

# Angels Try TLC on Downing's Arm

By JOHN STREGE

PALM SPRINGS, Calif.—His arm is kept warm with a coating of something called capsolin, a heating compound strong enough to overpower Ben Gay.

It is exercised 15 minutes a day, then is retired to the warmth of the capsolin and its resting place alongside its owner, not to be used for anything, not so much as lobbing a baseball.

It is pampered and protected like no other arm in the California Angels' spring training camp, and for good reason, its is not like any other arm in camp.

It belongs to catcher Brian Downing, and the Angels treat it as if their season hinges on it. Maybe it does.

"If his arm is sound and he can catch 130 or 40 games, we could win our division," Manager Jim Fregosi said.

Sound or not, Downing's arm will never threaten Willie Wilson, or Willie Randolph, for that matter. No matter.

It is Downing's bat that is a threat, but only if he can use it. It is of no use from the bench, where Downing will be should his arm prevent him from catching.

"I can go out and throw a perfect strike from left field without pain," Downing said. "I can play other positions. But we made all those great trades, and I have to catch."

His problem is execution. For lack of a teacher, he was never a student of catching, and is a victim of bad habits.

They are painfully bad habits; for how else can you explain Downing's ability to bench press more than 300 pounds seemingly without effort, while his arm hurt every time he attempted to throw out a runner in 1980?

"When base stealing became more and more prevalent," Downing said, "with Maury Wills going around to every camp teaching everybody how to steal, I tended to get a bit more active behind the plate. I sacrificed everything, including my shoulder, to get the ball down to second in a hurry."

"I've practiced all these bad habits without ever knowing about them since 1975."



Brian Downing . . . Bad habits.

When he throws properly, he throws painlessly and this is his goal for 1981. Old habits are hard to break; new habits are necessary to break them. This is Downing's objective for spring training.

During the winter, he read books on the art of catching, and practiced proper technique in his batting cage in the back yard of his Anaheim home.

His spring training throwing consists of 15 minutes a day.

with Downing fielding a pitch thrown to a different spot and throwing from home to second.

"What I'm doing now is a matter of repetition," Downing said. "When I came back from my injury last year I was throwing pretty well (in practice). But it's not the same as getting into a game. Willie Randolph took off and I immediately went back to my old way of life."

"It's tough to break six years of bad habits. But I figure that if I learned how to hit, I can learn how to throw."

He may learn the proper way to throw, but he will never do it as well as he hits.

In 1979, Downing was the American League's top righthanded hitter, with a .326 average. He played in 148 games, had 166 hits and 75 runs batted in and was instrumental in the Angels winning their first American League West title.

Last year was a lost year for Downing. His left ankle was fractured in his 11th game and he was disabled from April 20 to September 1. He batted .290 with 25 RBIs in 20 games.

His ankle is healed, he said. His bat is as healthy as ever. His arm, then, remains his only liability.

"I'm not looking to totally alleviate the pain," he said. "I can live with some pain. The only thing is I want to play defense as well as I'm capable of playing. Guys who can steal are going to steal. What I'm trying to do is stop the average guy."

Angels Angles: Pitcher Jim Barr faces disciplinary action over an appearance he made in a January 31 benefit game in Riverside, Calif., without receiving permission from the Angels. Barr, who was in the process of overcoming a tendinitis problem in his right shoulder, played first base and made just two easy throws. Nevertheless, Buzzie Bavasi, executive vice-president of the Angels, was miffed and said he would take some action. Conceivably, he could seek a breach-of-contract action. "Section 5-A of the standard player's contract has a stipulation that says you can't play—that's play, not can't pitch—in an off-season game without the club's permission," Bavasi said.

## 'I'll Earn My Pay,' Claudell Assures Braves

By TIM TUCKER

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla.—Claudell Washington seemed to be expecting the questions. The answers came easily, almost naturally.

After a winter of controversy over his five-year, \$3.5 million contract, Washington reported to the Atlanta Braves' spring camp prepared to defend his salary and his playing ability. He did an eloquent job.

One by one, he answered the inevitable questions:

• Can you possibly live up to your contract?

"Look, if I thought I couldn't, I would have signed with Toronto or somebody and gotten out of the country. But I know I can play this game. The controversy over my contract is because I've been a platoon player the past few years, not because of my talent. The talent is there. I will earn my salary."

• Do you resent the other owners using your contract as an example of the excesses of the free-agency system?

"Of course. Every time the owners mention the strike threat, my contract is brought up. They're using me as sort of the symbol. There are a lot of other contracts they could pick on."

• Considering the publicity given your contract, won't there be tremendous pressure on you in Atlanta?

"I know a lot of eyes will be on me, sure. I know it's important to get off to a good start and get the fans in my corner. But I think I'll get a good response from the fans in Atlanta. I'll just play Claudell Washington baseball, and everything will be okay."

• What about charges that you've "dogged" it at times?

"You had to get that from somebody in Chicago. That's the only place I've ever had trouble. Everything I did there, they said was wrong. I had a bad ankle when I was traded there from Texas, and I couldn't run. The writers started saying I wasn't hustling, and they kept saying it the whole time I was there."

"After a while, I got depressed. I didn't want to go to the park. You can only motivate yourself so long until you ask, 'Is it worth it?' I didn't know if this game still had a place for me. I thought it was trying to weed me out. But I never had any problems anywhere except Chicago."

• After being a platoon player for four years, do you have any doubts about your ability to play every day?

"I became a free agent because I wanted to play every day. I figured I had to go out and demand a lot of bucks. I figured if somebody gave me a lot of bucks, they'd be sure to play me."

• Were you surprised by the lack of hoopla surrounding your arrival in camp?

"A lot. I expected reporters to be all over me and cameras everywhere. But I'm glad it hasn't been that way. I'm a person who likes to do his work. I don't like to talk that much. Some people might think I'm egocentric, but I'd describe myself as an introvert, a quiet person who likes to do his job and then spend time with his family."

• Will you be bothered by the controversy and turmoil that always engulfs the Braves?

"You forget I played for some of the wildest organizations: Oakland when Charley Finley owned the team, Texas when Brad Corbett was the owner, the White Sox. All the stuff that happens here is nothing new to me. It's all repetitious."

Manager Bobby Cox predicts that Washington will hit 20 home runs, steal 40 bases and exceed his career average of .280. Told of those expectations, Washington smiled and said, "Oh, yes. I can at least do that."

Wigwam Wisps: First baseman Chris Chambliss is having second thoughts on a new five-year contract and has not signed. "We're still talking; we could still work it out," said Chambliss, who is eligible for free agency after this season. . . . A deal with Cincinnati for Dave Collins fell through, but the Braves continued to attempt to trade outfielder Gary Matthews.

## Papa Jack's Twins Future Rests on Funderburk's Bat

By PATRICK REUSSE

ORLANDO, Fla.—If rookie Mark Funderburk sticks with the Minnesota Twins, Ron Jackson won't. There are some variables that make this less than certain, but it's not a bad premise on which to start.

Funderburk, 24, is 6-4, 225 pounds, and is receiving close scrutiny in the Twins' camp. After his 26-home run, 150-strikeout season at Orlando (Southern) in 1980, it was assumed Funderburk would need at least one more year in the minors.

But then Funderburk went to Mexico this winter and played for Tony Oliva, the Twins' minor league hitting instructor who came back raving about Funderburk's improvement. The Twins' front office started mentioning Mark as the possible solution to the long-standing need for a righthanded power hitter.

If Funderburk makes it, it will be as the righthanded designated hitter. And that means Jesus Vega, considered the probable successor to Jose Morales as the righthanded DH, will be available to play first base.

And that means Jackson, who won a \$200,000 salary in arbitration, would be considered expendable.

The lack of respect has caused distress in Jackson, who hasn't fulfilled expectations in two years in Minnesota. In 1980, Papa Jack had five homers and 40 RBIs.

When he was awarded the \$200,000 (instead of the \$130,000 figure submitted by the Twins), there was guffawing among the media. One telecaster made note of Jackson's home run output in 1980 and said, "Just think how much money Papa Jack could be making if he hit, say, eight or nine home runs."

"I heard that," Jackson said. "People should be happy to see you make money. Movie stars have been making money, but nothing is said. Then players get up where they can start making money and people get on you."

Jackson, eligible for free agency after this season (or sooner, if the Twins release him), went to Minnesota before the 1979 season. It was a trade engineered by former Manager Gene Mauch, who saw Jackson as a hitter with power potential. Mauch also wanted to get rid of Dan Ford.

Jackson has not displayed much of that power, and his inability to deliver in RBI situations has become almost legendary among Minnesota fans. During his early 1980 slump there were suggestions Jackson's nickname—Papa Jack—should be, instead, "Papa Up."

But Jackson thinks he has at least one ally in management. Manager Johnny Goryl, who has said that Jackson is his first baseman.

"Goryl told me not to listen to all that stuff," Jackson said. "He knows what I can do. If I'm healthy I'll hit, I'll play good defense, I'll play good all-round ball. And the players look up to me as being one of the leaders, especially the black guys."

Indeed, one of the players who gave Funderburk much encouragement last spring—Mark's first in a big league camp—was Jackson.

There was the intrasquad game in which Funderburk struck out four times against a pitching machine. "That machine had good stuff," Funderburk said, now smiling about the embarrassment.

Doubletakes: Pitcher Al Williams finally arrived from Venezuela after solving his "visa problems" and then signed his contract. . . . Outfielder Ken Landreaux still hasn't signed, although agent Tom Reich had agreed to a contract weeks earlier. Landreaux has no bargaining leverage—he can't become a free agent for three more seasons and he missed the arbitration period.