

Madlock Not the Only Guilty Party in Umpire Rhubarb

PHILADELPHIA—Hell hath no fury like a league president when one of his umpires has been scorned. And if the manner in which scorn is inflicted includes physical violence, it becomes a hanging offense.

N.L. BEAT

By BILL CONLIN



When Pirates third baseman Bill Madlock shoved his glove into the jutting jaw of "Little Shag," Gerry Crawford, the reaction of National League President Chub Feeney was swift and severe. "Maximum Chub" sat Madlock down 15 days without pay (Pirates G. M. Pete Peterson says he'll be the fiscal judge of that) and fined him \$5,000. It makes a good headline, but this one could go all the way to the Supreme Court before Madlock serves a day or pays a cent. In fact, it's so tough to slip a disciplinary fastball past Marvin Miller that nobody would be surprised if Madlock winds up collecting for defamation of character and several violations of his constitutional rights.

No athlete has the right to physically abuse a game official. Offenders should face swift and merciless justice. But umpires should also go to any length to avoid provoking physical retaliation at the hands of an angry player. The truth is, too many umpires carry chips on their shoulders the size of a telephone pole. Gerry Crawford is one of many National League umpires who invite confrontation with their arrogant bearing after making a call, thus inviting dispute. An incensed player is far less likely to make a run at an umpire who walks away with dignity, the way a Doug Harvey does, than at a guy who jabs a finger, goes jaw-to-jaw or walks toward an offending player. He is, after all, the law out there. He has the thumb and the last word.

There is a certain hypocrisy at work here, too. Players who physically or verbally assault members of the media usually receive telegrams from a league president or the commissioner instructing them "don't do it again." Is a

glove in the face of an umpire worth any more than a right to the jaw of a writer who is being held by a coach and a manager while another coach pummels him? That's what happened to Cleveland writer Russ Schneider in 1973 (he said he was pinned in a corner by coach Rocky Colavito and Manager Ken Aspromonte and was hit in the face by coach Joe Lutz). Schneider asked the Indians for an apology and confirmation that what he wrote about the incident was true, and he got it. When Cincinnati's Vada Pinson hung one on Earl Lawson in the early 1960s, the writer got an out-of-court settlement. All Pinson got was a slap on the wrist from N. L. President Warren Giles.

One wonders what the reaction would be if a writer poured a tub of icewater over a fully-clothed ballplayer. A jury would probably return a verdict of justifiable homicide.

Quote of the week: Danny Ozark, fired last year as manager of the Phillies and now third base coach for the Dodgers, couldn't let his Philadelphia homecoming go by without a delightful Ozarkism. Discussing his desire to manage a big league club again, he told a radio interviewer, "My contract with the Dodgers stipulates that I am welcome to leave at any time." . . . Decisions made on May 16 will probably determine whether there will be a strike when the clock strikes midnight for baseball May 22. The owners were asked to present their best offer on that date to give the Major League Players' Association a week to study it. If a strike is averted, the player most responsible for pushing the players back from the brink of Armageddon will be National League player rep Bob Boone. The Phillies' All-Star catcher has been a voice of moderation and reason since the negotiations began last winter. Boone's rhetoric almost singlehandedly averted a strike on April 1. The team player reps settled instead for cancellation of the last week of exhibitions.

Now that Joaquin Andujar is lobbying actively for a trade, it's almost possible to have a National League Disgruntled Top 10. 1. Bob Horner; 2. Bert Blyleven; 3. Gary Matthews; 4. John Stearns; 5. Jerry Martin; 6. Bruce Sutter; 7. Ron Cey; 8. Scot Thompson; 9. Any Met reserve; 10. Any Braves reserve. Blyleven's incredible sulk is sending shock waves through National League front offices. "I



Bill Madlock waves a menacing finger at Gerry Crawford after the umpire called him out on strikes with the bases loaded, May 1. Pittsburgh reliever Kent Tekulve turns his back on the disputants.

don't think I'd want a player who so obviously places individual goals over team goals," one G. M. said after receiving a Telex message from the Pirates announcing the right-hander's availability. "Most starters would pay to pitch with the Pirates' bullpen behind them."

Bill Nahorodny, who broke up Steve Carlton's no-hit bid with a clean single to center with two out in the eighth inning May 15, was embarrassed when he reached first base amid a tremendous ovation for Carlton. "I didn't know he had a no-hitter going," the Braves' reserve catcher told Pete Rose. "I was down in the bullpen the first half of the game and wasn't paying that much attention."

The scary thing about the pitching-rich Astros is that No. 4 starter Ken Forsch might be the toughest man in Bill Virdon's rotation when he's got less than his best stuff. "You can beat J. R. Richard, Nolan Ryan or Joe Niekro when they don't have their best stuff," says Reds super-scout Ray Shore. "But Forsch can go to finesse and still pitch a helluva game."

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