

BASEBALL

Some Respect for Rodney... Please

HOUSTON—Trying to gain respect, Kevin Bass has given himself a nickname. The Houston Astros outfielder calls himself Rodney. As in Rodney Dangerfield.

No, Bass doesn't want to go back to school or peddle light beer. "I'd like to be known as a good all-around player," he said. "I'd really like to be given the respect that guys like Glenn Davis and Billy Doran get around the league."

Bass' campaign gained ground in June. The 27-year-old switch-hitter batted .378, with seven homers, 15 RBIs and five stolen bases. He raised his average from .275 to .313 and was named National League Player of the Month.

"Only numbers earn you re-

spect," said Bass. "I haven't hit .300 since my last year in Triple A (1982)."

Bass has been steady in his second year as a full-time player. He raised his average into the .280s in mid-May and has had it on the rise ever since. Usually a better hitter righthanded, he was batting over .300 from both sides of the plate.

Bass' defense, spotty last year, is still occasionally below par. Manager Hal Lanier would like Bass to play right field instead of center, where he sometimes gets poor jumps on balls.

Bass prefers right field, too. But, he explained, "We were flying home from San Diego after our last series last year and Mr. Wagner (General Manager Dick Wagner) asked me if I had played

a lot of center field. I told him I hadn't played there since I was in Double-A ball in 1980. He said this club really had to be strong up the middle, that they wanted someone who could go get the ball and minimize their mistakes.

"When I came to spring training, all that was on my mind. Last year, even if I got a bad jump and caught the ball, I still felt I had messed up. I put a lot of pressure on myself."

This year, Bass has been putting pressure on opposing teams. He has an excellent chance to hit at least 20 home runs and steal 30 to 40 bases. If he could combine those numbers with a batting average in the top 10, Bass no longer would be the Rodney Dangerfield of baseball.

NEIL HOHLFELD

Painful Success for Padres' Show

SAN DIEGO—Eric Show spent much of last season battling the fickle winds of fortune. Now he's being tested by a sterner opponent.

Show, who with 60 victories is the winningest righthanded pitcher in the San Diego Padres' 18-year history, was removed from four straight starts from June 14 to July 1 because of pain in his right elbow. He's suffering from a form of tendinitis—the first arm problem ever for the 30-year-old.

Ironically, Show won each of those starts, and improved his record to 7-4 on July 1 by pitching five innings in a 7-4 victory over Houston. His earned-run average after 17 starts was 2.76, second to Dave Dravecky's 2.60 among San Diego starters.

Show's elbow is a major concern. Manager Steve Boros has been able to rely on only three starters this season: Show, Dravecky and Andy Hawkins. The fourth and fifth spots in the rota-

tion produced five victories in the first 77 games.

Show said the elbow, which had bothered him slightly all year, worsened on June 14, when he pulled himself out of a 12-0 victory over Los Angeles after seven innings. In his next three starts, he lasted seven, five, and five innings.

It is especially frustrating because he is enjoying one of his best seasons. Last year, he posted a 3.09 ERA but managed only 12 victories against 11 losses.

"It kind of bugs me," said Show. "It's hard to deal with, constantly thinking about your arm. But I've been very fortunate not to have had any problems in the past."

Show said he considers elbow tendinitis one of the hazards of pitching regularly. Dravecky, a lefthander, also has had some elbow soreness this year, and reliever Craig Lefferts battled a tender elbow last season.

Boros juggled Show in the rota-

tion, allowing him a week between starts, and made plans to shift the rotation so that Show and Dravecky each would have 10 days between starts around the All-Star break.

An examination of Show's elbow by team physician Dr. Cliff Colwell revealed no bone chips, spurs or fragments. But the soreness remains. Show is taking daily treatments that include cortisone cream, a compound that combats inflammation but does not mask pain.

The soreness has prevented Show from throwing the fastball and hard slider, normally two of his most effective pitches.

"Everybody still considers this to be in the mild stage," Show said. "But it's the kind of thing that you don't want to see become any worse. It's a challenge, in a weird sort of way, to try to win without your best stuff."

MARK KREIDLER

The Word's Out: Leonard Is Hurting

SAN FRANCISCO—The San Francisco Giants tried to hide the seriousness of Jeffrey Leonard's wrist injury, but it's common knowledge now.

In an attempt to ease the pain in a tendon in his right wrist, Leonard submitted to an injection of steroids when the Giants returned from a trip July 3.

When Leonard rolls his top hand while batting, the tendon "flops loose," according to trainer Mark Letendre. It is especially painful when he has to check a swing. Only surgery will correct the condition.

"The word is out," Letendre said. "People know how much he's hurting and they're trying to take advantage of it. I've never seen anyone play with as much pain, but Jeff doesn't want to come out of the lineup."

"That's why we're going the steroids route. It will reduce the inflammation in the wrist. But it's only a one-time deal because steroids make the tendon brittle."

Leonard injured his wrist last

season, but surgery wasn't recommended. Doctors believed that a winter of rest would rectify the problem. It didn't.

The wrist acted up in spring training and has progressively worsened, as has Leonard's performance. As of July 3, he had not hit a home run since May 14, when he hit his sixth, and a 1-for-25 slump had dropped his average to .283. Still, he was tied for the National League lead in game-winning RBIs with 10 and continued to be one of the league's premier left fielders.

"I'm concerned," Manager Roger Craig said. "There's no question the injury affects his power. He doesn't drive the ball with his top hand, and he doesn't have his old pop."

"I'm going to try keeping him out of batting practice and saving him for games. There's no question he's the leader of the club."

Leonard's mood has worsened along with his injury, which caused him to miss three straight games on the trip preceding the

injection. Reporters' attempts to approach him are often greeted with a warning to stay clear. "Only I will decide what I have to do about my wrist," he has said.

Leonard's grit has inspired his teammates and enhanced his stature as their unofficial captain.

"It would be awfully tough to win without Hack," pitcher Mike Krukow said. "He's our emotional catalyst, so we definitely need him in the lineup."

"Hack, so to speak, is the straw that stirs the drink for us, so we like to see him on the field, even if he's only 50 percent."

"Still, Hack isn't the only guy on the club playing with pain. Chili Davis' left shoulder is always popping, and Robby Thompson's right knee is hurting. They're going to need surgery, too."

So far, the Giants have overcome their injuries and remained in the N.L. West race. Whether they can stay afloat with Leonard deteriorating is problematic.

NICK PETERS

N.L. WEST

ASTROS



After missing more than three weeks because of an elbow injury, Houston Astros reliever Charlie Kerfeld came off the dis-

abled list on July 2. For the last 10 days that Kerfeld was out, bullpen ace Dave Smith was unavailable because of an injured muscle in the left side of his chest. Veterans Aurelio Lopez, Frank DiPino and Larry Andersen had to fill in. "The bullpen is one area where I think we're improved since the start of the year," said Manager Hal Lanier. "We've got some guys with experience down there. It isn't like they've never been asked to save a game before." Bob Knepper ran into a dry period in late June. He failed four straight times to win his 11th game and dropped to 10-6. Mike Scott was 3-1 in June, with a 1.64 ERA and 50 strikeouts and nine walks in 49½ innings. "I think he's the most dominant pitcher in the league right now," said second baseman Billy Doran. "Dwight Gooden is outstanding, but when Mike is on, he's as good as anybody."

Nolan Ryan and Dickie Thon came off the disabled list with strong efforts. Ryan allowed five hits and three runs in 11 innings in his first two starts after being sidelined with an elbow injury. Thon hit .421 (8 for 19) in seven games after sitting out with blurred vision. The Astros had to cancel a trade with Philadelphia because of an injury to pitcher Mike Madden. The Astros had traded Madden for reliever Rocky Childress, but Madden complained of a sore arm after the trade was made. After Madden was examined by the Phillies' doctors, the trade was annulled.

By sweeping a three-game series with the Dodgers in Houston, the Astros regained first place in the National League West on June 29 and knocked the Dodgers 7½ games out. "I don't believe in putting the Dodgers up on a pedestal," said outfielder Kevin Bass. "This is a new year, this isn't 1985. It's our turn, or some other club's turn." Several Astros were upset by Los Angeles Manager Tom Lasorda's remark that Houston was only renting first place. "I think we showed Tommy that we weren't just renting," said DiPino. "All you hear is Dodgers this and Dodgers that. I'm sick of hearing it."

Outfielder Terry Puhl was placed on the 15-day disabled list July 2, and outfielder Louie Meadows was recalled from Tucson (Pacific Coast). Puhl was struck on the right elbow during batting practice June 30. Denny Walling batted in six runs against San Diego on July 2 with two home runs off Andy Hawkins and a two-run single off Mark Thurmond. Three of Walling's four homers this year had been at Hawkins' expense.

PADRES



Trying to shake his team out of its inconsistency, San Diego Padres Manager Steve Boros on June 30 sent outfielder

Carmelo Martinez to the bench in

favor of Marveli Wynne, and inserted 22-year-old Lance McCullers in the starting rotation in place of Mark Thurmond. Wynne, a left-handed hitter acquired from Pittsburgh this spring in exchange for minor league pitcher Bob Patterson, had been platooned with Martinez. But Boros decided he could not afford to squander Wynne's superior defense. Wynne helped his cause by hitting .300 in his first 65 games. That left Martinez, a regular for 2½ seasons, out in the cold. "He (Boros) told me he wanted to go with the best defense," Martinez said. "I told him, 'If good defense is all you want, good luck.' There's no way they can tell me I haven't been producing against the left-handers." In 73 at-bats against lefties, Martinez was hitting .301 but had driven in only seven runs. Thurmond has been erratic all season, and mystified the Padres by mixing in one- and three-hitters among several awful starts. After 16 appearances (15 starts), he was 3-7 with a 6.29 earned-run average. "I just hope I can help the team out of the bullpen, and I'll be trying to get some consistency in my pitching," he said. McCullers, a starter all his minor league career before being called up near the end of last season as a set-up reliever, appeared in 37 of the Padres' first 76 games, posting a 4-2 record and a 1.78 ERA.

Shortstop Garry Templeton became the first player to publicly criticize the managing style of Boros, saying the Padres' skipper "needs a mean streak" in him. Templeton said that Dick Williams, who resigned on the first day of spring training and now is guiding Seattle, "was the best thing that happened" to the Padres because "he taught us how to win." Said Templeton: "You can't keep on patting people on the back if they're screwing up every day. You have to kick someone in the butt every once in a while." Some of Templeton's teammates said they agreed with him, while others said he was not speaking for the majority. "I don't need to be motivated," said Tim Flannery. "I've got bills to pay." Templeton also took issue with Boros' habit of shuffling the starting lineup nearly every day. Boros said he has been searching for a solid combination. Asked if he needed to be tougher, he said, "I don't think so. I think you've got to let the players know that the team's got to win, and that you'll do all you can to win."

Templeton, who drove in only five runs in his first 53 games, went on a tear during an 11-game span from June 20 to July 1. He batted .326 (14 for 43), with nine runs scored and nine driven in. After a sluggish start, relief ace Goose Gossage recorded six saves in six appearances, giving him 14 for the season in 19 opportunities.

Steve Garvey endured an 0-for-28 slump during a 12-game trip ending July 2. After slugging 12 home runs in his first 50 games, he hit only one in his next 27.

DODGERS



For the first time in 26 years, the Los Angeles Dodgers failed to post a winning record in any of the first three months. The Dodgers were 10-13 in