

Bat, Glove Do Shouting for Yankees' Nettles

By PHIL PEPE

NEW YORK—It was November 27, 1972, an important day in the life of **Graig Nettles**, a memorable day. The Indians had traded him to the Yankees, and it should have been a day for rejoicing.

Graig was coming to New York, center of communications, the Big Apple. Finally, he would get the attention he deserved, the recognition, the prestige, the money.

Only it hasn't happened. You don't see him on your TV tube selling after shave or popcorn poppers, although he is a good-looking, clean-cut, well-spoken fellow.

HE NEVER HAS received a Rawlings Gold Glove, although he has been the best third baseman in the American League for several years.

And he doesn't have one of those fancy, seven figure, lifetime contracts, although he produces a lot more than some who have them.

Much of that, **Nettles** understands, is his own fault. He is a very private person. As a player, he has been described as a bank teller—he comes to work, does his job capably and efficiently, but without fanfare, then goes his way. It is this businesslike approach to his job that has earned his nickname.

"Puff," the players call him because he's here one minute, gone the next, as if disappearing in a puff of smoke.

"I GUESS," HE admitted, "I'm just not controversial enough. I'm not the kind of guy who goes out and seeks publicity. I don't hang around and talk to the writers and I don't have an agent who tries to get me endorsements and appearances in the off-season. If they come along, I'll take them, but I don't go looking for them.

"That's all right for some guys, but I don't know if it would have worked for me to play with all that pressure. I like the pressure of game situations, not the pressure that comes from outside things."

The lack of attention, the lack of publicity, the lack of recognition never bothered **Nettles** until recently, until he looked around at people not producing as much as he produces, but making more money than he is making.

"It's starting to bother me now," he admitted, "because I see that teams are paying players for all those things instead of a player getting paid on his ability."

IN THIS DAY of inflated salaries, with egos to match, when players have the upper hand, when managers must be careful how they talk to players and how they treat them, **Nettles** is not the kind who has to be "handled."

"Just put my name in the lineup and let me play" is all he ever has asked.

These are not just fancy words that look good in print to **Graig Nettles**, they are a code, a way of life.

In the words of his current manager, Billy Martin, **Nettles** is a "a gamer. He wants to play. He never wants to sit."

His record is the testimonial to this desire. He plays both ends of the field, offense and defense, and he produces at both ends. This year, at age 34, he will have played in at least 150 games for the eighth consecutive season. He holds the Yankee record for home runs and RBIs as a third baseman; he has a chance to become the first player since Harmon Killebrew in 1963-64 to win back-to-back home-run titles in the A. L.

HE HAS AN OUTSIDE shot at breaking the league record for home runs by a third baseman (43 by Al Rosen in 1953); a good shot at being only the third third baseman in A. L. history to hit 40 homers (Rosen and Killebrew); an excellent chance to break Brooks Robinson's career A. L. record for home runs by a third baseman and if he does not make THE SPORTING NEWS All-Star Fielding Team this year, there should be an investigation.

Soon, he will be named the Yankees' all-time third baseman in a poll of experts that has chosen him over Jumping Joe Dugan and Frank (Home Run) Baker, over Red Rolfe, Clete Boyer, Joe Sewell and Billy Johnson.

Despite all this success, **Nettles**, as a kid, never thought much about major league baseball. And, truth to tell, the major leagues never thought too much about him.

NOT THAT sports were not important in his life. With a dad who played college football and an older and younger brother in the house, it had to be. **Graig** grew up in San Diego, just five blocks from the house in which Ted Williams was born, and he played all sports. Baseball was his favorite, but not his best.

"My dream was not the major leagues," he said. "It was to play in the Pacific Coast League for the San Diego Padres, my hometown team. But I was too small."

With a brother named Paul and another

named Jim (he played in the big leagues with the Twins and Tigers, played in Japan and spent this year in Columbus), it seemed there might have been a typographical error when the middle brother was named.

"No," **Graig** said, with a laugh. "It's a combination of Gregg and Craig. I think my mom liked the way Craig sounded, but not the way it looked on paper. Anyway, I've seen my name misspelled and heard it mispronounced so often, I'm used to it by now. If they don't know it now, they never will."

MAJOR LEAGUE scouts didn't know it until **Graig** was a sophomore at San Diego State College. In high school, he was ignored by baseball scouts and he accepted a basketball scholarship to San Diego State, although he played baseball there, too. But in his second year at college, he grew from 150 pounds to 180, which changed everything.

"I was bigger and stronger," **Nettles** said, "and I was able to hit a ball a long way."

That summer, he played in Alaska, in a college league that attracted a great many scouts. In 1966 he was chosen in the fourth round of the free-agent draft by the Twins. He managed to squeeze a \$25,000 bonus out of Calvin Griffith and went off to hit home runs in Wisconsin Rapids (Midwest), 28 of them in 117 games, which led the league.

The following year, he tied for the league lead with 19 at Charlotte (Southern) and was leading the American Association with 22 homers in 130 games at Denver in 1968 when he was called up to the Twins.

TWO IMPORTANT things happened to **Nettles** in his less than three-year minor league career. Somewhere along the way, he was moved off second base and became a full-time third baseman.

"The reason," he recalled, "is that the Twins had a second baseman one class ahead of me and they thought he was going to be a pretty good one. Rod Carew. I knew Harmon Killebrew was playing third for the Twins, but I figured I had a better chance competing against the older guy than the younger one."

At Denver, another thing happened. He met Billy Martin. "For the first three weeks I hated him," **Nettles** admitted. "I didn't like his style. He was loud and wise and nothing like the first two managers I played for."

"But in three weeks, he turned the club around. He started us winning and the more

I played for him, the more I liked him. He taught me how to win. I still think if Billy had stayed with the Twins, I'd still be there, too."

BUT AFTER the 1969 season, he was traded to the Indians in a deal for Luis Tiant.

"The Twins told me I couldn't hit left-handed pitching, I couldn't hit the curve and I couldn't play third base," **Graig** recalled.

In Cleveland, he hit 71 homers in three seasons before the Yankees got him in a big winter deal on November 27, 1972. The trade will live in infamy in Cleveland.

Soon after the Yankees got **Nettles**, somebody asked Brooks Robinson how good a third baseman **Graig** was.

"He ranks second in the league," Brooks said with a smile. And **Nettles** accepted it as the compliment it was intended to be.

A lot of people have been tipping their cap to **Nettles** fielding over the five years he has excelled at third base for the Yankees. But it isn't the great plays—the diving stop on the ball in the hole, the backhanded stop over the bag—that characterize **Nettles**. What characterizes him is a play he made in Cleveland recently.

Midway in a scoreless game, Andre Thornton hit a shot over the bag. Most third basemen would have backhanded the ball. **Nettles** chose to get in front of it and twist his glove to take a wicked hop and throw Thornton out.

"IF I TRY TO backhand the ball," **Nettles** explained, "and the ball takes a bad hop, it's down the line for two bases. If I get in front of it and it takes a bad hop, it hits me in the chest and I can hold him to one base. I'll gladly take an error to hold him to one base."

When he is no longer a player at all (he says he can play until he's 40 with the DH), **Nettles** thinks he wants to stay in baseball in some capacity.

Manage? "I didn't used to think I'd like that," he said, "but I'm changing my mind. Now I think I'd like to manage someday. I won't like the part of managing in the clubhouse, handling players. But running the game, I'd like to do that."

WHAT HE WOULD like is managing a team of players who do their job without fuss or fanfare, a team of players who think of the team, who just want you to put their name down on the lineup and let them play.

What he would like is to manage a team of nine guys by the name of **Graig Nettles**.



Graig **Nettles** Manufactures His Own Smokescreen While Avoiding a Tag by Detroit Catcher Milf May

Nettles Barrage Stirrs Shades of Babe and Rog

By PHIL PEPE

NEW YORK—It was April on the calendar, but Graig Nettles was as hot as a Fourth of July firecracker. He is not supposed to be a spring hitter, but he just had cracked his eighth homer in his 14th game.

It was a windblown job that carried from 10 feet foul to five feet fair and fell into the right field seats in Baltimore, a two-run blast that gave the Yankees a 4-3 victory when they seemed on their way to a 3-2 defeat.

NETTLES WAS just getting warmed up. On April 28, he blasted his 11th homer of the season in the nightcap of a twin bill with the Rangers in New York. That blow off Fergie Jenkins broke Frank Robinson's American League record of 10 homers in April and tied the major league record for April set by Willie Stargell of the Pirates.

The circumstances, the good fortune involved, his hot bat at a strange time of year put Nettles in a good frame of mind. Didn't he know he wasn't supposed to hit in the spring?

"The weather," he said with a huge, face-splitting grin, "has been good."

NETTLES EVEN thought of saying the right thing about winning the game for Mel Stottlemyre, who had pitched well, but seemed doomed to defeat.

"I'm happy for Mel," Graig said. "It seemed he always was losing 2-1 or 3-2 last year."

Now, Stottlemyre was a winner for the third time in four decisions, thanks to Nettles' big blast, which put him ahead of Reggie Jackson for the major league home-run lead.

The following day, Nettles hit No. 9. That one, too, almost won a game. It put the Yankees ahead in the 11th, but the Orioles came back to tie and win in 13.

Home run No. 9 came in game No. 15. No. 10 was hit in game 17. No. 11 put Nettles 12 games ahead of Babe Ruth when he hit 60 in 1927 and 18 games ahead of Roger Maris when he hit 61 in 1961.

ALL RIGHT, so it is a little early, but Nettles has started out at a fantastic pace and, if he hits homers in bunches early, he could be spending an interesting summer in a fish bowl.

Comparisons are inevitable and there are several striking similarities between Nettles and Maris. Both were noted as lefthanded power hitters with other teams (Roger with Cleveland and Kansas

City, Graig with Minnesota and Cleveland), and they were obtained by the Yankees in big, off-season trades with the hope they would take advantage of the low, short Yankee Stadium right field fence.

Maris was more of a dead pull hitter and benefited more than Nettles from the short right field porch in Yankee Stadium. Nettles' style of hitting is more conducive to Shea Stadium, where the Yankees are playing this year and next, because he does not pull the ball all the time and can reach the fences by hitting to the opposite field and right center.

IN HIS FIRST year as a Yankee, Maris hit 39 homers. In his first year as a Yankee, Nettles hit 22. Maris hit his 61 in his second year as a Yankee. Nettles is in his second year as a Yankee now.

In 1961, Maris had the home-run stroke down pat. Everything he hit seemed to jump off his bat and fly out of the park. The same was true of Nettles in the first few weeks of this season. He had the home-run stroke. Everything he hit jumped off his bat and had legs.

To those who covered Maris in 1961 and are covering Nettles now, there is a similarity in the personality of the two players. They are both solid pros who do their job quietly, efficiently and without fanfare. Maris was never accorded the praise he deserved as a defensive player and Nettles isn't, either.

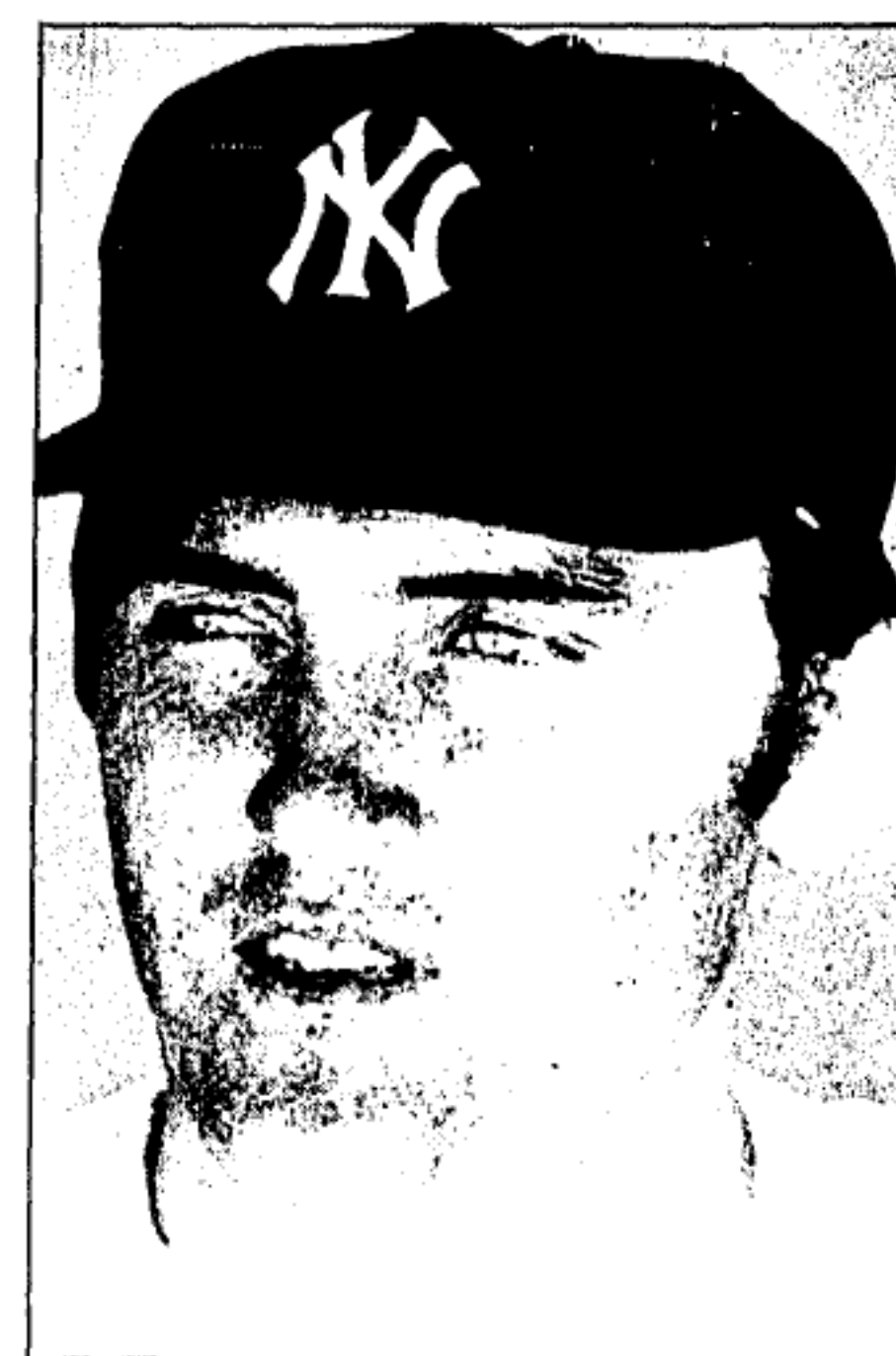
Both are quiet, soft-spoken, very much aloof, almost suspicious. It was difficult to get to know Roger, and the same is true with Graig.

MARIS NEVER wanted the attention he got. He had a job to do

and he did it. The pressure never bothered him on the field, but he couldn't stand the outside pressure and the constant badgering by the news media. He cooperated to the fullest in his record year, but felt betrayed by a few newsmen who blasted him the next year. So he climbed back into his shell and grew surly and suspicious.

Eventually, he dropped out of baseball and faded into the relative obscurity but opulence of operating an Anheuser-Busch beer distributorship. Now fat and facing 40, Maris said he doesn't miss the game and he especially doesn't miss being in the goldfish bowl.

Different people react differently to sudden fame and attention. How would Graig Nettles handle being in the goldfish bowl? Nobody really knows, but they just might find out this summer.



Graig Nettles

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Graig's Clouts

Here is how Nettles' home-run chart stacks up against those of Ruth and Maris in their best years:

Ruth 1927 Maris 1961 Nettles 1974			
HR. No.	Game No.	Game No.	Game No.
1	4	11	1
2	11	17	3
3	12	20	8
4	14	29	8
5	16	30	9
6	16	31	9
7	24	32	13
8	25	35	14
9	29	38	15
10	33	40	17
11	34	40	22
12	37	41	
13	39	43	
14	41	44	
15	42	45	
16	43	48	
17	47	49	
18	48	52	
19	52	55	
20	52	55	

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Acrobat Nettle Derails Dodger Express

By **LOWELL REIDENBAUGH**
Managing Editor

NEW YORK—Some years ago a young second baseman in the Twins' farm system was asked to switch to third base because, it was explained, the parent club already had a young, multi-talented second baseman who in a very short time would court super stardom.

"I had fancied myself as a hard-hitting second baseman, but I had also seen Rod Carew play in spring training, so I consented to the switch," said the transplanted player. "I realized that my chances for making the majors were much better as a third baseman."

How well **Graig Nettles** succeed-

ed at his position was made clear the night of October 13. While 56,447 watched in utter disbelief at Yankee Stadium and millions more on television, the 34-year-old Californian repeatedly dived to his right to smother vicious smashes and throw out runners as the Yankees defeated the Dodgers, 5-1, for their first 1978 World Series victory over the twice-triumphant Dodgers.

To Los Angeles Manager Tommy Lasorda, it "was one of the greatest exhibitions I've ever seen," an opinion shared by his Yankees counterpart, Bob Lemon.

Roy White, playing behind Nettles in left field, thought it was a typical performance. "He's been making my job easier all season," said White.

LEAST IMPRESSED of all, it seemed, was **Nettles**.

"I've been making plays like that for eight or nine years," he reported. "But when I was with Cleveland, nobody noticed. Nobody in Cleveland draws the attention that a player does in New York, and particularly in the World Series."

"Who remembers that I led the American League third basemen in fielding in 1970?"

Nettles' defensive star shone brightest in the fifth and sixth innings when the Dodgers, trailing by only 2-1, threatened to wrest the lead from the Yankees.

In the fifth, after Steve Yeager walked, Dave Lopes singled and **Nettles** turned a Reggie Smith smash into a single that loaded the bases. Then Steve Garvey rifled a shot to **Nettles'** right. Playing an erratic bounce, **Nettles** smothered the white blur while stretched prone, regained his feet and threw out Smith at second base.

ONE INNING later, with the score unchanged, the Dodgers again loaded the bases on singles by Dusty Baker and Lee Lacy and a walk to pinch-hitter Manny Mota. When Lopes blistered another smash to **Nettles'** right, **Graig** repeated his shooting-gallery act, forcing Mota at second base.

Spectacular as **Nettles** was on those two plays, they did not represent his entire contribution to the Yankee victory. In the third inning, with Bill North on third base and one out, Lopes drilled a ball toward **Nettles'** cranium. Out No. 2!

After Bill Russell singled to score North with the Dodgers' only run, Smith attempted to volley a shot into left field. **Nettles** knocked down the ball and threw Smith out.

Nettles' acrobatics were in sharp contrast to the pitching of the cus-

tomarily neat and expeditious Ror Guidry, the Yankees' 28-year-old lefthander with the gaudy 25-3 season record.

GUIDRY WALKED seven batters, two more than in any previous game in 1978. He made 137 pitches, an astronomical total for him. In no inning was Guidry able to retire the Dodgers in order.

Twice he was aided by double plays. In the second inning, Lacy made the mistake of pulling a Guidry pitch to third base after Baker had walked. **Nettles** initiated the twin killing.

In the eighth, following a Baker single, Lacy bounced to shortstop Bucky Dent, with the same result.

If Guidry accomplished one thing, other than victory, it was nipping the Dodger streak of hitting at least one home run in seven consecutive Series games.

The Louisiana lefthander was not particularly disturbed by his atypical performance.

"A PITCHER can't always be strong," he noted, "especially after he pitches more than 270 innings in a season. I had trouble getting my slider over the plate, and often when I did, I didn't get the call. But that can happen when a National League umpire (John Kibler), who has never seen me pitch, is behind the plate."

The absence of his fast ball, Guidry said, was as much a surprise to him as to others.

"When I was warming up before the game, I thought I had a good fast ball. I must have left it in the bullpen."

Game 3 Notes

BIG MEDIA MARKETS

With the World Series involving the two largest media markets in the country, the television networks were happy and so were the players. "All I know," said Reggie Smith of the Dodgers, "is that when I was in my first World Series, in 1967 with the Red Sox, the loser's share was \$5,000 and the winners got \$8,000. Last year, we got \$21,000 for losing. I'm glad the Yankees are back in it again because it gives me the opportunity to make more money because of the size of their ball park. Believe me, money is the reason I play this game."

Shortstop Bill Russell of the Dodgers said the Yankee Stadium infield was a factor in Los Angeles' mediocre defensive play. "The infield here is harder than in Dodger Stadium," said Russell, "plus some of the balls were hit just soft enough so that Davey (second baseman Lopes) couldn't turn two. The balls were hit just right so that the runners had time

(Continued on Page 16, Column 1)

When, he was asked, did Thurman Munson inform him that his fast ball was missing?

"After the first pitch," he quipped.

As for **Nettles'** scintillating defense, Guidry, a droll put-down artist, observed, "Tonight he only made up for all those he missed during the season."

THE YANKEES never trailed in the contest after Roy White found the right field seats with a first-inning home run off Don Sutton. It was the fifth Series homer off Sutton in as many appearances.

The score mounted to 2-0 in the second inning, which was initiated, appropriately, by a **Nettles** single.

Chris Chambliss, back in action after a one-game layoff due to an injured tendon in his right hand, walked. Two infield outs sent **Nettles** across the plate.

Sutton tightened perceptibly in the next four innings, permitting

only two harmless singles until the seventh, when the Yankees drove him from the mound.

Dent singled to left and took second when Mickey Rivers, ignoring a leg injury that sidelined him in game No. 2, beat out a sacrifice for a base hit.

RIVERS WAS forced by White, but Munson, 1-for-11 at this point, singled off Ron Cey's glove, Dent scoring.

Lance Rautzhan relieved Sutton and was greeted by Reggie Jackson's first-pitch single, White scoring. When Lou Piniella grounded out to shortstop Russell, Munson scored the final run of the game.

Curiously, the Yankees scored only two runs on balls hit out of the infield, on White's home run and Jackson's single, but few persons noticed on a night when a whirling dervish named **Graig Nettles** gave an illustrated lecture on how third base should be played.

Guts and Graig

Los Angeles	AB.	R.	H.	PO.	A.	E.
Lopes, 2b.....	5	0	1	3	2	0
Russell, ss.....	4	0	2	2	3	0
Smith, rf.....	4	0	1	2	0	0
Garvey, 1b.....	4	0	1	4	2	0
Cey, 3b.....	3	0	0	0	1	0
Baker, lf.....	3	0	2	5	0	0
Lacy, dh.....	4	0	1	0	0	0
North, cf.....	3	1	0	5	0	0
Yeager, c.....	1	0	0	2	1	0
Mota.....	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grote, c.....	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ferguson, c.....	1	0	0	0	0	0
Sutton, p.....	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rautzhan, p.....	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hough, p.....	0	0	0	1	0	0
Totals.....	32	1	8	24	9	0

New York	AB.	R.	H.	PO.	A.	E.
Rivers, cf.....	4	0	3	2	0	0
Blair, cf.....	0	0	0	0	0	0
White, lf.....	3	2	1	2	0	0
Munson, c.....	4	1	1	4	1	0
Jackson, dh.....	3	0	1	0	0	0
Piniella, rf.....	4	0	1	1	0	0
Nettles, 3b.....	4	1	1	2	5	0
Chambliss, 1b.....	3	0	1	8	0	0
Doyle, 2b.....	4	0	0	7	2	0
Dent, ss.....	4	1	1	0	5	1
Guidry, p.....	0	0	0	1	1	0
Totals.....	33	5	10	27	14	1

Los Angeles.....	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
New York.....	1	1	0	0	0	3	0	x-5

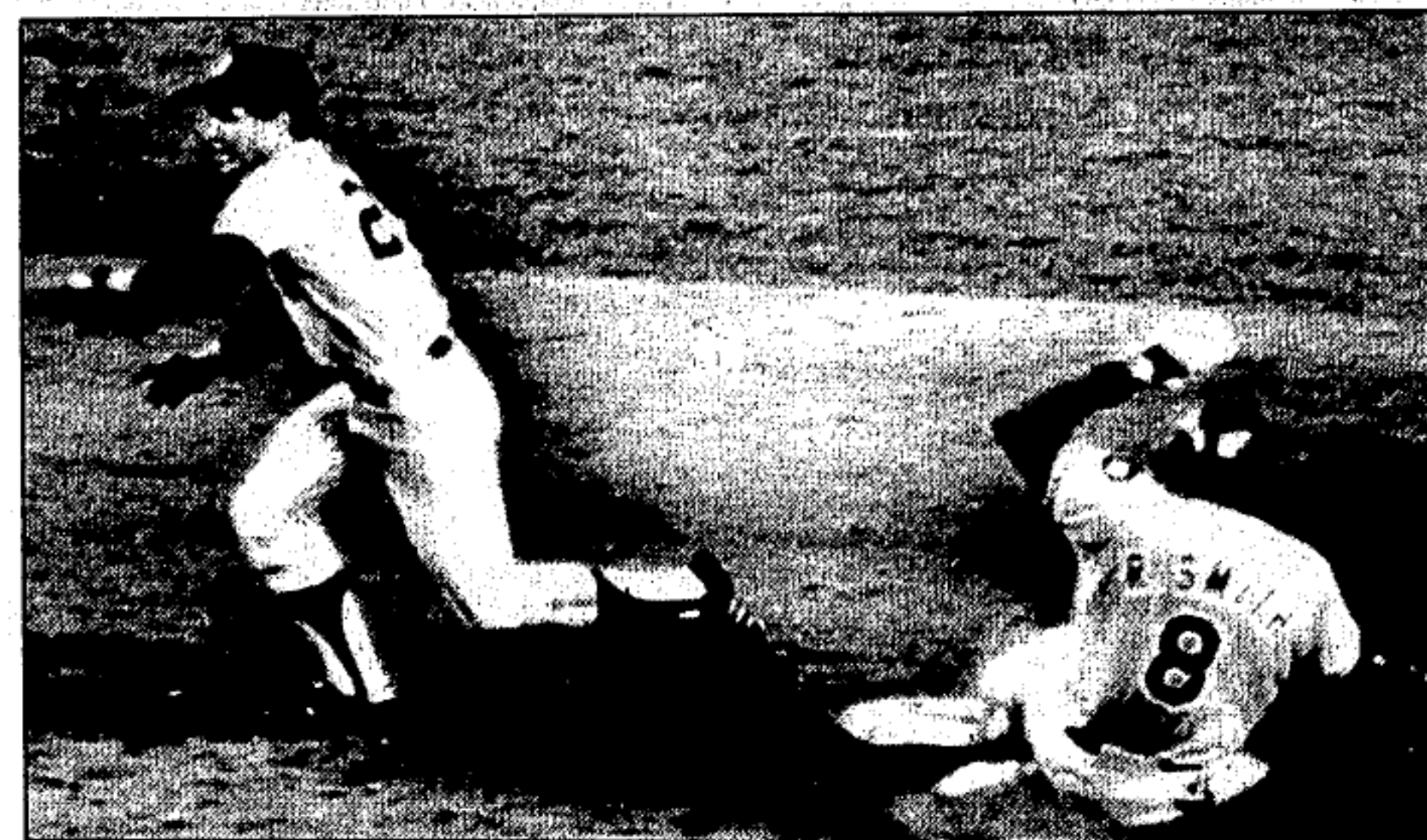
Los Ang.	IP.	H.	R.	ER.	BB.	SO.
Sutton (L).....	6 1/2	9	5	5	3	2
Rautzhan.....	2 1/3	1	0	0	0	0
Hough.....	1	0	0	0	0	0

New York	IP.	H.	R.	ER.	BB.	SO.
Guidry (W).....	9	8	1	1	7	4

Bases on balls—Off Guidry 7 (Smith, Baker, North, Cey, Yeager, Mota, Russell), off Sutton 3 (Jackson, Chambliss, White).

Strikeouts—By Guidry 4 (Cey, Lacy, Ferguson, Smith), by Sutton 2 (Munson 2).

aWalked for Yeager in sixth. bRan for Rivers in seventh. Runs batted in—Russell, White, Munson, Jackson, Piniella, Dent. Two-base hit—Garvey. Home run—White. Stolen bases—North, Piniella. Caught stealing—Russell, Rivers. Double plays—**Nettles**, Doyle and Chambliss; Dent, Doyle and Chambliss. Left on base—Los Angeles 11, New York 7. Umpires—Kibler (N.L.) plate, Springstead (A.L.) first base, Pulli (N.L.) second base, Brinkman (A.L.) third base, Vargo (N.L.) left field, Haller (A.L.) right field. Time—2:27. Attendance—56,447.



GRAIG NETTLES turned Steve Garvey's bases-loaded smash down the third-base line into an inning-ending force out in the fifth frame. The Yankee third baseman threw to shortstop Brian Doyle (lower photo) in time to retire a sliding Reggie Smith.



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