

to come. In 1981, Valenzuela replaced Jerry Reuss as the opening-day starter at the last minute and shut out Houston, 2-0, on five hits. He went on to win his first eight starts, seven of them complete games, and finished the strike-interrupted season with a 13-7 record. He became the first player to win the Cy Young and Rookie of the Year awards in the same season. He was also selected the Major League Player of the Year by THE SPORTING NEWS.

The next year Valenzuela won 19 games. In 1985 he set a major league record by not allowing an earned run in his first 41 1/2 innings, and in 1986 he hit the 20-win plateau for the first time, winning a National League-high 21 games.

But last year, as he said, was "so-so," so he has begun lifting light weights, not so much for strength but for better mobility. "I get loose much faster now," he said.

A notorious slow starter in the spring, Valenzuela came out strong in his first exhibition appearance this year. He fanned five in three scoreless innings.

"I'm trying for better location," he said. "Maybe last year I was pitching too fine. My walks were high. I want to do my job, and my job is to keep hitters off base."

Valenzuela's 1987 record might have been considerably better had the Dodgers' offense been more productive. Fifteen times the Dodgers scored three or fewer runs when Fernando was on the mound.

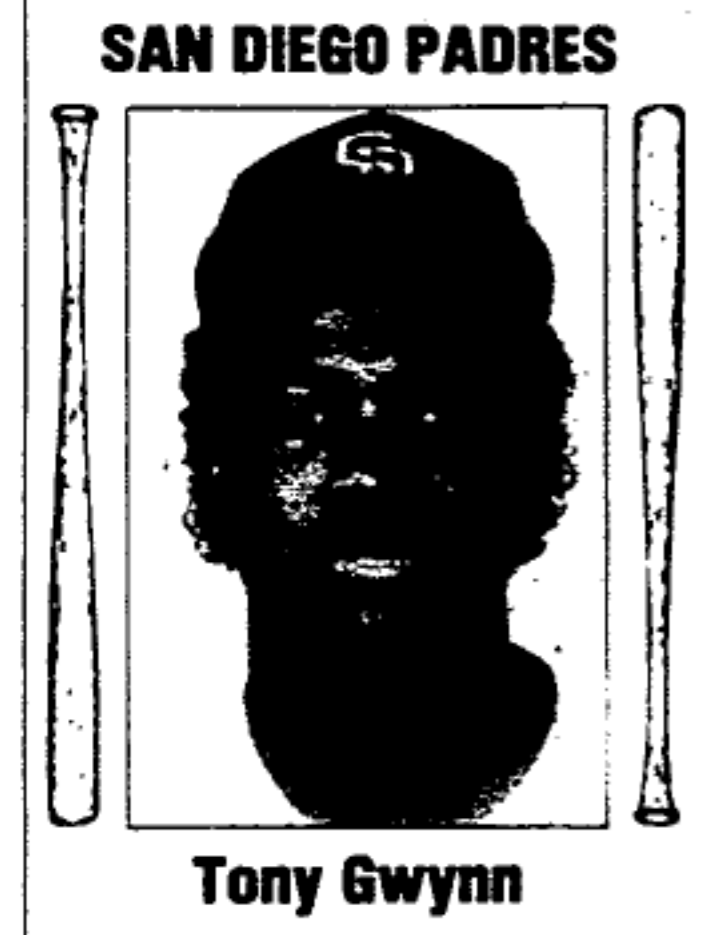
So, naturally, Valenzuela likes the additions of Gibson, Mike Davis and Alfredo Griffin.

"I'm very happy we have those guys," he said.

What about the two new relievers, Jesse Orosco and Jay Howell? Will they reduce Fernando's workload?

"I told them, 'No way,'" Valenzuela said, smiling. "I told them I know they're good, but I like to finish my games."

GORDON VERRELL



Tony Gwynn

He hits. He fields. He runs. He teaches the organization's kids and charms its fans and chroniclers. What would the San Diego Padres do without Tony Gwynn?

"I guess I can't even think of the Padres without him," said pitcher, Greg Booker.

"It's unfathomable," said assistant media relations director Mike Swanson, who handles many of Gwynn's public appearances. "Tony Gwynn and the Padres have become synonymous. It's like imagining the Royals without George Brett."

Gwynn, 27, just shrugs. "I guess

you can say I have tried to be, what do you call it, a Padres' Padre," he said. "I consider everything I do just part of my job."

Gwynn has two National League batting titles and a .335 career average. He has never spent a full season in the big leagues without hitting at least .317. In his one full season in the minors, when he broke into baseball in 1981 as a third-round draft pick from San Diego State, he hit .331 in the Northwest League and .462 in the Texas League.

In 1984 he hit a National League-high .351 and took the Padres to the World Series. Last season he led the majors with a .370 average, the highest in the senior circuit since Stan Musial hit .376 for St. Louis in 1948.

"He's amazing," said infielder Tim Flannery. "At the plate, he does everything right. He'll get a hit on an incredible pitch, maybe something that's busted him inside, and all of us on the bench will look at each other and shake our heads. Happens all the time."

Last year Gwynn won his second straight Rawlings Gold Glove, further establishing himself as one of the top right fielders in baseball. He committed just six errors and had 13 assists, more than twice as many as any other San Diego outfielder.

"To be honest with you, that's the thing I'm proudest about, my fielding," said Gwynn. "I work hardest at that. I want to be more than just a hitter."

Even with an iron glove, Gwynn would be multidimensional. He was second in the league in stolen bases last season with 56, well

above his previous high of 37. "It's just something I tried," he said. "I always thought I might be able to do it."

Statistical accomplishments are just part of Gwynn's value. Many in the Padres' organization believe his work in the clubhouse is equally important. He gives younger players his extra gloves, spare shoes and an example.

"They watch him, how he gets to the ball park at 1 p.m. every day, how he goes about his business, and they learn," said Manager Larry Bowa. "He's the greatest kind of teacher you can have."

Said outfielder Thomas Howard, in a major league camp for the first time: "That's the best thing about being here, getting to watch and follow Tony. He's always got time for the younger guys."

And for the media guys. And for the fans. Gwynn gives more interviews and autographs than all his teammates combined.

"He's too nice," said Swanson. "Whenever we're in a bind for something, we go to Tony. He'll do it. Sometimes we worry that he does too much."

Like signing autographs at the front door of his Poway, Calif., home. Or patiently spelling his name for out-of-town television reporters.

"I'm no saint or anything. I get mad and I curse and I might not feel like talking," said Gwynn. "But I was raised to believe you treat people as you'd want to be treated. That's all I do. That's easy."

If it were, there would be more than one Tony Gwynn. The Padres will tell you he is unique.

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