



Manny Sanguillen Scores for the Pirates as the Cub Catcher Angrily Kicks the Bat Toward the Dugout.

\$5,000 Manny Huge Pirate Treasure

By CHARLEY FEENEY

PITTSBURGH, Pa. — The first time Manny Sanguillen chased a foul pop, he got hit on the head.

"I run and I run," Sanguillen said, "and all of sudden the ball hit me on the head. Then I hear the fans boo."

It happened in Panama City several years ago. A few weeks earlier, on the recommendation of Herb Raybourne, scout Howie Haak had signed Sanguillen to a contract.

It was a progressive contract and when Sanguillen made it to the Pirates in 1967, he wound up with the sum total of \$5,000.

It was one of Pittsburgh's biggest bargains.

When Sanguillen was growing up in Colon—about 50 miles from Panama City—he gave little thought to baseball.

He taught in a Bible School and he thought he might become a pastor in the Evangelist Church.

"I didn't have any idea about baseball," Sanguillen said. "When I was a boy, I played basketball and football. Our kind of football is like soccer."

It was Haak—loosely called super scout in some circles—and Raybourne who suggested that Sanguillen's quickest way to a Pirate uniform would be as a catcher.

His catching career almost ended the first time he chased that pop foul.

He Ate Steak Often

"I can laugh 'bout it now," Sanguillen said in his improved English. "It wasn't funny when it happened. I run back, back and I don't see ball. Then my head . . . oh, how it hurt. The people . . . they don't think it was funny."

Sanguillen's first taste of baseball in the United States was at Batavia (NYP).

"I couldn't speak much English and I couldn't read English," the Pirates' catcher said. "I go to one restaurant in Batavia. The waitress, she didn't know I didn't know English. She say 'steak' and I'd say 'yeah.' She say 'medium rare'—I didn't understand. I say 'yeah.' The next night, she say 'well done' and I'd say 'yeah.' I don't understand but I liked steak."

Steak remains Sanguillen's favorite dish, but for awhile it wasn't certain that he would be eating his steaks in Pittsburgh.

He batted only .235 at Batavia in 1965 and for a brief spell the Pirates wondered if they should protect him from the draft.

"We really didn't give it too much thought," Buc G. M. Joe Brown said. "We knew Sanguillen hit well early in the season, then he hurt his fingers and stopped hitting."

"I used to hurt my hands a lot," Sanguillen said. "My first manager, Tom Saffell, he helped me. Then there were other people. Everybody was nice to me. Everywhere I played, people helped me. Understanding the language was a problem. I bought a dictionary."

Mastered Use of English

When Sanguillen first used to talk to pitchers on the mound, he used to say: "Come on, baby, throw hard."

"Those were the only words I knew," he said.

There is no language barrier now.

Manny Sanguillen knows his English and he knows the National League hitters.

He began learning when he caught 30 games with the Bucs in 1967.

But the next season, he was at Columbus, where he caught 105 games for Johnny Pesky and batted .316.

In 1969, he was the Bucs' first-string receiver, batting .303 in 129 games.

He really arrived last year, appearing in 128 games and batting a hot .325—tying him with the Cards' Joe Torre for the runner-up spot to league-leader Rico Carty.

As a hitter, Sanguillen is a swinger. He drew only 17 walks last year—which was an increase of five over 1969.

"When I first broke in at Batavia, I used to take a lot of pitches," he said. "Howie Haak, he tell me that I better learn to swing at the first pitch. Now I swing at almost everything. I think I get a lot of base-hits on bad pitches."

Sanguillen used to catch Jim Bunning when the side-wheeling veteran pitched for the Bucs in 1969.

"I didn't ask for him," Bunning said, "but I was pleased with the way Manny caught me. He used to squat on his rear and give me a low target. Maybe, it looked funny to the fans, but it was fine with me. Manny learned well."

"I learned from almost every pitcher I ever caught," Sanguillen said. "Now I squat down for most every pitcher I work with . . . but not Luke Walker. You know, he throws that curve ball in the dirt. But Luke has so much breaking stuff, I have to catch him differently. His curve does

tricks. Ask the hitters."

While Johnny Bench is doing his thing in Cincinnati, Manny Sanguillen probably never will be considered the No. 1 catcher in baseball.

There is a chance, if young Milt May develops as expected, that Sanguillen will wind up as an outfielder.

He played in the outfield in Puerto Rico last winter.

"I like the outfield," he said. "I think if I played the outfield, I would be able to keep my speed for more years."

Sanguillen, tabbed the Road-Runner (pardon us, Ralph Garr) by Pirates' broadcaster Bob Prince a couple of years ago, is the fastest catcher in the majors.

"They tell me catchers lose their speed in a few years," Sanguillen said. "Maybe so, but I still feel I can run pretty good."

Sharper on Base Paths

A year ago, there were some who felt Sanguillen's speed wasn't necessarily an asset. He used to run the bases with reckless abandon. This was from inexperience.

"I'm a better base runner now," Sanguillen said. "I used to get confused. Now I know what I'm doing."

Sanguillen considers himself lucky if he has made it with the Pirates at age 27.

"I did not really understand this game when I first started," he said. "I made many mistakes. I didn't know how to shift my feet when I was catching. I didn't know how to call for certain pitches. I guess I was ignorant."

Nobody thinks Manny Sanguillen is ignorant now.

"They called me crazy when I got hit on the head with the foul pop-up," he said, with a big grin.

There is nothing crazy about Manny Sanguillen now. He has adjusted to big league baseball quite well. He has adjusted to Pittsburgh, too. Last December, he left the bachelor ranks when he married Kathy Swanger, a girl who lives in North Versailles, Pa., a Pittsburgh suburb.

"My wife, she is a good baseball fan," Manny said. "We talk baseball a lot. I don't bring home my baseball problems to her. If I'm not hitting, I don't talk about it. But we talk about the good things that baseball has given us."

In Pittsburgh, the fans feel Manny Sanguillen is a good thing for the Pirates.