

BASEBALL

Van Slyke Heats Up, Lets Go of Past

PITTSBURGH—Andy Van Slyke couldn't figure it out.

"It was driving me crazy," said the Pittsburgh Pirates outfielder. "One hit every game. No more. It must have been a month since I had a two-hit game."

He broke out June 26 against the Chicago Cubs when he homered, singled twice, drew a walk and made a throw to the plate to complete a double play and help save a 5-2 victory.

"You wish every night at the ball park was like that, but you know it can't be," said Van Slyke, who had collected 37 hits in his last 107 tries to lift his average to .283. He had 10 homers, 37 RBIs and 20 stolen bases.

He has come a long way from the confused young man who was packaged with catcher Mike LaValliere and pitcher Mike Dunne by the St. Louis Cardinals for catcher Tony Pena on April 1.

Traded to Pittsburgh? Why not Siberia? Or Candlestick Park?

He had a beautiful home in suburban St. Louis, the tulips he planted were about to come up and he had been playing in a baseball-crazy city. And then along came Pittsburgh.

"I guess I finally accepted the trade about the time I started swinging the bat well," said Van Slyke. "I just got to thinking that I had to make the best of the situation. I didn't want to go through the whole year the way it started. I could have made excuses, but



Andy Van Slyke impresses teammate Mike Diaz with his basketball skills during a rain delay.

I'm not that way."

"We talked," said Manager Jim Leyland. "He had a lot on his mind at first. He had to move his family out of a beautiful home. He was going to a club that was struggling to get out of last place. But he's a real quality person—and he happens to play the game pretty good."

"Andy could have packed it in early," said LaValliere. "He could have said 'Why did this happen to me?' and gone out and made ex-

cuses. He had a chance to get down on himself."

Instead, Van Slyke fought back and eventually realized that he was not going to wake up some morning and find out it all had been a bad dream.

"The attitude I took was that the Cardinals didn't want me anymore," he said.

"And, know what? I have to believe the Pirates got the better end of the deal."

BOB HERTZEL

Expos Patch Pitching

MONTREAL—Manager Buck Rodgers grudgingly accepted the fact that the Montreal Expos, forced to recycle their pitching, fell short of expectations in June.

On the eve of a stretch of 26 games with National League East teams, Rodgers asked his men to go at least 10-10. Instead, they were 12-13, with one game rained out in St. Louis.

"We were five games over .500 at the time (18-23)," Rodgers said, "and I wanted to be 10 over when we finished with the East."

"We didn't do that and we didn't gain ground in the standings. But we had to straighten out our pitching. I think we're going the right way."

"I'm satisfied but not closed. I wanted to do better."

On June 5, the third-place Expos were 7 1/2 games behind the first-place Cardinals. At the end of the month, they were 6 1/2 out.

Meanwhile, pitching coach Larry Beane was scrambling. "We knew this spring it was going to be a struggle, and it's been all of that," Beane said.

Floyd Youmans was put on the disabled list, primarily for disciplinary reasons, and told to get in

shape. Jay Tibbs was demoted to Indianapolis (American Association). Bob Sebra was banished to the bullpen.

All were back in Beane's good graces on July 1. Youmans met his prescribed weight, Tibbs was recalled and Sebra, returned to the rotation, had two brilliant complete-game efforts as he struck out 10 in a 4-1 victory over St. Louis and fanned 14 in a 1-0 loss to Chicago.

Denis Martinez, lost in the free-agent shuffle last winter, joined the Expos in June and won three starts.

In early June the Expos were still trying to replace relief ace Jeff Reardon with a committee of Tim Lincecum, Andy McGaffigan, Bob McClure and Randy St. Claire. By the end of the month, Jeff Parrott had been called up from Indianapolis and was the Expos' closer.

If this staff can't get the Expos closer to first place, Pascual Perez is waiting in Indianapolis. He was American Association pitcher of the week twice in June, indicating that he knows the way to Montreal.

IAN MACDONALD

Farm System Rescues Injury-Wracked Cubs

CHICAGO—The Chicago Cubs' farm system, directed by Gordon Goldsberry, Scott Reid and Bill Harford, was in evidence as rookies who were injury replacements kept the club buoyant in the last half of June.

Center fielder **Dave Martinez**, who had struggled as the No. 8 hitter, batted .353 his first two weeks as leadoff man in place of disabled Ryne Sandberg.

Les Lancaster replaced off-injured Scott Sanderson in the rotation. After two starts, he had his first major league victory and a 2.84 ERA.

Paul Noce hit .308 for the month as a utility infielder and then a replacement for Sandberg at second base.

Mike Brumley made just one error in two weeks at shortstop, taking the place of disabled Shawn Dunston, and he had three hits in one game.

Rafael Palmeiro had four extra-base blows among his first eight hits as platoon left fielder with Jerry Mumphrey.

Martinez was below .200 in mid-May. He didn't begin to hit until Sandberg was lost with stretched ankle ligaments.

"Leading off is what I like best," Martinez said. "I'm getting my hands around the ball. (Coach) Billy Williams helped a lot with that."

In Lancaster's first two starts, he limited the Mets to one run in seven innings before a crowd of 42,000 at Shea Stadium, then beat the Expos in Montreal.

"I know it can be difficult going up and down—a change of scenery and all—but this kid has ice water in his veins," pitching coach Herm Starrette said. "He has four pitches and, as a rule,



Dave Martinez

can get them all over."

Starrette and Manager Gene Michael liked Lancaster in spring training.

"He's not in awe of anything or anyone," Michael said of the Texan, who was signed by Billy Capps as a free agent after leading Dallas Baptist to the NAIA World Series in 1985.

Sanderson's latest injury was a pulled groin muscle. He started the season on the disabled list with a shoulder problem.

"Scott has shown he can't take us too far into a game," Michael said. "He tears the bullpen up, and that scares me. You never know when you're going to get a two-inning job from him."

JOE GODDARD

Mathews' Backloggers Change-Up

ST. LOUIS—Manager Nippy Jones called back Gary Mathews back to Louisville (American Association) in May, the pitcher said. "Maybe I have to get my right hand back in tune and my fastball."

Mathews said he wasn't going forward again in 1987. After throwing two shutouts at Louisville, he was recalled by the Cardinals and called back to St. Louis to be first baseman Steve Braun's replacement.

"I guess he thought he'd get some major league action," Braun said. "I'd win over Philadelphia on June 21."

"That bottom," Mathews said of his time at Louisville. "The only

thing to go on is that I was never called back. I was very happy when I was sent back to Louisville. I was enjoying the big-league life and I wasn't working to become better."

Mathews, an 11-year veteran in a career in MLB, was recalled to St. Louis.

"The good thing is that I could have stayed here and continued to pitch like I was and had a mediocre year," he said. "I came back wanting to do a little bit of pitching."

Mathews talks on his change-up and usually gets in trouble when he tries to overpower his

pitch. "He's pitching like he has to

pitch," said manager Nippy Jones. "He's changing gears and not knowing the difference when he's supposed to come out."

When Mathews started the first of three starts in St. Louis, he pitched 4 1/2 innings and gave up three runs and four hits. "We just got him to go down there and start pitching his change-up."

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Mathews was only 20 days his return to St. Louis but had a string of 10 straight scoreless innings and an ERA of 2.64 in his seven starts.

RICK HENNING

How Long Can James Hold Left Field?

PHILADELPHIA—With James James in the Philadelphia Phillies' lineup, it's a revolving door. "I'm not sure if I can hold it for long," James said. "I'm not sure if I can hold it for long."

James, 27, began the season as a utility infielder with the Phillies. He was hitting .256 when he was assigned to left field on May 21. After a short-term experiment playing third base, James returned to the Phillies on June 1. He hit .286 for the month.

James has a number of getting out of the lineup and getting off the bench. "I've been a utility infielder and I'm willing to let

know, they've got somebody else to play for them if I don't produce."

"My goal is to play as long as I can. I'm not sure if I can hold it for long."

In order to accommodate James, the Phillies decided to keep James in left field and place Steve Braun in center field for the rest of the season. Braun, who has been in left field since June 1, hit .286 for the month.

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