

OPENERS

CAUGHT ON THE FLY

Men in blue will get a share of green

Welcome to Caught On The Fly, a fixture in THE SPORTING NEWS since 1886, that will make its new mark each week in this corner. Caught will snag info you won't find elsewhere. Caught will go into the alleys for a good cause. If there's a controversy, Caught will run it down. Caught will take you behind the scenes. Can't wait to get started?

You're catching on...

The major league umpires' pay scale in the just-expired contract was \$41,000 minimum, \$105,000 maximum, and union boss **Richie Phillips** tried to double those figures in early talks with baseball about a new deal. But we hear that after an appropriate period of posturing, Phillips will settle for \$65,000 minimum, \$175,000 max—an average of \$110,000 per man in blue. Still, a hike in the arbiters' postseason bonuses (from \$800,000 to something like \$1.4 million) could earn 29-year veteran **Doug Harvey** as much as \$200,000 in 1991 if he gets a World Series assignment.

Meanwhile, the union's plea for five-man crews is but a ploy. Baseball won't buy it.

Pittsburgh Manager **Jim Leyland** was chastised by a higher authority after his recent epithet-laden shouting match with Pirates outfielder **Barry Bonds**. The imbroglio was the result of MVP Bonds' attempt to pose only for his personal photographer during spring drills. And when Leyland discussed the problem within range of TV cameras, not even ESPN's Bleep-It Unit was able to keep all of the managerial curses off the sound track. Guess who watched the show and made a quick call to Bradenton, Fla.? "Son, I didn't raise you to swear on national television," Leyland's mother said.

Japanese baseball honchos and Cubs Manager **Don Zimmer**, however, would be the first to ask Leyland's mom to grant absolution. Bonds wore out his welcome in Japan—forever—during a U.S. all-star team's exhibition trip last year, once flat-out refusing a summons from manager Zimmer to pinch hit. "Barry Bonds is a jerk," Zimmer says.

Caught on campus: We hear the longtime nickname of former Southern California quarterback **Todd Marinovich** is "Marijuanovich." Todd, who throws and thinks lefthanded, will learn on April 10 whether he'll be accepted for a drug diversion program or have to face misdemeanor

charges for possession of marijuana and cocaine. That's just four days before the 1991 National Football League draft. Pop psychologists in La La Land think Marinovich's antics were an act of rebellion against father/high school coach **Marv Marinovich**, who raised his kid to be "Robo QB" (carry a football in the cradle, eat wheat germ instead of Taco **Bell**



Curses: After getting bleeped by ESPN, Jim Leyland got an earful from mom.

burritos, pump iron instead of dance, etc.)

Speaking of dope, members of the U.S. Olympic Committee entourage were abuzz after viewing a PBS "Frontline" TV program shortly after returning from a recent Pan Am Games fact-finding mission to Cuba. The USOCers were wined and dined one day at the Marina Hemingway resort near Havana, which PBS called a major off-loading spot for Colombian drug runners.

It will be interesting to see how born-again free agent third baseman **Gary Gaetti**, a former Twin, fits in with the California Angels. Some Minnesota players have suggested Gaetti's value as a clubhouse leader went south when Gaetti discovered religion after the '87 season. Angels Manager **Doug Rader** downplays team leadership roles, claiming, "I don't expect any one of my players to be **John Wayne**." But he admits: "I never managed a real God-squadder before. In Texas, a lot of my players weren't smart enough to read a Bible."

From Vero Beach, Fla., comes word that **Tommy Lasorda** admits it was a major con job when he said he expected **Darryl Strawberry** to be the Dodgers' center fielder this season. Lasorda concedes he had a pretty good idea when Los Angeles bought Strawberry that **Brett Butler** was soon to follow. ... Ex-baseball commissioner **Peter Ueberroth**, who has promoted a few heavyweight fights in his time, says **Razor Ruddock**, **Mike Tyson's** opponent on Monday, is overrated. Peter U's forecast: "Slow hands, no chance." ◇



Dopey QB: Marinovich puts future on hold.



Goodbye, Cool Papa: The only thing to stop **Bell**, who made this pitch in '86, was color barrier.

James (Cool Papa) Bell, 1903-1991

Tales of James (**Cool Papa**) **Bell**, who died last Thursday in St. Louis at age 87 after suffering a heart attack February 27, are the stuff of baseball legend.

Satchel Paige, a former roommate in the Negro leagues, claimed **Bell** was so fast he could turn out the light and be in bed before the room got dark.

Then there was the story that **Bell** once hit a bouncer up the middle, only to be struck by the baseball as he slid into second base.

If only the major leagues had been color-blind.

The majors' ban on black players kept **Bell**, a native of Starkville, Miss., in the Negro leagues. From 1922-36, and again from 1942-46, **Bell** played for the St. Louis Stars, Detroit Wolves, Kansas City Monarchs, Pittsburgh Crawfords, Chicago American Giants and Homestead (Pa.) Grays. He earned his nickname for his demeanor under pressure while pitching for the Stars at the age of 19 in 1922.

Bell, who later became a superb center fielder, claimed he stole 175 bases in a 200-game season in 1934. His career batting average, according to existing Negro leagues statistics, was .338.

In 1951, **Bell** was offered a chance to play for the St. Louis Browns, but at age 47 he declined. In 1974, **Bell** became the fifth Negro leagues player enshrined in the Baseball Hall of Fame.

"My biggest thrill in baseball was when they opened the door to the Negro, when

they said we couldn't play and we proved we could," **Bell** once said. "There were more guys before me who didn't have a chance, and I wanted us to prove it all to them, black and white alike."

His legend lives on. ◇

Three men and a nickname

More than 1,500 Golden State fans responded to a recent San Francisco Examiner poll to pick a flashy nickname for the Warriors' high-scoring trio of Tim Hardaway, Mitch Richmond and Chris Mullin.

Among the best Bay Area suggestions: Joint Chiefs of Stats, Pointer Brothers, Barrage a Trois, Totally Tubular Trio (you can't beat the Left Coast) and Bloodthirsty Gym Rats from Hell.

But alas, Hardaway, Richmond and Mullin chose a less-bloodthirsty entry, going with RUN T.M.C.

(Tim, Mitch and Chris, get it?)

Oh well, they're still on the verge of an NBA scoring record. Through last week, Mullin averaged 26.3 points a game, Richmond 24.5 and Hardaway 23.3. Should they finish the season that way, RUN T.M.C. would be the first trio of teammates in league history to average more than 23 points a game.

Sure sound like Gym Rats from Hell. ◇