

Quiet Schofield Defies His Age

ANAHEIM—Three years ago, Dick Schofield was bustling between classes at Griffin High School in Springfield, Ill. He felt proud if he bumped into the principal in the hall and was greeted by a simple hello.

An hour before he would open the 1984 season as the California Angels' new shortstop, Schofield stood by his locker shaking hands with former President Richard Nixon. You had to wonder about the 21-year-old's thoughts at that moment.

Indeed, Schofield has come far and done it quickly—too quickly, you'd swear, by looking at him. He is a babe among grizzled vets, a round face and dimpled smile enhancing his boyishness. When he walks to the plate under one of those double ear-flapped helmets mandatory for all new big leaguers, he seems to be looking for the nearest Pony League game.

Schofield plays big, however. After one stop at each rung of the Angels' minor-league ladder, his path to the shortstop's job was cleared when a new tear was discovered in Rick Burleson's shoulder.

"Things have really happened fast," said Schofield. "I didn't have any expectations either way. Rick hadn't played for a year and a half, and I thought he'd be ready for sure. I planned on replacing him for the last few innings of games. I wouldn't have been disappointed either way. But I'm happy to have this chance."

Was he ready for it? Schofield himself simply shrugged. As shy as a freshman at his first sock hop, he says little.

"We'd like to get Dick to open up a little, to be a little more communicative in the field. I think he's still feeling his way," said Manager John McNamara.

Dressing among Reggie Jackson, Rod Carew and Fred Lynn would make any kid hold his tongue. But those who know Schofield best assure the Angels they have something special.

"I think he has a legitimate chance to be another Robin Yount," said Moose Stubing, who managed Schofield last year at Edmonton (Pacific Coast), where he hit .284 with 53 extra-base hits and 94 runs batted in. "He's quiet, but a leader by example. The more confident he gets, the more he'll take charge. And the more he matures, the more home runs he'll hit."

Schofield, 5-10, 175 pounds and definitely still growing, swiftly seduced an organization not known for producing young talent. Some, in fact, rank the Angels' farm system the worst in the majors. They couldn't resist showcasing their gem last September, although Schofield, weary from playing virtually non-stop for 18 months, was due for an early off-season.

Never mind that he batted only .204 and committed seven errors in only 21 games. "After watching him there was no doubt in my mind he had the mental toughness to play here," McNamara said.

According to the party line, Schofield was in spring-training camp "just in case." But Burleson couldn't realistically be expected to overcome an injury few do. Schofield had the job.

Rooting for him from afar was the elder Dick Schofield, his father, whose 18-year career as a journeyman infielder ended with the St. Louis Cardinals in 1971.

"There's no doubt that Dick is ready," said the elder Schofield. "Another year in Triple A wouldn't prove anything. The Angels need young blood more than anything. Dick is quiet, but he knows how to play. The tougher the situation, the better he has played. He's always been faced with the pressure of having to play with older players because he was better than players his own age."

Schofield still faces the same situation. His double-play partner is 35-year-old Bobby Grich. To his right is 33-year-old Doug DeCinces. He throws to first baseman Rod Carew, who's 38.

And now for the report card: Schofield has a quick bat but takes a big cut that'll result in a lot of strikeouts, a concession to his power. In the field, his arm is accurate but no shotgun; to compensate, he'll cheat toward the plate a little, cutting down his range.

And he has a firm handshake. Ask Richard Nixon.

Angels Angles: Schofield and center fielder Gary Pettis give the Angels two rookie starters for the first time since 1975, when Jerry Remy and Orlando Ramirez cracked the lineup. . . . A crowd of 62,921—the fifth-largest in Anaheim Stadium history—watched the opener of the Dodgers' three-game sweep over the Angels in the annual exhibition Freeway Series. . . . Pettis occupied the leadoff spot throughout the spring but was dropped to No. 9 for the start of the season. "I want to put more pressure on the other team from the beginning," said McNamara, who returned Brian Downing to the spot in which he produced 28 homers in 1982. . . . To pare the roster to 25, the Angels released veteran reliever Andy Hassler (6.83 spring earned-run average following a 1983 record of 0-5), optioned Doug Corbett to Edmonton and placed Ellis Valentine (bruised heel) on the 15-day disabled list. Also sent to Edmonton were pitchers Rick Steirer and Angel Moreno, outfielder Mike Brown and infielder Steve Lubratch.

TOM SINGER

Wilson, Martin Return May 15

By MIKE FISH

KANSAS CITY—Willie Wilson watched the Kansas City Royals' season opener with the New York Yankees from a back-row seat in the press box at Royals Stadium. Starting May 15, he is expected to be in center field for the Royals as a result of a compromise decision by arbitrator Richard Bloch.

Bloch ruled April 3 that Wilson and former Royals outfielder Jerry Martin, now with the New York Mets, must be reinstated May 15. His ruling came in response to a grievance filed by the players after they were suspended for one year by Commissioner Bowie Kuhn for drug involvement in the 1983 season.

"It's better than a year, I guess," Wilson said as he watched the Royals play the Yankees on the day of Bloch's announcement. "We're still being punished doubly. I hope people are satisfied. I know there are still some hard-core people who want me punished for a year or years after."

Wilson, Martin and first baseman Willie Aikens, who also played for the Royals in 1983, were suspended for a year by Kuhn last December 15 after they had pleaded guilty to attempting to possess cocaine. Kuhn also dealt Los Angeles Dodgers relief pitcher Steve Howe a one-year suspension for cocaine involvement. At the time, Kuhn said the suspensions of Wilson, Martin and Aikens would be reviewed May 15 with the possibility of their return to baseball at that time. Because Howe was a repeat offender, his suspension is not reviewable.

The arbitrator's decision recognized the disciplinary powers of the commissioner and set May 15 as the date for the return of Wilson and Martin, assuming their behavior is in order.

Both players remain on the suspended list, although they can continue to work out with their respective clubs. Neither player will be paid until May 15.

Wilson, Martin and Aikens served three-month prison sentences this winter in the Fort Worth (Tex.) Correctional Institute. Pitcher Vida Blue, who had been released by the Royals last summer, pleaded guilty to possession of cocaine. He was sentenced later, and still is serving his three-month term. Because Blue no longer is in baseball, Kuhn took no disciplinary action against him.

Martin said he was relieved to learn of the arbitrator's decision, saying: "It's a load off my mind. It's the best I could have hoped for. It's the final chapter."

News of his May 15 reinstatement left Wilson relieved, but no more a fan of Kuhn. He viewed the decision as a compromise.

"I feel it's a plus for us and a plus for Bowie," Wilson said. "It makes Bowie feel like he has a little say-so. It also gets us back this year."

Bloch is a Tampa, Fla., lawyer who handles grievances under the collective bargaining provision in baseball's Basic

Agreement. In hearings March 12-14 in Tampa, representatives of Wilson and Martin had asked Bloch to strike down Kuhn's decision on those two players. They argued that the commissioner lacked just cause for the one-year suspensions. It was their contention that Wilson and Martin had been dealt with harshly enough when they were handed prison sentences last November by U.S. Magistrate J. Milton Sullivan.

Both sides were at least partly satisfied with Bloch's decision. The commissioner declared that his disciplinary powers were reaffirmed; the players said the decision showed his initial suspension to be too harsh.

"I am pleased with the arbitrator's clear recognition of the seriousness of the cocaine threat to our game," Kuhn said. "Bloch said that the possible consequences are so obviously disastrous as to require no elaboration."

Bloch's decision was hardly a victory for the acting commissioner, however.

"While my decision of last year made provision for review of the suspensions on May 15," Kuhn said, "I very much regret that Mr. Bloch did not find it appropriate to leave it up to me to decide the nature of my May 15 review, and the date of their reinstatement."

Representatives of the players said the decision, at the very least, limited the commissioner's disciplinary powers.

"In the overall sense, yes, I am pleased," said Don Fehr, acting director of the Major League Players Association. "That clearly vindicates the players. We'd have liked him to do more."

"What we now have is an arbitrator's decision that will support a limited amount of discipline. That is a precedent, sure."

"What he's said is, 'No, Mr. Commissioner, you can't keep them out for a year on facts like this.' You do have a suspension of April 3 or whatever until May 15. That measurement can be applied in other cases."

In all likelihood, Aikens and his representatives will attempt to reach agreement with the commissioner's office for his return on May 15. Aikens, now a member of the Toronto Blue Jays, and Howe were not party to the grievance procedure.

"There isn't any question the commissioner should have the power to discipline, but we felt this was too harsh," said Bill Simpson, who represents Martin. "It's not absolute vindication for Jerry or Willie, but this is a case of the system working."

Reaction from the Royals to the ruling on Wilson was positive. "All the guys might not feel the same way, but they know we're a better club with him than without him," said second baseman Frank White. "He's a threat on the bases and he solidifies us in center field."

"It's just a shame the baseball world and everybody else is crucifying the Royals for drug problems when there've been five or six clubs (in the same situation) before us."



Nobody Does It As Well as Quiz

KANSAS CITY—In case you haven't been keeping up with the bullpen kings of the hill, Dan Quisenberry reigns supreme. Forget about Goose Gossage and Bruce Sutter. Quisenberry sneaked up on them overnight with his 80 mph submarine deliveries. His pitches sink, slide and flutter. They are little puffs of smoke when compared to Gossage's inferno.

But nobody, mind you, does it as well as Quisenberry. What he accomplished in 4½ seasons is staggering—136 saves and 30 victories, with a 2.47 earned-run average. He established a major-league record with 45 saves last season, and nobody was near his 131 saves in the last four seasons.

"I don't really think of myself as the best," Quisenberry said. "I obviously know where I am and all. But even during the season, I don't look at Rollies (which sponsors a Fireman of the Year award in each league) to see who has how many saves."

"I try not to dwell on it. I don't concern myself with whether somebody thinks I'm the best or if somebody else is supposed to be better."

"I think I'm accepted, yes. I don't think that I match up to a Gossage. I think that when Gossage came in the game, people thought it was over. (Now that Gossage has gone to the National League, Quisenberry speaks of him in the past tense.) I guess we can't be compared."

"Statistically, I like the way I match up. I'm not competing for attention, though."

Of course, it probably pays Quisenberry to be humble and let the numbers do his talking. Since 1980, only Rollie Fingers, in the strike-shortened 1981 season, has broken Quiz's hold on The Sporting News American League Fireman of the Year Award.

Quisenberry, a 6-2, 180-pound righthander, has led the A.L. in saves the last two seasons, earning 35 two years ago and the record 45 last year.

Quisenberry has developed from a virtual unknown with a funky delivery into the premier relief pitcher in baseball. He had a hand in 50 of the Royals' 79 victories a year ago. And with all the questions surrounding the club this season, the one thing you can probably count on is that Dan Quisenberry will save at least 30 games.

No less an authority than designated hitter Hal McRae rates Quiz the best in the game.

"He's not overpowering, but he gets people out," McRae said. "He gets them out more than anybody in the game. At some point you have to say, 'Hey, this guy isn't punching people out (striking them out) and he's not overpowering, but every time he comes in he does the job.'"

"Really, you got to let common sense take over. He's just the best relief pitcher in baseball. I'm very secure when he's in the game."

Quisenberry doesn't throw hard and he can't get the strikeout you look for from a short reliever. Control and getting ground balls are his fortes.

"He's proved you can do the job another way," said catcher John Wathan. "But probably the key is how few people he walks. He throws strikes and makes people hit it on the ground."

Quisenberry has walked just 72 batters in 505½ major-league innings. The last two seasons he walked 23 in 275½ innings, fewer than one every 11 innings.

Strikes and ground balls. The formula has worked splendidly for Quisenberry. So well, in fact, that his star is still rising. No longer is he the underdog with the peculiar delivery and pleasant wit. Now he expects to perform well in every outing. Management expects the same. So do his teammates and fans.

"At one time, I hoped to do well in every situation, and now I expect it. I'm disappointed when I don't. I've also noticed my

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