

up.”  
Kruk, the Phillies' earthy and self-deprecating first baseman, keeps picking up various articles of clothing and dropping them in piles. He doesn't get dressed or do much of anything with great haste. His movements slow and tortured, he winces while he works.

A three-time All-Star, Kruk went into this season as a model of consistency. He had a .297 career average in the first half of the season, a .297 career average in the second half. But he'll never look the part of a model.

Asked why he doesn't join the team stretch before batting practice, Kruk contorts his face like he's been touched by a hot iron.

"My body doesn't stretch," he says without apology.

"You are an idiot," he tells me as he finally discovers his favorite red socks.

When he is in a mood to talk, however, he plays it simple. But if you buy the "Aw-shucks-I'm-just-a-good-ol'-boy-from-West Virginia act," you've been taken for a ride in the country.

As long as he was batting around .350, which he did for the first three months of the season, Kruk was the big guy who played hurt and played hard every night.

But one of the worst skids of his career (he went 20 for 100 in one stretch) saw Kruk's batting average plunge from .347 on August 8 to .316 on the final day of the season.

Naturally, the old doubts about his physique and training habits returned. I even dared to complain in print that Kruk spent too much time hanging out in the trainers' room after games, when he should be in the clubhouse entertaining questions from scribes trying to scratch out a meager existence of their own.

That critical piece of advice earned this writer a full-blown airing from outfielder Pete Incaviglia, who was outraged that a reporter would take shots at a guy batting over .300 for a first-place team.

Just the memory of it inspires me to make a transition to another subject. Something happy and upbeat.

"It's been a long wait," Kruk says of making it to the playoffs. "You'd like to think that every once in a while you'd sneak into one."

Well, the Phillies did go from worst to first.

"This time a year ago, mentally, it didn't matter," Kruk says. "You could go out there brain dead. Now you go out there with a job to do, and you do it realizing that you're under a microscope."

Of course, as far as Bad Johnny is concerned, the eye behind the microscope is attached to an idiot.

*Bill Brown is a TSN correspondent who covers the Phillies for the Delaware County Times.*



standable. As soon as the Braves acquired McGriff from the San Diego Padres' garage sale, he was identified as not just another fine offensive player, but a figure capable of changing the course of history. All hail Fred, who had hit more home runs over the past five seasons than any man living.

On July 20, the Braves trailed the San Francisco Giants by nine games. All that happened Before Fred, when the Braves bobbed along in the Giants' backwash. After Fred, it got serious.

"Atlanta forgot its dubious relationship with fire and celebrated that day as when the race for the West really began. McGriff's impact was sudden and striking. He produced three home runs and five RBIs in his first two days as a Brave, six home runs in his first 35 at-bats. An offense that once had a nasty cough began averaging nearly three more runs per game. McGriff had done no less than throw the switch on a run-scoring cyclotron.

Of all the testimonials to this found treasure, perhaps the most meaningful comes from the man he displaced at first. All Sid Bream, a player of some renown, could do was tip a cap and quietly step aside.

"He changed a lot of attitudes," Bream says. "That was something we needed. I'm not saying it couldn't have been done with the people we had, but he was the guy who did it."

There was an idea floating about that the Braves had only rented McGriff for this one run; that to trim a monstrous payroll he would be traded once this season's work was done. Countering that theory is that the Braves had begun experimenting with top first base prospect, Ryan Klesko, in the outfield.

So immensely popular has McGriff become that Georgia citizens pay him the highest compliment whenever "Crime Dog" appears. They bark at him. Such a figure can not be easily disposed of.

McGriff holds the right to ask for a trade at season's end, but where would he go?

"Atlanta is a great place. It is probably the second best for me other than playing in Tampa, and there's no team there," he says. "But I know that it is a business and at the end of the season, I'll sit down with (G.M. John) Schuerholz and see what the plans are."

Once more, the Braves will be asked to protect their new-found masterwork.

*Steve Hummer is a columnist for the Atlanta Journal-Constitution.*

**Down the stretch:** After his All-Star Game appearance, Kruk "slumped" and hit only .274.



**On fire:** The Braves took off after McGriff joined the team on July 20.

## A Brave move

By STEVE HUMMER

It was either a first baseman or a rare first edition on display that fiery July evening at Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium. Obviously, Fred McGriff was considered precious, irreplaceable. Otherwise, why would the Braves have assigned two security guards, one for each elbow, to McGriff on his first day on the new job?

Ex-presidents and Egyptian treasures don't get this kind of protection.

"I went to the bathroom, and they were there. I went to the training room, and they were there, too," McGriff says, still amazed. The threat was a local media armed with state-of-the-art recording devices.

Whatever overreaction there was at the beginning was under-

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4	Ben Danner	Newberg, OR	38797
5	Barry Packer	El Cajon, CA	38758
6	Andrew Dempsey	Quakertown, PA	38687
7	Mick Schwee	Herndon, VA	38326
8	Randy Sanford	Chippewa Falls, WI	38282
9	Charles Maly	Norfolk, NE	37966
10	Wm. Boersma	Prairie Village, KS	37883

**MID-SEASON CHALLENGE**

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2	Dan Polissano	Westland, MI	14432
3	C. Woll / C. Miller	Broad Brook, CT	14350
4	Scott Lasky	Binghamton, NY	14246
5	J. Janas / E. Heise	Amherst, NY	14163
6	David Sibley	Signal Moun't, TN	13952
7	Tom Banks	Cupertino, CA	13893
8	David Berman	Miami, FL	13891
9	Barrie Green	Oakland, CA	13874
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that can be claimed after 9AM on Friday, October 8th and before 11PM on Thursday, October 14th and be on your team for games starting Friday Oct. 15th.

P	ID	Player/Team	Salary
G	19	Grant Fuhr, Toronto	\$2,270,000
C	108	Adam Oates, Boston	\$2,230,000
W	336	Kevin Dineen, Philadelphia	\$1,630,000
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that can be claimed after 2 PM on Tuesday October 12th and before 11PM on Sat. October 16th and be on your team for week 7 games.

P	ID	Player/Team	Salary
K	25	Greg Davis, Cardinals	\$1,770,000
Q	111	Troy Aikman, Cowboys	\$2,270,000
RB	246	Eric Metcalf, Browns	\$860,000
RB	255	Harvey Williams, Chiefs	\$740,000
TE	408	Shannon Sharpe, Broncos	\$1,140,000
WR	502	Jerry Rice, 49ers	\$1,980,000
WR	574	Kelvin Martin, Seahawks	\$680,000

**Overall Leaders thru Week 4**

1	Don Hunt	Orlando, FL	20579
2	Chris Hartmetz	Independence, KS	20569
3	Michael Wilson	St. Louis, MO	20505
4	Paul Benedetto	Brooklyn, NY	20346
5	Mark Drexler	Oakland, CA	20207
6	Dave Anderson	Harrisburg, PA	19860
7	Hicks / Hardesty / Payne	Owensboro, KY	19786
8	Doug Wellins	Elmwood Park, NJ	19759
9	Buckmaster / Jensen	Port Angeles, WA	19622
10	M. Siegal / J. Kerner	New York, NY	19533