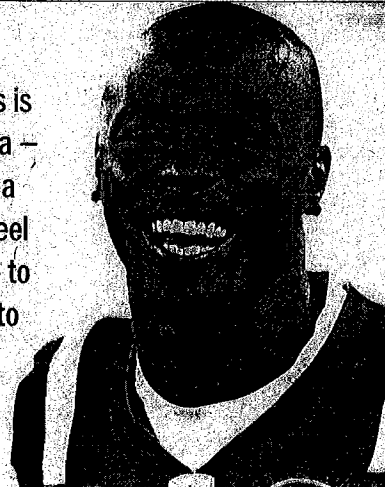
DO YOU KNOW THE SCORE?

Got a hot tip? A juicy rumor or sports celebrity sighting? Drop us a line at thescore@nydailynews.com.

SAY WHAT?

"If you guys — and this is for the New York media — if you guys want to be a part of our team and feel so important, be there to support us. Not to try to break us down."

Santonio Holmes to NFL.com.



WHAT'S ON TV THIS WEEK

- Today**
Golf: Can Tiger Woods break his major title drought and win the British Open? Woods has been stuck on 14 majors, four behind Jack Nicklaus, since 2008. 6 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., ESPN; 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. (tape delay), Ch. 7
- Monday**
Baseball: Two reasons to watch the Yanks' series opener in Seattle: 1) Any game against the light-hitting M's features the possibility of a no-hitter. And 2) Jesus Montero, the former phenom of the Yankee farm, has been heating up for the Mariners. 10:10 p.m., YES
- Tuesday**
Baseball: The Mets may not be serious playoff contenders, but it has become must-see TV when R.A. Dickey is on the mound. He'll look to beat the first-place Nats for the second time in five days. 7 p.m., SNY
- Friday**
Olympic Games: Two weeks of madness begin with the Opening Ceremonies in London. Who will carry the U.S. flag during the Parade of Nations? Will it be swimmer Michael Phelps? LeBron James? Or perhaps a lesser celebrity with an inspirational story? Tune in to find out. 7:30 p.m., Ch. 4 (tape delay)

TOP 5

Jeremy Lin headlines we have yet to use

1

KATE-LIN

If he starts dating Tom Cruise's ex

2

LINCEPTION

If he stars in confusing movie about dreams

3

REUN-LIN

If Mike D'Antoni joins him in Houston

4

LINFIDELITY

If he's caught cheating on his significant other

5

BROOKLIN

If he's dealt to Nets

BY BERNIE AUGUSTINE, MITCH ABRAMSON, JUSTIN TASCH AND EBENEZER SAMUEL

Cheers for Nash in L.A.!

They couldn't splurge for a Sierra Nevada? A couple of Los Angeles-based bros recently welcomed Steve Nash to La-La Land with an ice-cold... Keystone Light. Besch!

Hey everyone's tastes are different, but the last time we drank a Keystone they were in red cups arranged in a triangle at the end of a folding table.

Anyway, the bros - officially @LA_Beer_Bros on Twitter (attempts to reach the bros were unsuccessful) - spotted the new Lakers point guard riding in a yellow cab on the 110 Freeway. They pulled their GMC SUV up alongside Nash's cab and handed him the brew. The bros were plenty fired up when Nash, the sure-handed two-time MVP, didn't fumble the frosty beverage.

The 38-year-old, future Hall of Famer recorded the exchange on his phone and sent the video out to the masses on Twitter. "LA, thanks for the warm welcome," Nash wrote.

Before you hit the brakes on this viral video as nothing more than a publicity stunt staged by Keystone Light, the beer-maker says that it had nothing to do with it.

"While we can take credit for the 'Always Smooth' taste of Keystone Light, we had nothing to do with this video," the company told TMZ.

Perhaps there's a partnership brewing here. Nash is also "Always Smooth," on the freeway and on the court.

IT'S A MATIC OF FACT

If ever there was a sports franchise just begging, no, pleading for attention, it's the game company Strat-O-Matic, which replicates sports contests with rolls of the dice and deep statistical analysis and celebrated its 50th anniversary with a convention in Manhattan last year that attracted in the neighborhood of 600 SABR nerds.

Last week, Strat-O-Matic again shrewdly made headlines by trying to settle the debate of whether this year's U.S. Olympic basketball team, led by confident Kobe Bryant, could beat the original 1992 Dream Team, led by the player Kobe likes to emulate, Michael Jordan. Strat-O-Matic officials played a best-of-seven game series in the company's Long Island offices on Tuesday. Not surprisingly, the Dream Team prevailed, four games to one, but in a situation that should give Knicks fans hope, Carmelo Anthony dropped in a team-high 17 points (LeBron James also had 17) in a 126-125 Game

5 loss. Chances are, Anthony wouldn't be caught dead playing Strat-O-Matic in public, but if the Knicks flounder in the rankings or at the box office this season, perhaps enlisting Strat-O-Matic to handle their marketing and public relations wouldn't be such a bad idea.

PACE MAKER

How do you overcome the tediousness of running and walking? If you're someone who lacks motivation to lace up your sneakers and hit the treadmill or circle the track, you might prefer watching paint dry. You want to get in shape, but you need inspiration to grind through the monotony. Perhaps some music will do the trick.

Problem is, you don't know what kind of tunes to queue up. Louis Armstrong might not get you jacked up to run the New York City marathon, while Slayer is probably not the best choice for a leisurely stroll through the park. You want your songs and pace to be in sync, but you can't concoct the right playlist.

Have no fear. There's an app for that. PaceDJ is an Android and iPhone app (\$1.99) designed to sync the tempo of songs on your phone with the pace of your run, walk or bike ride. The app has built-in pedometer technology to help determine the beats-per-minute that best suits you. It can build mixed playlists by taking your steps-per-minute and finding songs with matching tempos in beats-per-minute.

Along with the app, there's a music discovery service at PaceDJ.com, where you can purchase songs and search for playlists that are conducive to their target pace.

CALLING AN AUDIBLE

Real quarterbacks step to the line of scrimmage and scream audibles to their teammates. So what's with all that button-pressing in video games?

Well, if you have an Xbox 360 and a Kinect, that's about to change with next month's release of Madden '13 football. This year's gridiron game will let gamers handle all their presnap adjustments Peyton Manning-style, putting receivers in motion, shifting the offensive line and even changing plays with voice commands.

It's not nearly as easy as Tom Brady makes it look, either. Once you step to the line, the remnants of the 40-second play clock tick away far more quickly than they did when you were just pressing buttons. And, like a real signal-caller, you really need to enunciate and yell at your console to make sure it registers the right command.

Not that The Score minds. It's a heckuva lot more fun than just pressing a bunch of buttons.



We want to thank Mike Piazza's wife, Alicia Rickter, for giving 'her' thoughts on Roger Clemens and steroids, and giving us a reason to dig up this pic from 'Baywatch Hawaii.'

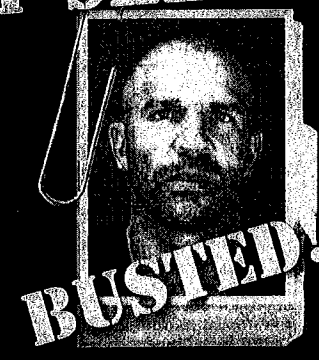
Gratis photo of the week

THE SCORE'S RAP SHEET

There have been so many arrests we don't know where to start. Whether it's the DUI busts of Seahawks back Marshawn Lynch and Titans receiver (and former Rutgers star) Kenny Britt, or the domestic abuse collar of Cowboys receiver Dez Bryant for allegedly assaulting his own mother, all three players showing they're ready for the start of NFL training camps. But we'll focus on new Knick Jason Kidd, who was acting more like a spoiled kid when, while driving through the Hamptons allegedly drunk, smashed his SUV into a utility pole near his Wa-

ter Mill home at about 2 a.m. on July 15. Kidd was subsequently arrested for DWI.

An eyewitness described Kidd as being "wasted." Kidd, who just signed a three-year \$9.5 million deal to return to the tri-state area (how can you forget his Finals appearances with the Nets), may be a 18-year NBA veteran in the NBA and just shy of 40 years old, but he's still behaving like a Delta House frat brother sprung loose. He's lucky that, unlike his SUV, he survived this crash.



- Eric Barlow

USA Today

Transactions - July 22

Previous

■ Adam Russell - RP - Braves

Braves released RHP Adam Russell.

Russell, 28, held a 7.28 ERA in 38 1/3 innings for their Triple-A affiliate. He'll try to latch on elsewhere for the rest of the season.

Jul. 22 - 8:14 a.m. ET

■ Brian Broderick - RP - Cardinals

Cardinals released RHP Brian Broderick.

A Rule 5 pick of the Nationals last year before eventually being returned, Broderick posted a 7.32 ERA in 78 2/3 innings for the Cardinals' Triple-A affiliate. The 25-year-old will look to catch on with another outfit.

Jul. 22 - 8:16 a.m. ET

■ Brandon Gomes - RP - Rays

Rays recalled RHP Brandon Gomes from Triple-A Durham.

They needed a reinforcement following Alex Cobb's early exit Saturday with a right knee contusion. Gomes replaces Cesar Ramos on the roster.

Jul. 22 - 9:50 a.m. ET