

Grich Was Best in Minors; Will He Get Shot With O's?

By ROBERT MATTHEWS

ROCHESTER, N. Y. — There were three reasons **Bobby Grich** —THE SPORTING NEWS' Minor League Player of the Year—spent most of the 1971 season tearing up the International League as a member of the Rochester Red Wings. They are Brooks Robinson, Dave Johnson and Mark Belanger. "Those three people have won us three straight American League championships," Baltimore Manager Earl Weaver said during a late-summer exhibition stop in Rochester. "Grich is better than a lot of guys in the big leagues today, but he'd be sitting on our bench."

Grich, 22, has been on Baltimore's bench before. He was recalled from Rochester late in 1970—after batting .388 with nine home runs—and watched the World Series from the dugout.

"I don't like to sit and watch other people play ball," Grich said after he was pased from Baltimore's 1971 spring roster. "The Orioles sent me to Rochester to play a season at shortstop and improve my power stroke at the plate."

Switched to Short

Grich, a unanimous choice as the International League's most valuable player, fulfilled both assignments brilliantly.

After playing the entire 1970 season at second base, Grich switched to short for this season and was chosen the league's best defensive infielder in a poll of IL managers.

"People always are comparing me with Belanger and I think my own fielding is underrated," Bobby said.

"I have a lot of pride in my fielding and I work hard at it."

Dave Leonhard, who pitched with both Rochester and Baltimore in 1971, is a Grich booster.

"Belanger may have just a shade more range," Leonhard said, "but the difference is hardly noticeable. They both can throw well, too. The big difference is in their bats. Bobby has so much more power."

No More Slap Hits

Grich, predominantly a slap hitter until 1971, led the International League in batting (.336) and home runs (32). He added homers in the IL All-Stars' victory over the Yankees and in Rochester's exhibition decision over Baltimore. Then he slugged five in consecutive playoff and Junior World Series games.

"Baltimore batting coach Jim Frey made me into a hitter by teaching me to punch the ball into right field during the 1968 season," Grich said. "This year I concentrated less on hitting to the opposite field and more on going for the long ball. My average fell a little, but the big jump in homers made up for it."

The Orioles finally recalled Grich after the fifth game of the Junior World Series, with Rochester leading Denver, three games to two. The Wings dropped the next game—their 11th straight defeat without Grich, who spent some weekends on military duty—before finally winning the decisive seventh game.

"I felt bad about leaving Rochester before we got the job done," Grich admitted, "but truthfully I can't say that I was disappoint-

ed about rejoining Baltimore."

Grich arrived at the stage of the American League season where the Tigers had cut Baltimore's lead to five games. Mark Belanger was injured and Weaver immediately inserted Grich into the second spot in the batting order. Bobby got three hits in that game, as the O's defeated the too-late Tigers. He batted .300 and hit his first major league home run through the final weeks of the regular season. Baltimore didn't lose a game in the stretch.

"We didn't feel guilty about recalling Grich while the Junior World Series still was going on," Weaver said. "Belanger was hurt and Bobby was the man we needed. He probably shouldn't have been down there (Rochester) that long, anyway."

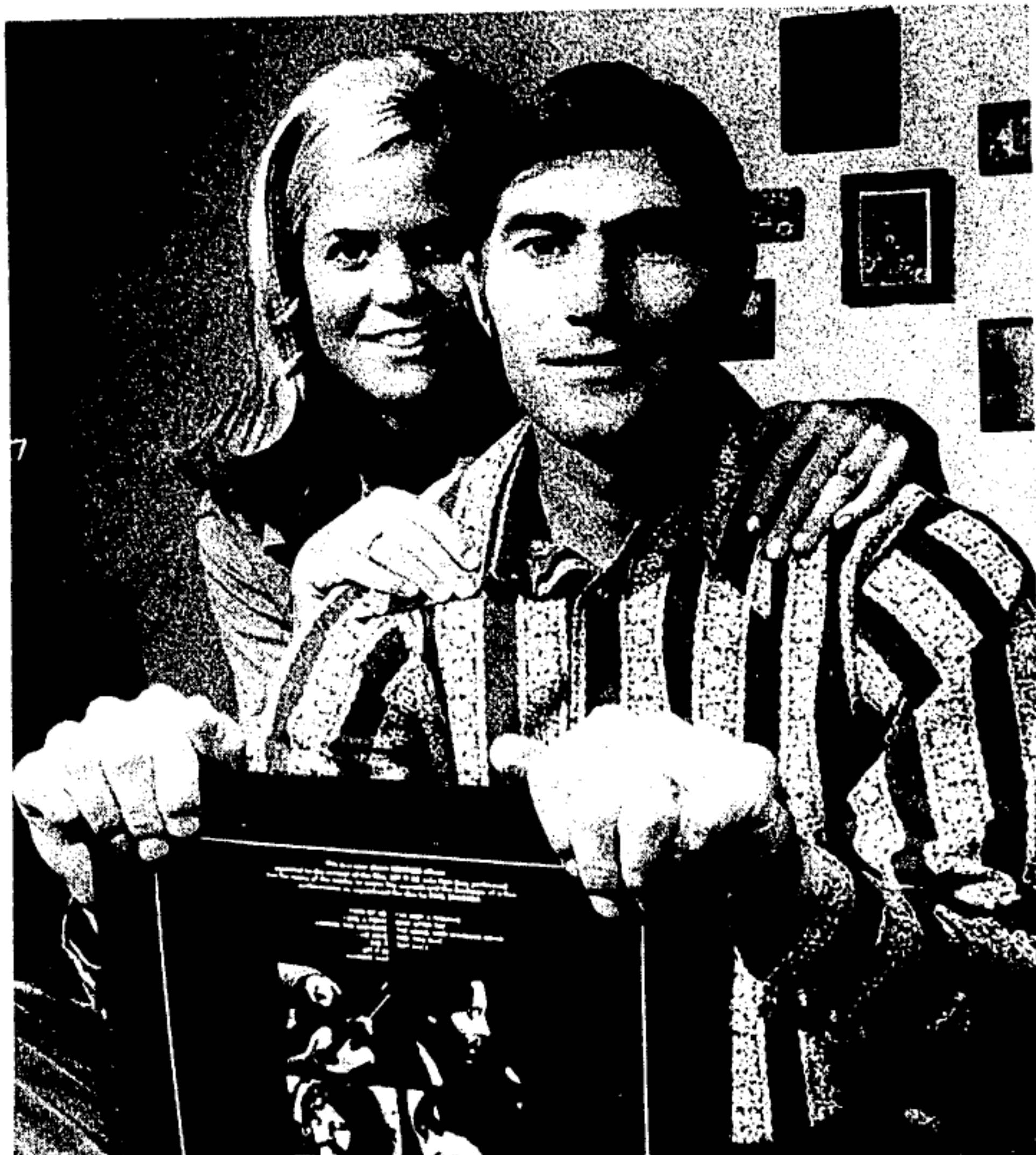
A League Sweep

At the conclusion of the season, Grich scored an unprecedented sweep of honors in the International League's managers' poll. He was a unanimous choice as best player and best prospect. He was selected best hitter (nine votes to one for Charleston's Rennie Stennett), best defensive infielder and best throwing infielder.

"The survey supports what I've said all season," IL Boss George H. Sisler, Jr., said. "Bobby Grich is easily the best player I ever have seen in this league."

Former Winnipeg Manager Clyde McCullough, a veteran judge of minor league playing talent, is another Grich booster.

"Grich is one of the three or four most valuable players in baseball



Bobby and Marty Grich . . . Patient, Thus Far.

today," he said. "He's the kind you build teams around. He's worth as much as Johnny Bench."

Grich, currently attending classes at Fresno State College in California with his wife, Marty, has been patient with the Orioles to this point.

"A lot of people tell me that I'd be playing regularly with most other big league teams," he said, "but I have no gripes with Baltimore. Too many players reach the majors before they're really ready. I've had the opportunity to polish my skills."

But there are signs Grich is growing impatient.

"Let's face it, I'm not going to run any starters out of a job next spring," he said. "I'll be satisfied

being a Rettenmund-type player next year, but I don't want to become a Motton."

Merv Rettenmund languished on the Baltimore roster for two seasons, gradually building up playing time and cashing World Series checks before emerging as a regular and star this year. Curt Motton has sat on the Oriole bench for four seasons—while he could have been a regular for several teams—and his once considerable skills have rusted.

The Orioles are loaded, but they have to make room for Bobby Grich. It's the kind of problem any other major league team would love to have.

'Lucky' Steinfeldt Named Triple-A Exec of Year

By AL C. WEBER

ROCHESTER, N. Y.—Promotion is the name of the game in baseball's minor leagues, but there's no substitute for a winning team on the field.

"The best promotion is to win, of course," said Carl Steinfeldt, Jr., Rochester general manager who has been named Triple-A Executive of the Year by THE SPORTING

NEWS and will be formally "crowned" at the annual convention in Phoenix.

"In this regard, I've been the luckiest guy in the world, and this caps it," said the 31-year-old Steinfeldt. "A pennant, Governors Cup, Little World Series winner, record year in attendance in my first year as general manager and now this

honor. It's unbelievable and I'm most appreciative. I only hope I didn't use up all my luck in one season."

In a success story unmatched in recent years in the minors, the Wings, managed by Joe Altobelli, a freshman manager in Triple A, won the pennant by seven games, beat out Syracuse and Tidewater in the playoffs, then edged Denver in the Junior World Series in seven games. In the process, the Wings drew 463,000 fans, tops for the minors.

Logical Successor

Steinfeldt was appointed by the Rochester board of directors at the recommendation of President William Lang on May 20, the day after Bob Turner resigned. The surprise resignation was the result of friction between Turner and some members of the board. As his assistant for two years, Steinfeldt was the logical choice.

"Bob had kept me informed on procedures, for which I am thankful," said the new G. M., "and I also am grateful to Lang and the board for their confidence in me."

Carl added some new promotional wrinkles to the time-tested ones of the previous administration set up by Morrie Silver, so often and deservedly called the savior of baseball in Rochester. It was Silver who first hired Steinfeldt in 1966, as well as Turner.

"Our basic group plan still is the reduced-price plan, mostly 50-cent nights," Carl said, "but we gave out a few prizes for better sales and the result was a 12 to 14 percent increase. We had 18 more groups this year than last, more

10-cent beer nights, more 'guaranteed-win' nights and in all 38 new promotions, including a T-shirt game.

"After the first 10 openings of the season, we have a promotion every night—on most nights three or four groups. You can't have too many. Only once last year were we oversold—that was the result of a rain-out. A Little League Grand Slam bumped into a Pony Night and there were 15,103 fans on hand. There was no other night to book either event. We normally would have had 8-10,000 for each.

"One of the most popular ones with the fans is the 'broom girls'—a pretty young lady who runs out in the middle of the fifth inning and sweeps the bases and the shoes of our players. She usually takes a swipe at the umpire with her broom. We copied it from Baltimore and almost every city in our league has copied it from us."

10-Year Apprenticeship

Another Steinfeldt innovation is a 5 p.m. starting time for Sunday and holiday games. "The later start (from 2 p.m.) gives the family a chance for a picnic first, or dad a chance for a round of golf or some other activity before the game. Whatever the reason, attendance has picked up 1,800 to 2,000 per game since we started at 5 p.m."

Actually, young Steinfeldt had been hanging around Silver Stadium in one capacity or another for 10 years before he became a member of the official administrative family. He worked on the ground crew in 1956, in the clubhouse and press box in 1957 and in the commissary

in 1958. After four years in the U. S. Navy, he returned to the stadium and worked part-time as ticket seller until '66. While in the service, he organized Little Leagues among Navy ship-based and land-based personnel in Naples, Italy.

Carl's dad was a good baseball player and an expert bowler and horseshoe pitcher. "He, too, was a good baseball fan and it was his interest that influenced my decision to stay in the game," Steinfeldt said.

No Hard Sell Needed

"Maybe it's because I've been so lucky or because we've had a winner, but it hasn't been so hard to sell the Wings. The people consider the team a community venture that must be supported by all, not as just a few guys trying to make a buck. We try to further that feeling by having the Legion, Little League, Babe Ruth League, parochial leagues and all community groups use the stadium for bare expenses. After all, it is community owned."

What will the club do with its profits? The final audit has not been completed, but there's sure to be a substantial profit.

"There'll be no dividend," Carl said. "We're spending more than \$125,000 on our 42-year-old plant, replacing wiring, repairing superstructure, replacing concrete slabs, painting steel, rebuilding home and visiting clubhouses and umpires' quarters, adding new seats in the grandstand and dozens of other odds and ends that cost money."

"We have been told we have the best-looking minor league park around and we'd like to keep it that way."



Carl Steinfeldt, Jr. . . . Winning Helps.

Bobby Grich: From Pits to Peaks

By Tracy Ringolsby

ANAHEIM—When the 1979 season began, Bobby Grich was cautiously optimistic. He was confident the nightmare of 1978 was behind him. He knew he could still play baseball. But he also felt the days of three Rawlings Gold Gloves and the selection to three All-Star teams were just memories of a past that seemed gone forever.

Yes, he had the five-year, \$1.58 million contract he signed with the Angels during the free-agent bonanza two years earlier, but he didn't feel he had the agility, strength and endurance which enabled him to perform at a level to merit that kind of money.

"All those things are going to be affected by the surgery," said Grich at the opening of spring training, 20 months after he had undergone an operation for a herniated disc. "I don't think I will ever be the player I once was. But I think I can make a meaningful contribution to the club."

His statements were filled with caution after struggling through a dreadful 1978 season.

It was a year in which he hit .251, but was at .227 entering September. Only a .356 September brought him respectability.

It was also a year in which his fielding deteriorated, leading to a six-day stint on the bench in August, a season in which he considered retirement, even though he had not yet reached his 30th birthday.

"I would rather make less money and be happier," he said.

As the curtain fell on the 1979 season, Grich was a happy man. While the Angels were spending the year fighting for their first pennant, the Long Beach (Calif.) native was enjoying his most successful big league season, a campaign that included his fourth All-Star selection.

With only a handful of games remaining, Grich was bidding to complete a year in which he batted .300 with 30 home runs and 100 RBIs. That is a feat teammate Don Baylor and Boston's duo of Fred Lynn and Jim Rice seemed destined to attain, but one which only three American League players have accomplished in this decade.

Not only has Grich become the leading candidate for the American League Comeback of the Year award, but he also is among the players being considered as the league's Player of the Year, sans comeback.

His biggest booster is Baylor, one of the top candidates for Most Valuable Player honors because of his tremendous contributions to the 1979 Angels.

"There is no doubt he should be considered as the MVP and Comeback of the Year," said Baylor, the self-proclaimed chairman of the Grich Campaign Committee. "He has had one helluva season."

The true scope of Bobby's accomplishments comes to light when it is realized that he spent most of the year hitting eighth in the Angel lineup—"Hiding in the bushes," said the second baseman.

"There's usually not much left for him by the time Bobby comes up," said Baylor.

"That's a tribute to the kind of year he has had."

Grich's most frequently mentioned competitor for the comeback award is Minnesota pitcher Jerry Koosman. In Baylor's opinion, there's no competition.

"Bobby has to be the top choice," said Baylor. "You must have gone somewhere to

come back. Grich had back surgery and struggled. People had written him off completely. They said he would never be the player he was before, and he's better than he ever was. Koosman was just with a bad club (the Mets). He was never that bad."

Baylor was one of the few who didn't write Grich off in 1978. He had known Grich since they came into pro ball in 1967. Grich was Baltimore's No. 1 draft choice that summer and Baylor was No. 2.

They advanced through the minor leagues, rooming together, and have spent all of their big league careers—except for 1976, when Baylor was exiled to Oakland—playing on the same team.

"A lot of people were down on Bobby, but I had played with him and knew the type of player he was," said Baylor. "I knew how hard he worked to be good. I knew how determined he was. I knew he wouldn't give up."

Baylor had seen Grich's intensity at work.

He remembered an exhibition game in 1971 when Grich, fresh from a .383 season with Rochester (International), overheard Frank Robinson telling some Oriole veterans the young infielder would never be a big league hitter.

"You don't think I can hit," Grich yelled at Robinson.

"No," replied the veteran.

"Well, sit around for 10 years and watch me," snapped the 22-year-old Grich, ready to go to blows if need be.

Then there was a game late in the 1970 season, after Grich had been called up from Rochester. The Orioles, 15 games in front in the A. L. East, were trailing by a run with two out and the bases loaded in the bottom of the ninth. As Grich walked to the plate, Manager Earl Weaver whistled him back and sent up Chico Salmon, a journeyman infielder who was also a righthanded hitter, to bat for Grich.

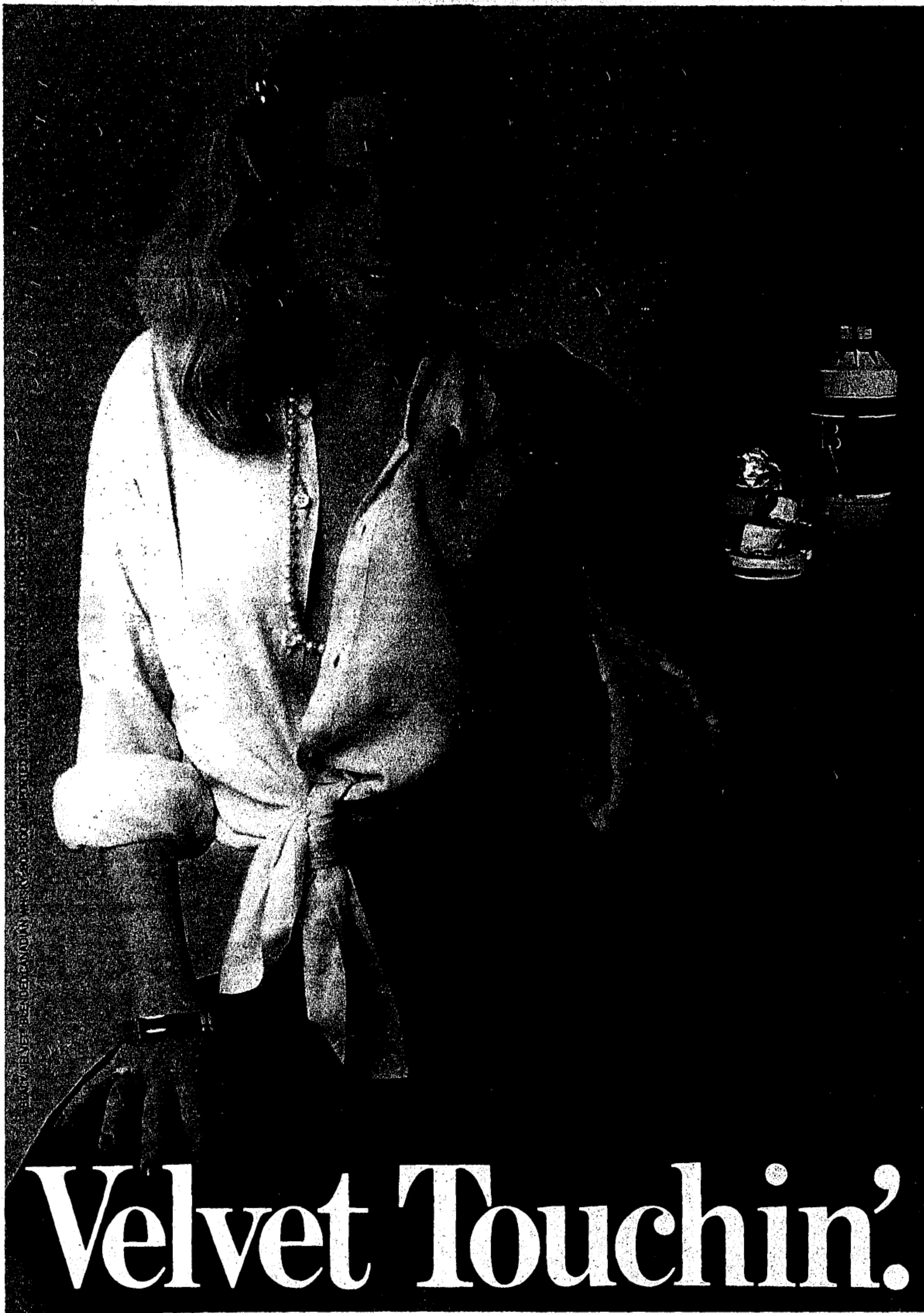
Grich stormed back to the dugout, threw his bat at the rack and turned to Weaver:

"How do you ever expect me to hit if you pinch-hit for me all the time?" said Grich. Elrod Hendricks stepped between the youngster and manager before the incident got past the shouting stage.

It is that kind of determination that led to Grich's frustrations last year. He wanted to be good, and couldn't stand failure.

He struggled from the opening days of the campaign at the plate, hitting .216 in the first two months with only 11 RBIs. He found solace only in his steady play at second base. Then came the disaster of disasters. During a three-game series with Boston at Ana-

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Velvet Touchin'

Pits to Peaks

(Continued From Page 21)

heim Stadium in mid-August, Grich committed key errors in successive games, leading to Angel defeats.

The fans, who had been anything but pleased with Grich, booed him unmercifully.

His dreams seemed faded.

Ever since he was a teen-ager, he wanted to be an Angel. He used to jump in his 1956 Ford, for which he paid \$125, drive from his home in Long Beach to Anaheim Stadium, buy a general admission ticket and root for his idol, Angel shortstop Jim Fregosi. Someday, he would think to himself, that will be me.

It was a quest which he thought had been fulfilled when he signed with the Angels after playing out his option with Baltimore during the 1976 season. But before he got to spring training in 1977, he injured his back trying to lift an air conditioner.

"I spent three weeks of spring training in traction, but the season was getting close so I came back," recalled Grich. "I guess I forced the pain out of my mind, but I never felt right. My body ached every day."

Finally, on June 8, 1977, he hit a 13th-inning home run to beat Toronto, and realized his season had ended.

"When I touched second base," said Grich, "I began to feel the pain. I knew if I could feel the pain after hitting a game-winning home run, I was hurting."

Twenty-five days later, surgery was performed.

Grich hoped 1978 would be his year of redemption, but there he was, being booed by the fans he once sat with.

After the second night of the Boston massacre, Grich asked Fregosi, now the Angel manager, for a couple of days off.

Fregosi knew what Grich was suffering. He had gone through the same hatred in New York when the Mets acquired him for Nolan Ryan in 1972.

While Fregosi was trying to play with assorted injuries, Ryan was beginning to establish himself as one of the strikeout kings in baseball.

The fans took out their frustrations on Fregosi, much the same as they spewed their feelings at Grich, who was expected to help the Angels win a pennant.

"I was worried more about Bobby doubting himself than I was worried about his ability," said Fregosi. "I knew it would take him a full season to come back from the operation, but other people wanted results faster. I didn't want them to ruin his mental approach."

So for the next six days, Grich sat on the bench talking with pinch-hitter Tony Solaita.

"We talked about what we would do if we got out of baseball," said Grich, feeling that decision was close at

hand. "Tony said he might open a dry cleaning store in Samoa. There's only one over there. I was thinking about becoming a college coach or going into real estate."

Before the games, however, Grich spent his time alone. For 20 minutes every day he went to the batting cage in the Angel bullpen and worked on his stance.

It was time, he decided, to find something comfortable and stick with it. He had experimented all season and everything had failed.

He tried a multitude of stances. He tried different bats—there are still 10 models which Grich used last year in the storage room at Anaheim Stadium. He tried looking for pitches. Nothing worked.

Finally, during those daily sessions on his own, Grich hit pay dirt.

"I raised my hands (around his head)," said Grich, "and took the loop out of my swing. Before, I was coming underneath every pitch. Finally, my swing was level."

Although he lacked power when he returned to the lineup, Grich wasn't complaining. In his final 87 at-bats, he had 31 hits, and more important, he had renewed hope for 1979.

"I was hitting line drives and even the ground balls I hit were hit hard," he said. "That showed me the ability was still there. I just had to work hard."

During the winter, Grich converted one of the bedrooms in his Long Beach home to a weight room and worked regularly.

He always had been a weightlifting buff. The fascination had been instilled by an uncle in Ohio, Alex Rocovitz, who was an Olympic weightlifter, and another in McCloud, Calif., 63-year-old logger Joe Hofer.

"But instead of lifting two or three times a week, I was working five or six," said Grich. "I felt like I might be slipping a bit, on my way down, but I was going to work hard. Besides, September showed me I still had some ability."

Every month of 1979 has reaffirmed Grich's belief in himself, even if there are some doubters in the American League.

He can appreciate that people are amazed with his resurgence, but he feels at times that the whole thing has gotten out of hand.

"I had two bats stolen, one in Seattle and one at home," he said. "It seemed like both came after people complained about my bats being corked. Maybe they wanted to cut up the bats and see for themselves."

A back-handed compliment, maybe? Perhaps, but one which Grich doesn't appreciate.

"I don't care about compliments," he said. "I just want my bats left alone. I don't need to cheat."

The folks who aren't complaining this year are the Angel fans. Their boos have turned to cheers, which is helping



Not even former President Richard Nixon was spared when the Angels celebrated their first title on September 25. The team's No. 1 fan was showered by champagne from a bottle held by second baseman Bobby Grich.

Grich erase the disillusionment of his first two years in Anaheim.

His biggest day was July 15, the Sunday before the All-Star Game.

New York was leading the Angels, 4-3. Ron Guidry was on the mound at Anaheim Stadium with two out in the bottom of the ninth and a runner on first.

Grich lofted Guidry's second pitch over the right-center field fence, and the sellout crowd of 40,739 went berserk.

"You can never forget a moment like that," said Grich, who drove in all five Angel runs. "To have 40,000 people applauding you for something you have done, it made all the work of the winter worthwhile."

It is the day like that which helps Bobby Grich realize he won't ever be the player he was. He is better.

Angels Reach Realms of Glory

"The Angels will win a pennant when a peanut farmer becomes President of the United States."

—Comedian Pat Buttram

"Now that we've got a peanut farmer in the White House, we should win it."

—Angels' Owner Gene Autry

By DICK MILLER

ANAHEIM—At last, the Singing Cowboy is riding a Champion again.

Nineteen years after buying a major league franchise—almost by accident because Dodgers' Owner Walter O'Malley took the radio rights away from his station—the cowboy, Gene Autry, was back in the saddle again after his Angels won the American League West Championship by beating Kansas City, 4-1, September 25.

Rookie shortstop Jim Anderson symbolized the madness of those zany years of frustration, tragedy and crippling injuries.

Anderson celebrated by pouring champagne on the head of former President Richard Nixon, who was as starry eyed as the club owner. California won 14 of the 20 home games at which Nixon was a spectator this season.

"There were doubts in my mind that I would ever see something like this," Nolan Ryan said, surveying the clubhouse celebration. "Some of the teams we had were pretty bad and when the things started happening to the free agents (Bobby Grich's herniated disc and Joe Rudi's broken hand) I wondered if we would ever win," said the Angels' senior player, who could look back on eight years of personal triumph, but team disappointment.

Autry may be the only baseball club owner who thrills to a conversation with the rawest rookie. Ryan noticed Autry deep in conversation with rookie pitcher Bob Ferris while Nixon was saying things like, "I call this team the Come-back kids from California."

"I imagine Mr. Autry is about as happy right now as he can remember being," said Ryan.

Just then second baseman Bobby Grich approached Autry, stuck out his right hand and said, "I just want to thank you for making a dream come true for me."

Rick Miller, who delivered three hits in the title clincher, was next.

"I just want to say thank you, sir," said the outfielder.

Thank you? Sir? Can this be the modern jock talking to his boss?

"We couldn't be happier for Mr. Autry," Grich explained. "He put his neck on the chopping block a few years ago."

Autry waited 19 years for a pennant.

Coach Jimmie Reese had to wait 56 years for his first championship. "I can't believe it," said Reese, who broke into baseball as a bat boy for the Pacific Coast League Angels in 1917.

Minutes after Frank Tanana, induced Darrell Porter to ground out for the final out, Manager Jim Fregosi pulled off his uniform shirt to reveal a T-shirt bearing this legend: "Western Division Champions."

"Yes We Did."

For two seasons the club motto, introduced by an unknown fan, had been "Yes We Can." The administrative assistant in the front office, Rose Anderson, has marketed tens of thousands of T-shirts bearing the slogan.

Within hours after the title-clinching game another entrepreneur sold 4,000 of the "Yes We Did" T-shirts at a restaurant opposite the Anaheim Stadium.

Within 24 hours of the Winning of the West, a third T-shirt manufacturer concluded a deal with the players to market a shirt containing their autographs along with those of the coaching staff, manager and trainers Ned Bergert and Rick Smith.

Although the players did not talk much about it, there was an extra player on the field for the Royal series.

Lyman Bostock lived in their memories, a joyous man whose life was snuffed out exactly a year to the day before the start of the biggest series in the history of the Angels.

A lifelike portrait of Bostock looks down from the wall in Fregosi's office. The real life Angels wanted to win their division not only for their own pride, but for their late teammate and the ever patient Autry.

And, yes, there were a lot of folks who wanted to see the Angels win it for a little Irishman named Fred Haney, who put it all together from day one.

Haney's widow, Florence, was scheduled to throw out the first ball at one of the playoff games in Anaheim.

Bostock was on Don Baylor's mind after the club's player rep called a meeting to divide playoff and World Series shares.

"Hardly a day goes by that I don't think of Lyman in one way or another," said Baylor.

For Grich and Baylor the playoffs were a homecoming against the team that signed them and nurtured them into professionals. Their opponent would not be only their ex-teammates, but their former manager, Earl Weaver.

'Royal Flush' Dis-Barrs Jim

By DICK MILLER

ANAHEIM—Jim Barr hit a Royal Flush and may have cost the Angels the American League pennant in the celebration following the division-clinching victory over Kansas City.

Barr, who won 10 games during the regular season, broke the little finger on his right hand, clouding his status for the championship series.

Angels players and fans were celebrating at The Catch, a restaurant near the stadium, long after the 4-1 victory over Kansas City.

"A guy tapped me on the shoulder and said, 'Look at this,'" Barr reported. "He was holding up a toilet seat with the words 'Royal Flush' on it."

"I thought the thing was made out of paper and slugged it. I was the most surprised guy in the world when my hand hit wood. It dislocated a knuckle."

"Luckily, Rick Smith (Angel trainer) was there. He did a helluva job. I respect doctors and one of them told me I wouldn't be able to pitch in the playoffs. But if they can shoot you up with cortisone surely they can give you a pain killer in a finger so you can pitch."

Barr didn't figure to start in the playoffs, but would work as the No. 1 righthanded reliever.