

Shortstops New Roots

Ozzie Smith, a Glove Wizard, Admits 'I Need Some Numbers' As Cardinals Drill Him at Bat

By RICK HUMMEL

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla.—"Crossroads" perhaps is too off-handed a word to describe what confronts shortstop Ozzie Smith in his first season with the St. Louis Cardinals. "But this year," Smith said, "I'll get a true evaluation of myself as a player and person."

Smith, for the first time in his career, has been traded. He has moved from an area with which he fell in love with, San Diego, to a place he knows little about other than that its baseball team is better than the one he left.

"Any time you get traded, you're a little apprehensive," Smith said. "I'll be interested to see how I handle it."

Smith had made, importantly, a good first impression with the Cardinals. "He takes extra hitting every day. He takes extra ground balls every day," said Manager Whitey Herzog. "He really wants to improve himself as a ballplayer, and why not? Look at the money he's going to make. If I was a ballplayer, I'd be out there every day at 6 in the morning."

Money was a root of the problems that delayed the Smith-for-Garry Templeton trade for 62 days before Smith and his agent, Ed Gottlieb, finally agreed to a special salary arbitration hearing. The arbitrator will decide whether Smith will make \$450,000 (the Cardinals' offer) this year or \$750,000 (the shortstop's request). But win or lose in arbitration, Smith insists he will be a happy man.

"I got into the game because I enjoy it. Not because there is a lot of money to be made," he said. "It's not a money thing with me, whether people believe that or not."

What's important now for the 27-year-old Smith is improving his hitting enough so that he no longer will be an "automatic

out." Smith averaged 231 in his first four years in the majors. From day one of spring training, St. Louis coaches Chuck Hiller and Dave Ricketts have worked with Smith in hopes that he will develop a downward type of swing that will be more conducive to playing on AstroTurf.

"Guys like Ozzie have to keep the ball out of the air," said Herzog. "If he could hit .240 or .250, we'd be very happy because we know he's the best defensive shortstop in the league and maybe in baseball."

Smith says, "Being on a better ball club should help me in my hitting. I was a good hitter in college (Cal Poly-San Luis Obispo) but the thing is numbers. I need to put some numbers up."

An ebullient sort, Smith says he has tempered his outward shows of emotion since entering professional baseball. "I used to be more the rah-rah type but that changed when I got into pro baseball," he said. "There doesn't seem to be the same kind of atmosphere. When you come up, you make sure you don't step on somebody's toes. You don't want them asking, 'Who's this guy?'"

"Deep down, I'm full of energy and excitement but I'm a little more subdued. I try to be low-key with people and see where others are coming from."

Smith had blended quietly into the Cardinals' atmosphere, not trying to stir anything. He's been a willing victim for the rips of George Hendrick, a former San Diego teammate who keeps the Redbirds loose in the clubhouse.

Hendrick drove Smith from the team hotel to early workouts at the Busch Complex but, seeing Smith being interviewed by a reporter one day, something Hendrick does not allow, the outfielder said, "He can take you home then, too. I'm out of here."

Smith smiled and said he wanted to finish the interview. Hendrick fixed him with only a half-serious glare. A few minutes later, Smith was scurrying out the door behind Hendrick. After all, Hendrick is about twice as big as the wiry Smith.

Until the salary arbitration procedure was agreed on, Smith still was with the Padres, turning down the trade because he didn't want to relinquish the no-trade clause he had in his contract. But, even as he turned down an offer by the Cardinals on January 26, he wasn't sure he was doing the right thing because he had been impressed by a visit with Herzog in San Diego.

"I've always admired Whitey Herzog as a manager," Smith said. "When he sat down and talked baseball, he was totally different. He was so sincere, it was so unreal the way he talked. It took me two weeks to find out that I wanted to play for him. He's a great baseball man."

The way Smith plays shortstop has been described in ballet-like terms and Smith admits he consciously tries to play the position a little differently than anyone else.

"I like to add my own little touch. I call it flair," said Smith. "Some people would call it hot-dogging but I call it flair. It's in a way like an artist."

The artistry was apparent almost from the minute the 5-10, 155-pound Smith showed up at his first major league camp. Veteran Gene Tenace, a Cardinals benchman and former Padres catcher-first baseman, remembers well.

"Alvin Dark (then manager of the Padres) told me that he had seen a kid in the instructional league that was going to be our regular shortstop. Ozzie came in and worked his butt off. He took 200 or 300 extra ground balls every day. I'll tell you. He can do things with that glove that you didn't think were possible," Tenace said.

Tenace believes that Smith's attitude and willingness to play every game, as he did last year, are just as much an advantage to the Cardinals as his fielding.

"The critical part of most teams is shortstop and now we have strength up the middle," said Tenace. "Last year, we didn't know if one individual (Templeton) was going to play or not going to play. That creates a lot of problems."

"I wish the best for Garry Templeton. I think both teams benefited from the trade but I think we're going to benefit the most because we've got the better ball club."

The period when Smith was balking at being traded was an uncomfortable one for those involved and the haggling perhaps unnecessary. But Smith says he can forget about it now.

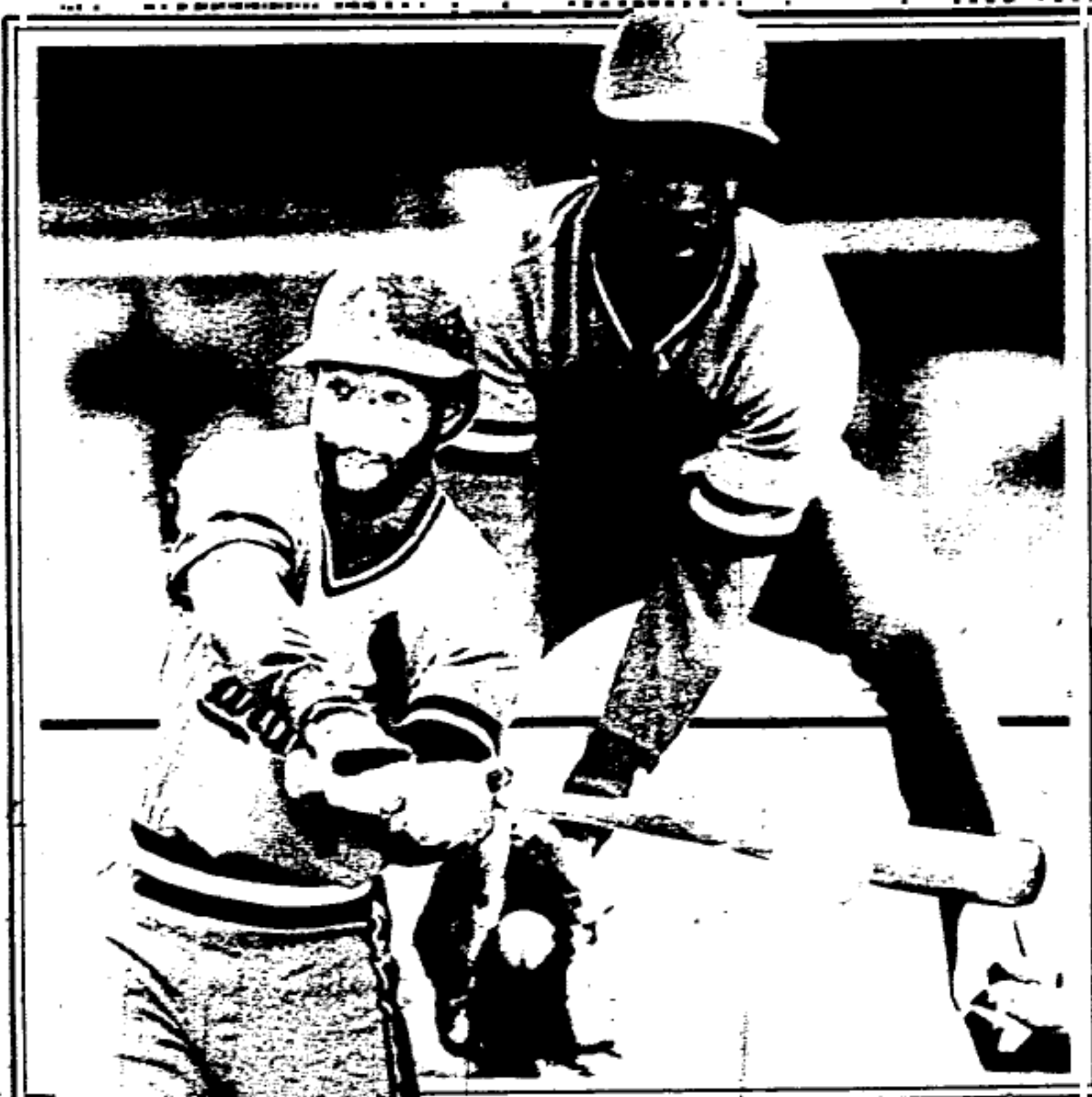
"I've been able to put all that behind me," said Smith. "I'm with the Cardinals now and I hope to become an active part of the St. Louis community."

He hopes also to learn something every day. "I try to get something positive out of a day, whether it's on offense or defense," said Smith. "I make sure that the day wasn't totally wasted."

"My batting averages haven't been what I would like. But I can go home and sleep because I know I did what I could. I was brought up to enjoy playing every day and I give all that I have that day. I do all I can possibly do to make the game entertaining."

Said Tenace, "He's a super kid. And there's not going to be so much pressure on him to perform every day with the bat and glove. There are so many guys who can pick him up. He's surrounded by so many good hitters, he's going to see a lot of good pitches."

Still, Smith would like to do more offensively. "Being an athlete, you never want to be left behind," he said. "I want to do my share."



Finally, a Deal Is a Deal

through when the Cubs sent Krukow to Philadelphia for catcher Keith Moreland and pitchers Dickie Noles and Dan Larson.

The Yankees did not offer enough pitching for Herzog's liking. The Rangers' bid was bogged down in a potential three-way swap with the Cubs that never materialized. For most of the meetings, Herzog was huddling with Baltimore officials but the Orioles' shortstops—Lenn Sakata and Bob Bonner—weren't appealing to Herzog.

Suddenly, the Padres showed an interest in trading Smith, perhaps frightened by Gottlieb's suggestion that his client be paid \$31 million or so for a 25-year contract.

Herzog virtually leaped at this opportunity because Smith was better than any of the shortstops he'd had a chance to acquire.

The deal was completed—well, agreed to—in a relatively short time but Herzog insisted that he did not know of Smith's no-trade contract until afterward, although McKeon denied that.

Both sides decided to wait on announcing the Smith-Templeton part until they could deal with the no-trade matter, which proved to be a weighty one indeed. Only the Lezcano-Mura trade was announced December 10, with "players to be named later."

A few days later, Gottlieb was saying, "There's no trade as far as I know. The no-trade clause is for ad infinitum."

A couple of days after that, Herzog said he "can't win with Templeton. I feel I might win a world championship if I got a shortstop who goes out there every day and hounds that ball." He meant Smith.

Two weeks later, Herzog met with Gottlieb and Smith in San Diego and came back impressed by Smith and dismayed by Gottlieb's demand of \$2 million for two years. "No .230 hitter is worth what he (Gottlieb) is asking," said Herzog.

The Padres threatened to cut Smith's salary by \$60,000 and both Herzog and McKeon waited for Smith to file for salary arbitration by the January 26 deadline, figuring that he would lose his no-trade clause in an arbitrated settlement.

On January 26, Smith did not file and at a press conference with Gottlieb said that the trade to St. Louis was off. But neither side gave up.

Lou Susman, attorney for Cardinals President August A. Busch Jr., discussed a possible solution with the owners' Players Relations Committee while Gottlieb talked with the Major League Players' Association.

Smith, meanwhile, was thinking that Herzog wanted him and that the Padres didn't. Finally, on February 11, 62 days after the December 10 deal was struck, he decided to approve the trade, pending the salary arbitration. The session with the arbitrator was scheduled for late March.

RICK HUMMEL

'Can't Get By on \$72,500,' Ozzie Smith Tells Padres

By PHIL COLLIER

SAN DIEGO—Ozzie Smith says he may have to take a leave of absence from the San Diego Padres this summer because of a job opportunity that would pay him more than his \$72,500 salary as a shortstop.

"I wouldn't want to leave the game because I love it so much, but I may be forced to because of circumstances," the 25-year-old switch-hitter disclosed.

This was the first time Smith publicly expressed dissatis-

faction over playing for the same salary he earned last year. His threatened walkout drew a sharp response from Padres President Ballard Smith, who said Ozzie would draw a stiff fine and be removed from the payroll if he left the team.

The matter could wind up in court or arbitration. Ozzie Smith and his agent, Ed Gottlieb, say that Marvin Miller, executive director of the Major League Players Association, has advised them the Padres cannot fine Ozzie if he takes a leave of absence.

Gottlieb said recently his client is the lowest paid shortstop in baseball and one of the major's lowest paid players.

"He just has to make more money, even if it means taking on outside jobs," said Gottlieb. The agent said he has had to lend Ozzie \$35,000, which Smith confirmed.

"We paid Ozzie \$21,000, the major league minimum, when he was a rookie two years ago," said Ballard Smith. "Last season, we raised him to \$72,500. We offered him a substantial raise this spring, even though he was coming off a bad year with the bat (.211 average).

"Ozzie wasn't satisfied. He wanted a lot more. He wouldn't sign for the raise we offered him, so we renewed his contract for the same money as last season. He was the highest paid second-year player this club has ever had. We could have cut him 20 percent when we renewed his contract, but we didn't.

"If Ozzie or anyone else leaves this team without good reason, they're getting fined. I'm not going to put up with anything like that."

Meantime, Ozzie would not reveal the nature of the outside job opportunity which he says Gottlieb is negotiating for him; except to deny that it has anything to do with the Shell Oil Co.

"It's something that probably could make me more money than I could make playing baseball all season, something I could do the rest of my life," Ozzie said.

"I understand the club is losing money. I know they're having contract problems with Dave Winfield, but I have to do what I think is best for me. Over half of what I'm making goes to taxes. I took home less money last year than I did when I was making \$21,000. I had to get rid of my first agent. There were some bad investments."

Gottlieb said the poor investments left Ozzie with short-term debts of \$84,000, due in about four months. He needs to get some cash so that the creditors will spread out the debt,



Ozzie Smith . . . Hard times in San Diego.

the agent said.

The 5-10, 148-pounder recently filmed some TV commercials for San Diego Trust and Savings Bank. He also conducts a taped, interview-type show preceding Padres radio broadcasts.

A day after Smith spoke of taking a leave of absence, Gottlieb took out ads in San Diego newspapers, seeking employment outside baseball for Ozzie.

Ozzie's ad, placed in the "part-time help wanted" section, struck a responsive chord with Joan Kroc, wife of Padres Owner Ray Kroc. She reckoned that her gardener could use an assistant and figured that Smith would be worth about \$4.50 an hour.

Mrs. Kroc said she had talked it over with the gardener, Luis Torres. "Luis is enthusiastic about the idea. He's a real baseball fan; Ozzie is his favorite player," she said. "I asked Luis about salary and he said \$3.50 per hour is the usual starting figure, but since Ozzie is a college man and he has natural talent, we could pay him \$4.50."

Gottlieb reported some mundane offers from brokerages and trading companies, but said that there also were offers for Ozzie to be a nude dancer at \$500 a show or a pizza deliveryman at \$3.25 an hour.

Padre Pickups: The Padres were angry at San Francisco outfielder Bill North after he slid into third base and swung an elbow at Aurelio Rodriguez, breaking his nose. Two innings later in the game at San Francisco, Padres reliever Dennis Kinney fired a pitch over North's head. Both benches emptied onto the field, but no blows were struck. North sat out the remaining three games of the series with two sprained fingers. Rodriguez was expected to be out of the lineup for a week to 10 days. It took seven stitches to close the gash in his nose.

Scot Thompson Unhappy Cub

By RICHARD DOZER

CHICAGO—No. 1 draft choices have a way of escaping the Chicago Cubs. The last one of their own who made it to the top was Burt Hooton, who was traded to Los Angeles five years ago, largely because he didn't like the management.

Finally, another top choice surfaced with the Cubs last year. He was outfielder Scot Thompson, selected in the first round June 6, 1974, out of Saxonburg, Pa. But now he, too, has grown suddenly disenchanted with the organization. He has let it be known he would like to be traded.

"I'd just as soon get out of here if they don't think I'm good enough to play," Thompson said during the Cubs' last home stand.

He hadn't started a game. He'd been reduced to pinch-hitting—a job at which he had two hits in four times at bat. And this, on April 23, was the statistical sum of his season.

Last year, when he was chosen the Cubs' rookie of the year by the Chicago baseball writers as a reward for batting .289 in 128 games, Thompson beat Bobby Murcer out of the right field job. Scot played against righthanded pitching, and Mike Vail largely against lefties. Now, neither of them fits into the Preston Gomez program, and Vail was as upset as Thompson.

But Thompson, 24, seemed even more crushed at being sidetracked. All systems had been "go" with Scot, ever since he began progressing steadily through the Cubs' system.

Then after his excellent rookie season came the big spring thud. His first hint that things weren't going his way, he said, "was when they started playing me at first base in those intrasquad games the last week of spring training."

It was a chance for Manager Gomez to give Carlos Lezcano a long look in center field, and when the season opened, Lezcano not only had made the big jump from Double A (Midland, .326), but also won the regular job. When Ken Henderson, the surprise right fielder on opening day, went to the disabled list with a pulled hamstring, Thompson still was not called on.

Lezcano returned to center and Jerry Martin went to right.

When it was suggested that Thompson needed patience because Gomez was merely seeing what Lezcano could do, Scot agreed that this is how he probably should look at the situation.

"But I'm running out of patience," he said. "I thought at worst I would be platooned out there (in right). Preston is talking about how our defense has been hurting us, but so far, I haven't been on the field for any defense at all. And I happen to think I'm a pretty good defensive player."

"I don't think Preston thinks I'm any good. I'm not as optimistic about things as I was. You can only hang in there so long. It's getting to me."

Still hoping inside that he is wrong about what he sees, Thompson said, "Maybe they're just testing me."

Cubbyhole: When Henderson went to the disabled list, Jesus Figueroa was recalled from Wichita April 21 to take his place. . . . Barry Foote belted a grand-slam homer in the ninth inning to beat the Cardinals, 16-12, under 22-mph Wrigley Field winds April 22, giving him eight runs batted in for the day, one shy of the club record set by Heinie Zimmerman in 1911. . . . In the same game, Ivan DeJesus became the 12th Cub in history to hit for the cycle. The most recent were Billy Williams and Randy Hundley in 1966. . . . Bruce Sutter got a win, a loss and four saves in his first six appearances.

Twins' Hitters Waste Good Pitching

By PATRICK REUSSE

TWIN CITIES—When the Minnesota Twins departed spring training in 1979, they were touted as a team with strong pitching, but were suspect offensively. As it turned out, the Twins batted .278 and scored 764 runs, but were done in by a pitching staff that compiled a 4.13 earned-run average.

This spring, it was the offense that was considered a strength. The Twins expected improvement from maturing players such as Roy Smalley, Ken Landreaux, Hosken Powell, Rob Wilfong, John Castino, Butch Wynegar and Ron Jackson. And there were some interesting reinforcements, such as rookie Rick Sofield and veterans Danny Goodwin and Pete Mackanin.

The pitching was now considered to be the hangup. With Dave Goltz departed, there were no tested starters behind Geoff Zahn and Jerry Koosman. That's not exactly true. Pete Redfern had been tested in 1976 and 1977, as a kid out of Southern Cal, and found wanting. Roger Erickson had won 14 games in 1978, then fell off to 3-10 in 1979.

The other starter was rookie Terry Felton, who had compiled a 26-34 record in four minor league seasons. This was not a starting staff on which to build a pennant express.

So what happened? On the season-opening, 12-game trip to the West Coast, the Twins pitched mightily, but came home with a 5-7 record because of a puny offense.

Redfern was tremendous in three starts. Felton was strong in two and Erickson had a good start in Seattle after opening the season with a bad one in Oakland.

The staggering start was the result of a .222 team batting average. On the swing to Oakland, Anaheim and Seattle, the Twins scored 41 runs in 12 games and the losses came by these scores: 1-0, 4-1, 3-1, 2-1, 4-3, 3-1 and 3-2.

Sofield, the best looking young player in Florida according to Manager Gene Mauch, returned to Minnesota with four hits in 36 at-bats. He went 3-for-6 on opening night in Oakland, with a home run, then had one hit in 30 at-bats, and none in his last 23 at-bats. Jackson failed to hit in his first 20 at-bats.

"I can't believe the pitching we wasted on the West Coast," Glenn Adams said. "This team can hit, but we didn't let anyone know it out there."

The frustration started to ebb during the final two games in Seattle. Powell, moved to the leadoff spot, ignited the offense with four hits and the Twins won, 8-3. The next day, Mike Cabbage and Smalley hit home runs and the Twins won, 4-3. Smalley's home run was his second of the Seattle series and his ninth in the Kingdome. That's two more than any other visiting player has hit in Seattle (Don Baylor of the California Angels had hit seven entering a late-April series in the Kingdome).

But the new start for the Twins' offense came on opening day in Minnesota. They were the last team to play at home, and were greeted by a crowd of 36,183.

Mauch complained that his team had been "overwhelmed by change-ups" on the road, and one of the pitchers who had done so was California's Dave Frost.

Frost was the opposition pitcher for the opener, but he didn't fool the Minnesota fastball lovers on this afternoon. Smalley hit a two-run home run, his fifth, in the bottom of the first. In the same inning, Sofield ended his 0-for-23 slide with a line single.

And, late in the game, Jackson homered into the left field seats for his first hit of the 1980s. The crowd responded with a thunderous ovation. The home run accounted for the Twins' final run in an 8-1 victory, and it was their 13th hit.

Overall, it was one of the most festive baseball days at Met Stadium since the Twins' pennant contending years of the 1960s. For the first time in 20 years, the traditional, melancholy organ music was replaced by taped, rock music between innings.

"If the fans like it, I guess I can put up with it," Mauch said. "But the volume has to be turned down. They have the speakers pointed right at the dugout."

Mauch was outvoted by almost everyone, including the old traditionalist, Calvin Griffith, who was going to pop for \$10,000 in new speakers to improve the sound system.

Doubletakes: Doug Corbett and John Verhoeven, two 27-year-old newcomers, were taking some of the late-inning relief pitching from Mike Marshall. "Gene and I have to talk," Marshall said. "Corbett's been good every time I've used him," Mauch said. "Mike wasn't sharp in his early games." Any differences of opinion seemed to be resolved by April 20, when Marshall got the final four outs in a 4-3 victory and gained his first save.

From Tired to Inspired, It's Mets' One-Year Log

By JACK LANG

NEW YORK—The New York Mets have reached the point where they inspire themselves. It's called believing.

Craig Swan, the most expensive player in club history, said it all when the team returned from its first transcontinental tour, one which could be likened to a roller-coaster ride. After losing the first six games in California following an amazingly successful home stand, the Mets were at the bottom of the ride.

But a final-game victory in Los Angeles triggered a climb to the top in which the Mets won seven out of eight before losing the finale in Philly. A 7-8 trip after such a disastrous start convinced all players of their capabilities.

"I am so inspired by this club, I can't explain it," Swan said. "I think our time has come, finally. We are the same club that left Florida, no major changes (except for Claudell Washington) and we are a respectable club beating the best of teams. The entire mental outlook is different than it was last year.

"Last year," Swan added, "guys were playing for themselves. The club was going to be sold, players were seeking to renegotiate. There seemed to be no hope to the situation.

"But all that has changed. The new owners have made the difference. They've given Joe Torre freedom and there's a new fresh attitude that's good. Torre showed great patience with us and it is paying off."

Last year, the Mets also were trying to develop a bullpen after Skip Lockwood, in the opinion of many teammates, quit on them.

Neil Allen had failed as a starter and was on his way back to the minors when he was, by necessity, thrown into the bullpen. In the final half of the season, learning his trade well, the 22-year-old righthander from Kansas City, Kan., became the Mets' most reliable reliever. He saved eight games with a terrible club but got his feet wet and

discovered what relieving is all about.

Today, Allen is one of the league's premier relievers. When the Mets returned from their successful trip, Allen was a major reason for the team's high optimism.

Of the seven games won by the Mets when they turned it all around, Allen won one and saved three. That raised his saves total to 13, only four fewer than Bruce Sutter had at the time. Of the Mets' first 34 victories, Allen had a hand in 17.

Allen's confidence in himself and the team's confidence in him is another reason for the optimism.

"I have the feeling now that I can get anyone out," he said. "I wouldn't say it's cockiness. It's overconfidence in yourself."

Another big factor in the climb to fourth place is Tom Hausman's work in long relief. Over a recent stretch of nine appearances, Hausman had an ERA of 0.75 with three wins and one save.

Eddie Glynn and Jeff Reardon also were giving Torre the kind of relief a manager dreams of. As Yogi Berra once said, "If you ain't got a bullpen, you ain't got nuthin'."

Metscellaneous: Elliott Maddox has been playing a superb defensive game at third as well as hitting in the .280s. The contract he signed as a free agent gives him the right to renegotiate when he proves physically sound. He has and he wants to reopen contract talks but so far G.M. Frank Cashen has shrugged him off. . . . Local papers are clamoring for the Mets to extend Torre's contract, but Cashen says nothing doing until the end of the season when he has a chance to evaluate the situation. But he adds that he has a history of "not firing managers."

Reardon missed the entire Philly series because of a strained stomach muscle which he believed, at first, might be a hernia. . . . Washington, after helping win three games in L.A. and Chicago with a homer barrage, went into an 0-for-20 skid. . . . Torre wasn't happy with Dallas Green



Craig Swan . . . Hat's off to Mets.

badmouthing his Mets after Green's inept Phils had dropped three out of four to Torre's kids. "It's wrong for him to rap my team," Torre said. "If he's mad at me, I don't know why. I didn't hit him any harder than most other hitters he faced." Green once pitched for the Phils.

Four of the six N.L. career homers Maddox has hit came at Wrigley Field where, he said, "I love to hit because of the background." . . . John Pacella got his first major league win in Philadelphia and lost his hat only 15 times. They keep track of John's cap drops in the press box. . . . Joel Youngblood was challenging for the league lead in assists from the outfield. He had 10. . . . Doug Flynn continues to play every day despite a pulled groin muscle. Torre says he is without question the best fielding second baseman in the league.

The Praise Piles High On Padre Ozzie

By PHIL COLLIER

SAN DIEGO—A rival National League shortstop, Bill Russell of Los Angeles, describes Ozzie Smith's fielding as acrobatic.

Dodgers Manager Tommy Lasorda, says he marvels at how far Smith can go to field a ball and still maintain perfect balance.

Smith's San Diego manager, former New York Yankees second baseman Jerry Coleman, regards the 25-year-old Smith as the best in the N. L. at his position.

Many observers of Smith's first 2½ seasons in the majors agree that they've never seen a shortstop, or any infielder for that matter, with quicker hands and feet.

Smith says that came about partly by accident.

"I have five brothers," said Ozzie, who grew up in Los Angeles, "but I was the only one who was involved in a baseball program. My brothers were always working or were in school, so there were lots of times I didn't have anybody to play catch with.

"So I would throw a ball against a brick wall, or against the steps to the house, and then field it. The closer I got to

the wall or the steps, the quicker my reactions had to be."

Few realize that Smith led National League shortstops in assists last year with 555. By comparison, Larry Bowa had 448, Dave Concepcion 495 and Garry Templeton 525.

By now, thanks to national television film clips, most fans have had an opportunity to marvel at the play Smith made on Atlanta's Jeff Burroughs two years ago at San Diego Stadium, when Ozzie became runner-up in voting for National League Rookie of the Year.

Burroughs grounded an apparent single up the middle. Smith darted to his left and dived behind second base. As Smith was in mid-air, the ball took a bad hop and was about to carom behind him when he made a barehand catch. He sprawled to the dirt, jumped up and made a strong throw to nip Burroughs at first base.

Smith does not get the national recognition he deserves because his hitting does not match his fielding. The switch-hitter batted .258 as a rookie, but slumped to .211 in 1979 and was averaging .232 this season.

"Nobody ever tried to teach me the mechanics of hitting until I got to the big leagues," said Ozzie, a much better batter against lefthanded pitchers (.279) than righthanders (.216).

"I think I've become a better hitter since I've learned to lay off the high fastball," he said.

"One thing that has made Ozzie more valuable is that he has learned how to work pitchers for walks," said Coleman. "He has become quite good at it."

As a rookie, Smith drew 47 walks in 159 games. Last season, he had 37 in 156 games. This year, however, he walked 41 times in his first 75 games.

"Ozzie is an excellent baserunner," said Lasorda, who became more closely associated with Smith during last fall's All-Star tour of Japan. "He plays with a lot of enthusiasm; he is very conscientious and ambitious."

Smith stole 21 bases in his first 28 attempts this season. He swiped 68 his first two seasons with the Padres, 40 of them as a rookie.

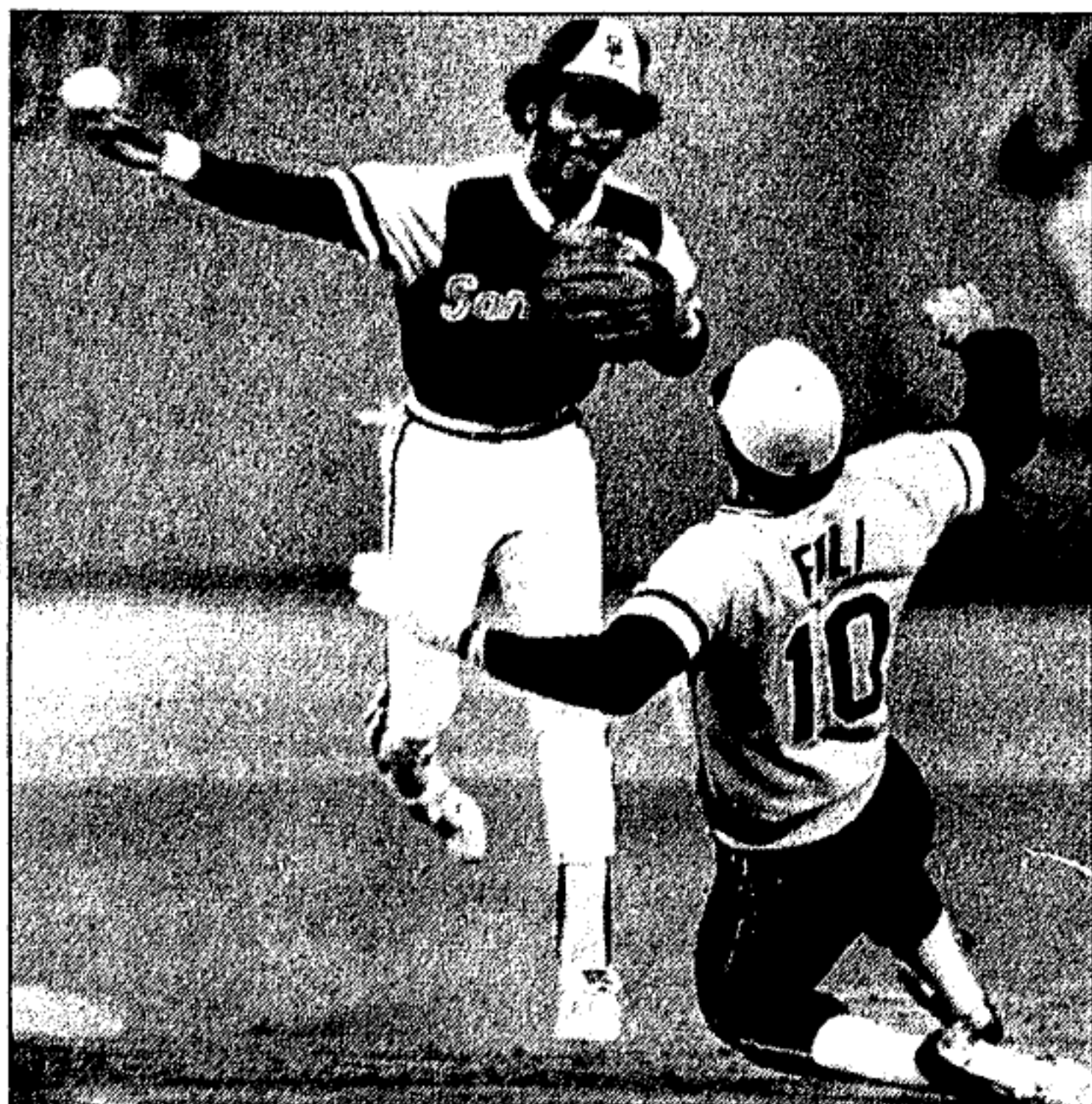
Smith, who bats second behind fleet Gene Richards, is considered the Padres' best bunter, but has been told he doesn't bunt enough to make full use of his speed. It was partly with that in mind that the Padres recently hired former Cincinnati and San Diego outfielder Bobby Tolan as their batting coach. Tolan was an outstanding bunter.

Smith had already committed 12 errors. He made only 20 last year, even though he plays half of his games on the dirt infield at San Diego Stadium.

Padre Pickups: The Padres have 12 pitchers and must cut two of them when lefthander Randy Jones and righthander Rick Wise come off the 21-day disabled list shortly.

Jones and Wise are recovering from pulled rib cage muscles. . . . The Padres may be reluctant to part with righthanders Juan Eichelberger and Dennis Blair, called up from Hawaii (Coast) when Jones and Wise were disabled. Eichelberger teamed with Rollie Fingers to beat San Francisco with a four-hitter in his second start. In Blair's first start, he allowed seven hits and only two runs in the first 7½ innings of a 3-2 victory over Atlanta. Reliever John D'Acquisto got credit for the victory.

Taken out of the cleanup spot for the first time this season, Dave Winfield marked his switch to the No. 3 slot by driving in five runs June 25 with a triple, sacrifice fly and his first homer since May 30. "We haven't had a No. 3 hitter all year," said Coleman, "and Dave wasn't hitting like a cleanup hitter." First baseman Willie Montanez, elevated from first to fourth in the order, narrowly trailed Winfield in the race for the club RBI lead, 45-43. . . . Left fielder Gene Richards threw out five base runners in one six-game stretch and raised his season total to nine. That's a San Diego high for a left fielder.



Ozzie Smith . . . If he could only hit.

PRO SPORTS SUCCESS THE DIFFERENCE IS MENTAL

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