

BASEBALL

At Age 40, Big Daddy Keeps Rolling

SAN FRANCISCO—Rick Reuschel's first outing as a 40-year-old was nearly perfect.

On May 17, one day after his 40th birthday and five days after he posted his 200th victory, Reuschel retired the first 20 Philadelphia hitters he faced before Tom Ferr singled past first baseman Will Clark. The hit was the only one Big Daddy allowed in the San Francisco Giants' 6-0 victory over the Phillies at Veterans Stadium.

Reuschel, who has five two-hitters in his career, didn't get credit for a one-hitter because he left the game after eight innings.

"He told me he was getting tired and didn't want to pitch the ninth," said Manager Roger Craig. "He's a rare breed. He once told me he didn't care about complete games or shutouts. He just wanted to win."

Reuschel was within one strike

of a shutout May 12 in Montreal when Hubie Brooks reached out and blooped a run-scoring single that cut the Giants' lead in half.

"That's the best I could do all night, so I'll take it," Brooks said. "Big Daddy just keeps rolling along. Before you know it, the game is in the eighth inning and he's shutting you out."

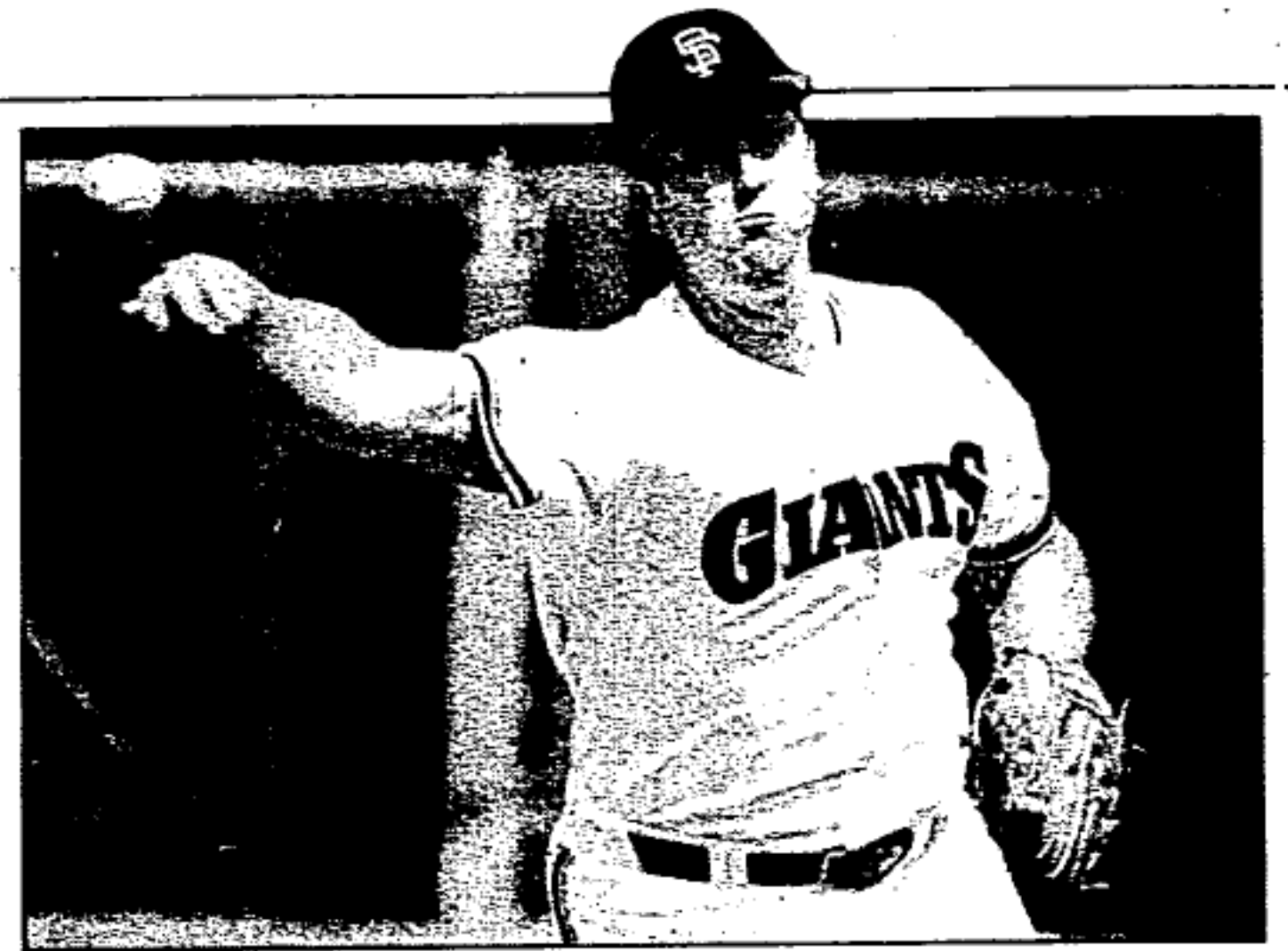
After Brooks' hit, Goose Gosage took the mound and watched as catcher Terry Kennedy gunned down pinch-runner Otis Nixon at second base. The 2-1 victory made Reuschel the 86th pitcher to win 200 games in the majors. There are four other active 200-game winners: American Leaguers Nolan Ryan, Bert Blyleven, Jerry Reuss and Tommy John.

Reuschel was reluctant to grant interviews leading up to his first attempt for the milestone,

but he found time to credit Fred Martin, pitching coach of the Cubs when Reuschel broke into the majors with the club. He also mentioned that as rewarding as the 200th victory would be, nothing could match his first start for Pittsburgh in 1985, a season he began at Hawaii, then the Pirates' Pacific Coast League team.

"I'm just thankful to still be pitching. At one time, I was just looking for a job, period," said Reuschel, who, after rotator cuff surgery, missed the entire 1982 season and spent most of the next two years on the disabled list or in the minors.

The near no-hitter against the Phillies raised Reuschel's record to 7-2 and lowered his earned-run average to 2.16. Although he had not pitched a complete game in 10 starts, he was averaging seven innings per outing.



Rick Reuschel . . . Nearly perfect.

"I really admire Reuschel," said the Expos' Tim Lincecum. "He doesn't really fool anybody, but he throws that good sinker all night."

Said Kennedy: "He plays on hit-

ters' greed, so they defeat themselves. He also tries to keep it as simple as possible, and that's a good lesson for any pitcher to learn."

NICK PETERS

Davis Still Mad at Cubs

ATLANTA—Jody Davis was angry when he left the Chicago Cubs last year, and he was still angry when he returned to Wrigley Field on May 15 in the road grays of the Atlanta Braves.

After catching an average of 140 games for the Cubs from 1982 through 1987, Davis lost his starting job to Damon Berryhill during the '88 season and was traded to the Braves in September for pitchers Kevin Coffman and Kevin Blankenship.

"They used me for eight years, then got rid of me," said Davis. "I was their answer to the 24-man roster."

By that, Davis means he often played hurt. But when a chipped bone in his right big toe sidelined him for a couple of weeks last May and the toe remained sore for months, the door opened for Berryhill. The rookie caught 60 of the Cubs' last 76 games.

"I think they used the injury as an excuse to get rid of me," said Davis. "I just wanted to play. It wasn't like it was a big deal before. They'd run me out there with broken fingers and a broken toe. They just knew from the first day of spring training that Berryhill would (eventually) be the starter."

Davis maintains close ties with many former teammates and describes his relationship with Cubs Manager Don Zimmer as cordial. But he hasn't spoken to General Manager Jim Frey since before the trade.

"I don't think I'll ever be to the point where I can forget that," Davis said. "I don't think I will ever get over it."

Last season was Davis' least productive in Chicago—.229, six homers, 33 RBIs in 88 games. The Braves hoped he would become a potent force in their lineup behind cleanup hitter Dale Murphy, but through May 15 Davis was batting .188 and had only two homers and 13 RBIs in 112 at-bats. He had struck out 30 times.

"I'm not done," said Davis, who needed a cortisone shot in his right shoulder this spring. "I don't feel by any means that I'm



Jody Davis

through. I know I can still play this game."

After the trade, Davis signed a one-year contract extension for a 20 percent cut, the maximum allowed. The tradeoff was that he could live at his home in Gainesville, Ga., and commute to Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium. And even with the cut, he will make \$888,667 this year, more than any other Atlanta player except Murphy.

Davis believes that his problems with Cubs management—he was fined \$500 for running onto the Wrigley Field tarp after the first night game was rained out last year—might have driven him from Chicago even if he had remained the everyday catcher.

"I was tired of Chicago. Not the fans or the players, but the bull and the place," said Davis, who would have been eligible for free agency last winter had he not signed the extension. "I guess I was pretty much burned out over there after eight years. I was tired of the wind blowing in 100 miles an hour every day. It's not that great a place to hit."

JOE STRAUSS

Bip-Bip...It's the Roadrunner

SAN DIEGO—OK, so his first name sounds like a cartoon character's. "Sometimes," Bip Roberts said this spring, "I feel like a cartoon character."

Lately, the 5-7 utilityman has even been acting like one: the Roadrunner.

Roberts was used as a pinch-runner nine times in the San Diego Padres' first 41 games. Three of those times he stole a base, and three other times he flew home from first or second on hits that would have been too short to score any of his teammates.

"Bip is our spark," first base coach Greg Riddoch said. "You can see it in his eyes when he runs down to first base to pinch-run. He always wants to take off. You can tell he's tickled to death to be here."

It wasn't always that way. Installed at second base in 1986 despite a lack of Triple-A experience, Roberts, then 22, found himself in over his head. His life became one of worry and misery,



Bip Roberts

and soon he was on the bench. He spent all of 1987 and all but the last couple of weeks of '88 in the Pacific Coast League. He fell behind Roberto Alomar, and it seemed he had no future with the

Padres—until this spring, when he showed he can also play third base and the outfield. No longer was he cocky and unwilling to change bad habits, as teammates said he was his rookie year.

"He realized that on this team, his value is as a utility guy, and so he has become receptive to whatever we want him to do," Manager Jack McKeon said. "So when it's late in the game, you can see him watching me, always watching me, like a hawk. As soon as I move, he's ready."

The five times he had been allowed to start—twice at second base, twice in right field and once in left—Roberts had legged out three triples, second on the team and one more than he had in all of 1986.

"I was always the fastest guy growing up, and I always figured that my speed would be the thing to get me to the big leagues," he said. "Now I just want to take advantage of it. I want to take every base."

BILL PLASCHKE

Herm Sticks in Center

CINCINNATI—Around the Cincinnati Reds' clubhouse they're beginning to call him Handyman Herm. After batting .324 in eight starts while center fielder Eric Davis nursed a strained hamstring, Herm Winningham was tapped to play in the absence of Kal Daniels, who, just before Davis returned to the lineup, underwent knee surgery that will sideline him for six weeks.

Winningham remained in center, however, with Davis moving to left, Daniels' position.

"Left field will be less strain on Eric's leg for now," said Manager Pete Rose. "And we certainly don't lose anything defensively with Winningham in center."

Throughout Winningham's career, with the Mets, Expos and Reds, scouts have scribbled "good field, no hit" beside his name.

"Maybe I can change that with

all the time I'm getting," said Winningham, 27. "Maybe some scout will see in me something he'd like for his club, and I'll get an everyday chance."

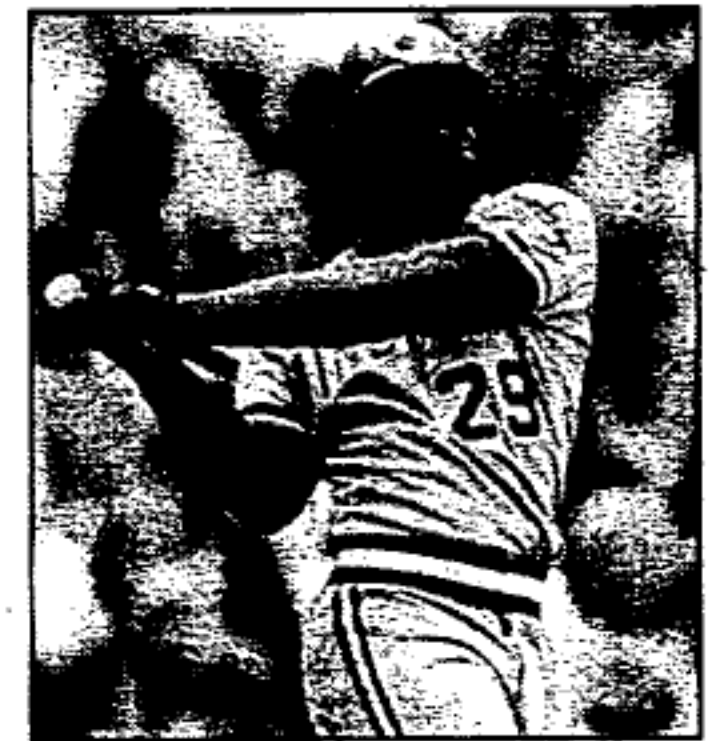
"Not that I'm unhappy here. Sure, I want to play every day. I know I can't here because of the good players we have. I try to make the best of what opportunity I'm given. Hey, I could be in the minors."

Winningham doesn't recoil at the good-field, no-hit label. In fact, he agrees.

"Hitting is the only thing keeping me from being a regular," he said.

To correct that, he has begun to work with Harry (The Hat) Walker, whose philosophy is simple.

"You see the ball, and you react to it. That's it. That's all there is," Winningham said. "Harry tells me to stay back, rec-



Herm Winningham

ognize what the pitch is, look for one I like and go get it."

Winningham had four hits in a 5-2 victory May 14 in St. Louis. He was 0 for 4 the next night until his two-run single with two out in the bottom of the ninth sank Pittsburgh, 6-5.

"And Harry was here to see it," he said.

HAL MCCOY