

Ferguson Thinks His Way to Stardom

By ROSS NEWHAN

LOS ANGELES—Joe Ferguson is the first Dodger to wear No. 13 since Ralph Branca.

That's right, Bobby Thomson's Ralph Branca, a man who visits Dodgertown each spring, puts an arm around Ferguson's back and says:

"Son, you've got to get rid of that number, it's very unlucky."

Ferguson smiles sympathetically at Branca and shakes his head. He has worn 13 since Little League when the taller kids got the higher numbers. He wears it as the Dodgers' most exciting power hitter since Frank Howard, a home run threat on a club that did not expect to have one, and all-star candidate, a catcher to compare with Johnny Bench. Sparky Anderson, the Cincinnati manager, made the comparison himself.

"I rate Ferguson as the best young power hitter to come into the National League in some time," said Sparky. "No one will ever be the defensive catcher Bench is, but Fergy can be that type of hitter."

THE 26-YEAR-OLD Dodger sat by his locker and analyzed the comparison.

"To be mentioned in the same breath as Bench is an awfully nice compliment," said Ferguson, "but he's who he is and I'm who I am. We each do things that the other doesn't."

"I don't believe, for example, that I'll ever be the power hitter he is. I have to hit the ball where it's pitched and wait until the pitcher comes to me before I swing for a home run. Bench is capable of pulling everything."

Ferguson has pulled no punches through the first two months of 1973, providing Bench with an unheralded challenge for the National League's home run and RBI lead.

Through 41 games Ferguson had driven in 33 runs, hit nine homers and was batting .298. He had driven in at least one run in 22 games and had not gone more than two games without an RBI.

This is a young man who says that hard-headedness was the reason he never hit more than 16 home runs during five minor league seasons.

HE CREDITS OSSIE VIRGIL and Tommy Lasorda for changing his mental and physical posture at the plate, making him an aggressive hitter who does not overswing, a thinking hitter who does not overthink.

This is the young man with the strength of a power hitter, but not until last year did Ferguson begin to draw upon that power, employing his size in an aggressive manner that would seem natural.

Joe Vance Ferguson is 6-2 and 200 pounds. The back is that of a blacksmith.

"I had always swung hesitantly, I had always been afraid of striking out," he said, reflecting on his development.

"I think it was a combination of a lot of things. I was hard-headed. I lacked concentration. I was actually late in maturing physically. I mean, I was 5-9 in high school and only six feet when I played basketball at University of Pacific.

"PEOPLE KEPT TALKING about aggressiveness, but I couldn't picture it. The first step was a change in my stance, the second was a change in my thinking."

And the catalyst was the September performance of Steve Yeager, a skilled defensive catcher who joined the Dodgers from Albuquerque in August, had only one hit in his first 34 at-bats and then batted .375 during the final month.

"Yeager's performance left me more or less at the crossroads," said Ferguson. "I knew I'd have to have a big spring to take the job away from Steve. I went to winter ball intent on becoming a new hitter."

The theories that Lasorda had preached to Ferguson at Albuquerque were implanted by Virgil in Venezuela, where he powered 19 homers and set a league record with 63 RBIs in 81 games.

Once an upright hitter who had difficulty getting at the low pitch, Ferguson's stance was changed so that he could go to the opposite field while not diminishing his power when he got a pitch he could pull.

"THAT WAS THE KEY," he said. "Whenever I want I can show the pitcher that I have the ability to hit the ball the other way. Given that capability, I've immediately put the pitcher on the defensive."

"That is the whole basis of my confidence and aggressiveness. I hit major league pitchers in Venezuela and I don't think anybody in this league has good enough stuff to

get me out consistently.

"If a guy was capable of making his pitch every time, he'd be in a higher league. And if he doesn't want to pitch to me, I'll take my walk. With our team I'm just as valuable on first."

"Selectivity is the difference between aggressiveness and overswinging. So is being a thinking hitter, but it takes time to find out about concentration and patience."

"EVERYBODY HAS THE capability to think, but a hitter can't afford to overthink. His decisions must be made before the pitch is made, not when it's on its way."

Ferguson would seem on his way to a banner season, but he has not set goals.

"I don't even want to know what I'm hitting," he said. "I wish they wouldn't put the averages on the scoreboards. You look up and see yourself hitting .300 and you tend to become complacent. Besides, hitting isn't my primary function."

"The Dodgers' basic strength is still in its pitching staff and if I don't do the job defensively, I'm not going to stay in the lineup no matter what I hit."

Ferguson was an outfielder initially. Lasorda suggested he become a catcher three years ago.

"The organization was in need of catchers," explained the Dodger coach, "and here was a guy with a tremendous arm and the hands of a basketball player."

DEL CRANDALL TAUGHT Ferguson the rudiments while the former Milwaukee catcher was managing in the Los Angeles farm system.

"I had done everything else in baseball, including some pitching in college," said Ferguson, "so the challenge was okay with me."

"Besides teaching me how, Crandall convinced me of its importance."

"You're going to be a good hitter, a guy who'll get a lot of home runs and RBIs," he'd say. "But think of your catching as the most important thing you do for the club."

Take your satisfaction from that, not your offensive totals."

Refinements in Ferguson's style are still being made by Chris Cannizzaro, the Dodgers' reserve catcher. The pair confer before and after every game.

"We have the type staff that makes it easy on a young catcher," said Ferguson. "They're mature, always thinking, always around the plate. I have confidence in my arm and I'm generally satisfied with my progress."

Ferguson's progress delights Manager Walter Alston, of course, but he is also concerned about what is happening to Yeager.

Alston considers the two his club's best young catchers since Roy Campanella and John Roseboro.

YEAGER, HOWEVER, was displaced by Ferguson's big spring and catches only when Joe requires a rest.

Ferguson's rest isn't really a rest. He simply moves to an outfield position.

"It's more of a matter of keeping Yeager sharp and Fergy's bat in the lineup," explained Alston.

Ferguson's bat has been such that he already has more RBIs than three Dodger catchers (Cannizzaro, Duke Sims and Dick Dietz) totaled last year prior to Yeager's arrival.

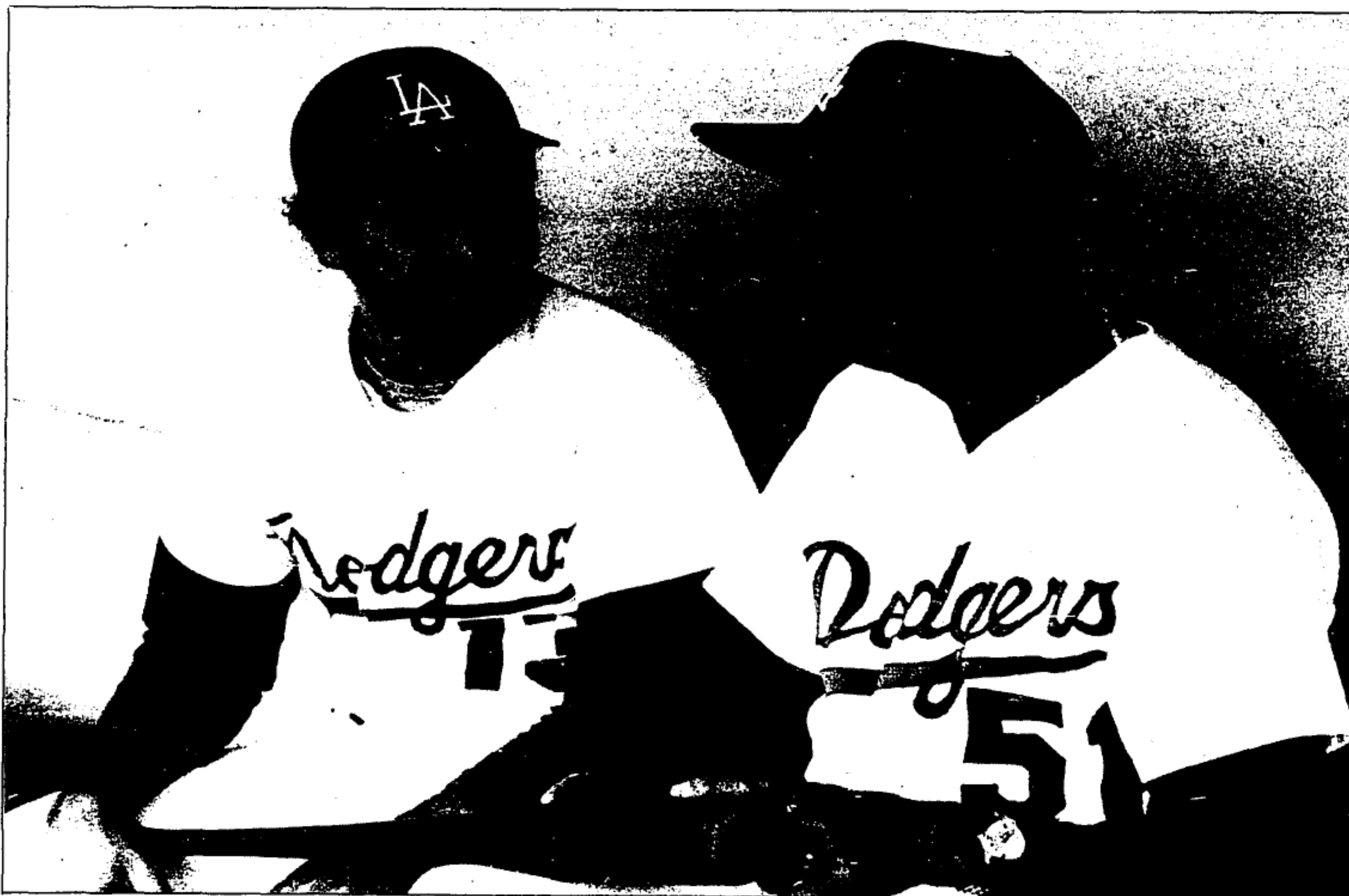
Born in San Francisco and raised in the Bay Area, a Giant fan who hated the Dodgers, Ferguson went to UOP on an athletic scholarship after rejecting a draft by the Baltimore Orioles as a high school senior.

"I was a midget (5-9) pitcher then," he said, smiling, "and I felt I'd be better off with a college education."

As a thin, 6-0 playmaking guard, Ferguson started on the two UOP basketball teams that reached the NCAA regionals, losing first to Texas Western and then to UCLA.

He was the Dodgers' seventh selection in the 1968 free agent draft.

Now he is a write-in candidate for the All-Star Game, a man whose No. 13 seems unlucky only to opposing pitchers and a former Brooklyn righthander named Ralph Branca.



JOE FERGUSON gets some batting tips from an expert source. Dodger coach Dixie Walker, who was a Dodger hitting star and a favorite of the fans in the 1940s, when the club was in Brooklyn.

Dodger Boo Birds Tied Into Knots by 'Ropes'

By BOB HUNTER

LOS ANGELES—It was only a couple of years ago that Bill Russell, a strawberry blond as wholesome as his native Pittsburg, Kansas, was listed as a Dodger outfielder.

Walter Alston, after sizing up the lithe, young speedster at Vero Beach, commented, "He might be our best outfielder, but I think he can become a great infielder."

Russell was eyed clinically by all the coaches and brass, with Al Campanis, vice-president in charge of player personnel, predicting:

"If Russell can hit .250, he'll be an All-Star shortstop."

Last season, "Ropes," as he is

called in the clubhouse, replaced Maury Wills when management dedicated itself to youth in the final half of the campaign.

DESPITE SHARING generously in the epidemic of errors that engulfed the rookies, Russell impressed Wes Parker to this extent:

"When Ropes has played his last game, he'll be recognized as one of the best-fielding shortstops baseball has known."

This season again started as a rocky road for Alston's young infielder but, quite suddenly, Russell found himself after an unusually abusive verbal beating from the hometown fans.

When he did, the entire team

performed an abrupt turn-around and, from 7½ games back, opened a 12-game home stand May 22 just two behind.

HE HAD NOT made an error on the previous junket, in which the revived Dodgers averaged more than 11 hits a game to win six of nine and scramble into contention.

"Give Monte Basgall credit," insisted Campanis.

The Dodger coach had worked for hours, days, months with Russell in the Arizona Instructional League, in the minors, at Vero Beach and at Dodger Stadium before games.

But it was in a room in the Chase Hotel on the club's first visit to St.

Louis that Russell blossomed into the shortstop they said he would be.

The boo-birds just had finished pecking him apart in Los Angeles so, after conferring with Alston, both Campanis and Basgall asked him to come to their room.

THERE, FOR several hours, Basgall reviewed the techniques of balance, with a shuffle step to help his throwing, and shorter strides to smooth his fielding.

The change bordered on the dramatic. It was obvious Russell walked out of that room a major league shortstop.

"It was simply a matter of him getting his confidence," said Basgall, who shrugged off any of the credit. "When his throwing came, his fielding came."

Russell conceded the booing, which caused Sparky Anderson to poke a sharp verbal blast at the Los Angeles fans, had disturbed him.

"People kept telling me not to let it get me down, but for a young player, that's an impossibility," explained Ropes.

"YOU HAVE two choices, to fight it, or let it get you down."

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GAME ONE

L.A. Left Dozen in Defeat

LOS ANGELES—Oakland began its quest for a third consecutive world championship by defeating Los Angeles, 3-2, in the Series opener October 12.

Reggie Jackson started the A's scoring in the second inning with a 400-foot home run to left field off Andy Messersmith.

Oakland went on top, 2-0, in the fifth after starter Ken Holtzman, the first A's hurler to bat this season, doubled and advanced to third on a wild pitch. Bert Campaneris then put down a suicide squeeze bunt on a 2-and-2 pitch, scoring Holtzman.

"We take runs any way we can get them," said A's Manager Alvin Dark of the squeeze strategy.

"I was surprised," Campaneris

said of the move, relayed orally by third base coach Bobby Winkles.

Los Angeles scored in the fifth after Dave Lopes reached base on Campaneris' bobble. Lopes came home on Bill Buckner's hit-and-run single to right field, where Jackson juggled the ball for an error and an unearned run.

The A's scored their final run in the eighth when Campaneris singled, advanced on Bill North's sacrifice bunt and scooted home as third baseman Ron Cey threw wildly to first after fielding a grounder by Sal Bando. Jackson followed with a fly ball to right-center field. Right fielder Joe Ferguson cut in front of center fielder Jim Wynn and fired to catcher Steve Yeager, who tagged out

Bando.

Wynn, playing with a bandaged right elbow because of bone chips, was not surprised by Ferguson's play.

Just prior to the fly ball, Ferguson had told Wynn, "If he (Jackson) hits the ball anywhere in this area, I'll take it."

Wynn, aware of his own throwing limitations, agreed.

"I thought sure I had a RBI," said Jackson. "The throw was perfect. If Ferguson had bounced it, he wouldn't have gotten Bando."

The Dodgers notched their final run in the ninth on Wynn's two-out home run. After a single by Steve Garvey, Jim Hunter replaced winner-reliever Rollie Fingers and got Ferguson on strikes to end the game.

Los Angeles outit the A's, 11-6, but stranded 12 runners. Only two of the five runs scored by the two clubs were tallied without the help of misplays.

The game was reminiscent of the first 1973 Series game when Oakland defeated New York, 2-1, despite being outit, 7-4. Holtzman also had a hit in that contest—a double touching off a two-run spurt.

World Series opener, Mike Marshall continued to thrive on the dramatic, clinching Los Angeles' 3-2 Series-squaring victory over Oakland October 13.

Marshall entered the game in the ninth inning when the Dodgers faltered. Winning pitcher Don Sutton opened the inning with a 3-0 lead but hit Sal Bando and departed on a check-swing double by Reggie Jackson.

Joe Rudi greeted Marshall with a two-run single, but the Dodger reliever struck out Gene Tenace. Pinch-running specialist Herb Washington then replaced Rudi at first base, only to be picked off by Marshall for the second out. Pinch-hitter Angel Mangual ended the game by striking out on three pitches.

The Dodgers had taken a 1-0 lead in the second inning against loser Vida Blue. With one out, Ron Cey walked and Bill Russell followed with a hit-and-run single down the right field line. A single by Yeager scored Cey.

In the sixth inning, Steve Garvey beat out an infield single and Joe Ferguson swatted a two-run homer over the center field wall for a 3-0 bulge.

Held to two hits for seven innings, Oakland threatened in the eighth on pinch-singles by Jim Holt and Claudell Washington. But after shortstop Russell booted Bert Campaneris' grounder to fill the bases, Sutton got Bill North to ground to Russell for an inning-ending double play.

Russell tagged the bag and threw to first, where Garvey had to make a backhanded pickup to get the Dodgers out of the inning.

Oakland Manager Alvin Dark called Garvey's pickup a "phenomenal play. If he misses the ball, we score two runs."

Garvey commented: "Billy has been having arm trouble this year and he has had to adjust his throwing. I was ready for it. On a throw like that, it is better for me if the throw is in the dirt as opposed to hitting the grass. If a low throw hits the grass, you don't know what it's going to do."

A record Dodger Stadium crowd of 55,989 watched the game.



Joe Ferguson . . . In Record Company

Fergy Flubbed in Game 3

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of the plate. As Joe Ferguson shifted behind the plate in a move to get Willie Crawford's bat in the lineup, grabbed for the ball, it squirted out of his mitt. North crossed the plate with the first run and Bando followed moments later on Joe Rudi's single.

"The ball was in the webbing," explained Ferguson, "and I more or less threw it out trying to close the mitt. It would have been a close play if I had gotten it. I was going as fast as I could just to get to the ball."

In the fourth, a walk to Green and a sacrifice put a runner on second base with one out. After North flied out, Campaneris singled to center to score Green and when Wynn's throw skipped through players and rolled to the backstop, Campy raced to third where he was stranded.

FERGUSON WAS charged with his second error on the play. His two miscues placed Joe in record company. Other catchers with two errors in one Series game were Lou Criger, Red Sox, on October 1, 1903, and Jimmy Wilson, Cardinals, October 7, 1928.

"I dove at the ball just trying to stop it," recalled Ferguson, fielding hero of the first game and batting standout of the second contest.

"You had the pitcher and Garvey standing on the mound. That causes confusion right there. You can't yell. It happens so fast that nobody's going to listen. We just didn't do the right thing on that play. The ball should never have been thrown there. We had no chance at home plate."

After Campaneris' single, Jim Brewer, Charlie Hough and Mike Marshall blanked the A's the rest of the way, Marshall yielding the only hit along the way, an eighth-inning single to Tenace. When Dark sent Herb Washington in to pinch-run for Tenace, the stage was set for a possible replay of the second-game episode in which Marshall picked Washington off the bag. This time, however, the designated runner stuck close to the base until Green flied to left field, when he ran to second base and watched Buckner catch the ball.

WHEN DARK removed Tenace, after having taken out Jackson earlier in the same inning, the Oakland manager was asked if he did not fear this depletion of power

too risky in view of the closeness of the score.

"I didn't feel there was any danger," he replied. "Washington (Claudell, Jackson's right field replacement) is a real good outfielder. He can really cover the ground. And Jackson, while his leg (hamstring) is a lot better, still isn't 100 percent. Holt (Jim, who replaced Tenace) is a good first baseman, too, and I felt Herbie (Washington) could score on a double or steal a base."

Until they scored in the eighth inning, the Dodgers moved only one runner as far as third base. And Lopes was solely responsible for that advance. After leading off with a first-inning single, he stole second and third, where he expired. His double theft in one inning marked the seventh time the feat had been performed, the last previous time by Lou Brock, Cardinals, October 12, 1967.

In winning his fourth World Series game without a loss, Hunter was undisturbed by Buckner's home run that sent him packing in the eighth.

The 25-game winner, whose 25 gopher pitches led the Oakland staff in season play, looked at it this way:

"There were a couple of folks up here from North Carolina who wanted to see a home run. They never saw one before."

Series Facts, Figures

GAME 1

Attendance—55,974.
Gross receipts—\$694,110.
Net receipts—\$694,110.
Commissioner's office share—\$104,116.50.
Players' share—\$353,996.10.
Leagues' and clubs' share—\$58,999.35.

GAME 2

Attendance—55,989.
Gross receipts—\$694,809.
Net receipts—\$694,809.
Commissioner's office share—\$104,221.35.
Players' share—\$354,352.59.
Leagues' and clubs' share—\$59,058.76.

GAME 3

Attendance—49,347.
Gross receipts—\$539,425.
Net receipts—\$539,425.
Commissioner's office share—\$80,913.25.
Players' share—\$275,106.25.
Leagues' and clubs' share—\$45,851.12.

GAME 4

Attendance—49,347.
Gross receipts—\$539,425.
Net receipts—\$539,425.
Commissioner's office share—\$80,913.25.
Players' share—\$275,106.25.
Leagues' and clubs' share—\$45,851.12.

GAME 5

Attendance—49,347.
Gross receipts—\$539,425.
Net receipts—\$539,425.
Commissioner's office share—\$80,913.25.
Players' share—\$275,106.25.
Leagues' and clubs' share—\$45,851.12.

GAME TWO

Marshalling Behind Mike, Dodgers Score Only Win

LOS ANGELES—After appearing in 106 regular-season games, two playoff games and the

Iron Mike

Oakland	AB	R	H	PO	A	E
Campaneris, ss	4	0	1	0	1	0
North, cf	4	0	0	3	0	0
Haney, c	0	0	0	2	0	0
Bando, 3b	3	1	0	0	1	0
Jackson, rf	3	1	2	2	0	0
Rudi, lf	4	0	1	3	0	0
H. W'gton	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tenace, lb	3	0	0	8	0	0
Fosse, c	2	0	0	5	0	0
Alou	1	0	0	0	0	0
Odom, p	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mangual	1	0	0	0	0	0
Green, 2b	2	0	0	1	2	0
Holtzman, p	1	0	1	0	0	0
Maxvill, 2b	0	0	0	0	0	0
Blue, p	2	0	0	0	1	0
W. W'gton, cf	1	0	1	0	0	0
Totals	31	2	6	24	5	0

Los Ang.	AB	R	H	PO	A	E
Lopes, 2b	4	0	0	3	2	0
Buckner, lf	4	0	0	3	0	0
Wynn, cf	3	0	0	0	0	0
Garvey, lb	4	1	2	7	0	0
Ferguson, rf	3	1	1	0	0	0
Cey, 3b	3	1	0	2	1	0
Russell, ss	3	0	1	2	3	1
Yeager, c	3	0	2	10	1	0
Sutton, p	2	0	0	0	1	0
Marshall, p	0	0	0	0	0	1
Totals	29	3	6	27	9	1

Oakland	0	0	0	0	0	2
Los Angeles	0	1	0	0	2	0

Oakland	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO
Blue (L)	7	6	3	3	2	5
Odom	1	0	0	0	1	2

Los Ang.	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO
Sutton (W)	8	5	2	2	2	9
Marshall (S)	1	1	0	0	0	2

*Pitched to two batters in ninth.
Bases on balls—Off Blue 2 (Wynn, Cey), off Odom 1 (Ferguson), off Sutton 2 (Tenace, Jackson).
Strikeouts—By Blue 5 (Buckner, Sutton, Lopes, Wynn 2), by Odom 2 (Wynn, Garvey), by Sutton 9 (Campaneris 2, North, Rudi, Fosse, Blue 2, Green, Alou), by Marshall 2 (Tenace, Mangual).

aStruck out for Fosse in eighth. bSingled for Green in eighth. cRan for Holt in eighth. dSingled for Blue in eighth. eStruck out for Odom in ninth. fRan for Rudi in ninth. Runs batted in—Yeager, Ferguson 2, Rudi 2. Two-base hits—Campaneris, Jackson. Home run—Ferguson. Stolen base—Ferguson. Sacrifice hit—Sutton. Double plays—Sutton, Lopes and Garvey; Russell and Garvey. Wild pitch—Sutton. Hit by pitcher—By Sutton (Bando). Left on bases—Oakland 5, Los Angeles 6. Umpires—Kunkel (A.L.) plate, Harvey (N.L.) first base, Denkinger (A.L.) second base, Olsen (N.L.) third base, Luciano (A.L.) left field, Gorman (N.L.) right field. Time—2:40. Attendance—55,989.

Squeezed

Oakland	AB	R	H	PO	A	E
Campaneris, ss	2	1	1	0	5	1
North, cf	2	0	0	4	0	0
Bando, 3b	4	0	0	1	1	0
Jackson, rf	3	1	1	0	0	1
C. W'gton, rf	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rudi, lf	4	0	2	6	0	0
Tenace, lb	3	0	1	6	1	0
Fosse, c	3	0	0	7	0	0
Green, 2b	3	0	0	3	2	0
Holtzman, p	1	0	0	0	0	0
Maxvill, 2b	0	0	0	0	0	0
Holtzman, p	1	1	1	0	1	0
Fingers, p	2	0	0	0	0	0
Hunter, p	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	28	3	6	27	10	2

Los Ang.	AB	R	H	PO	A	E
Lopes, 2b	5	1	0	5	0	0
Buckner, lf	5	0	2	2	0	0
Wynn, cf	4	1	1	1	0	0
Garvey, lb	5	0	2	6	1	0
dPaciorek	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ferguson, rf-c	3	0	0	2	1	0
Cey, 3b	3	0	1	0	5	1
Russell, ss	4	0	1	2	0	0
Yeager, c	3	0	1	9	1	0
aCrawford, rf	1	0	1	0	0	0
Messersmith, p	3	0	2	0	4	0
bJoshua	1	0	0	0	0	0
Marshall, p	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	37	2	11	27	12	1

Oakland	0	1	0	1	0	1
Los Angeles	0	0	0	1	0	0

Oakland	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO
Holtzman	4 1/2	7	1	0	2	3
Fingers (W)	4 1/2	4	1	1	1	3
Hunter (S)	1/2	0	0	0	0	1

Los Ang.	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO
Messersmith (L)	8	5	3	2	3	8
Marshall	1	1	0	0	1	1

Bases on balls—Off Holtzman 2 (Ferguson, Wynn), off Fingers 1 (Cey), off Messersmith 3 (Holtzman, Jackson, North), off Marshall 1 (Fosse).

Strikeouts—By Holtzman 3 (Lopes, Ferguson, Messersmith), by Fingers 3 (Garvey, Yeager, Russell), by Hunter 1 (Ferguson), by Messersmith 8 (Tenace, Green, North, Bando 2, Rudi, Fosse 2, by Marshall 1 (Fingers).

aSingled for Yeager in eighth. bGrounded out for Messersmith in eighth. cPopped out for Green in ninth. dRan for Garvey in ninth. Runs batted in—Jackson, Campaneris, Wynn. Two-base hit—Holtzman. Home runs—Jackson, Wynn. Sacrifice hits—Campaneris 2, North, Tenace. Caught stealing—Buckner, North. Double plays—Campaneris, Green and Tenace; Ferguson and Yeager. Wild pitch—Messersmith. Hit by pitcher—By Fingers (Ferguson). Left on bases—Oakland 6, Los Angeles 12. Umpires—Gorman (N.L.) plate, Kunkel (A.L.) first base, Harvey (N.L.) second base, Denkinger (A.L.) third base, Olsen (N.L.) left field, Luciano (A.L.) right field. Time—2:43. Attendance—55,974.