

Tom Seaver and Christy Mathewson . . . Remarkable Parallels in Careers of Modern, Old-Time Pitching Aces.

Seaver Dubbed a Modern-Day Matty

By FRED LIEB in the St. Petersburg Times

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla.—Back in the first decade of this century, New York and the entire nation had a righthanded pitcher who was tall, handsome, college-educated, clean-cut, clean-living and clean-shaved, named Christopher (Christy) Mathewson. He pitched for the New York National League club of that era, John McGraw's scrappy New York Giants. Big Six or Matty, as he was affectionately known to New Yorkers, was the nation's All-America boy.

More than half a century later, the New York Nationals, by this time the fascinating Mets, have another good-looking, good-doing, good-acting righthanded pitching collegian in George Thomas (Tom) Seaver, son of Charles Seaver, Walker Cup golfer. Loved, admired and respected, Tom is the present-day version of the All-America boy.

They're Look-Alikes

It really is remarkable how much Matty and the younger New York star, Seaver, resemble each other. The same is true of their respective careers. Physically, both righthanders are much alike. Matty's height was 6-1½ inches; Seaver is 6-1. Tom weighs 200 pounds, Christy, in his prime, weighed 190 pounds.

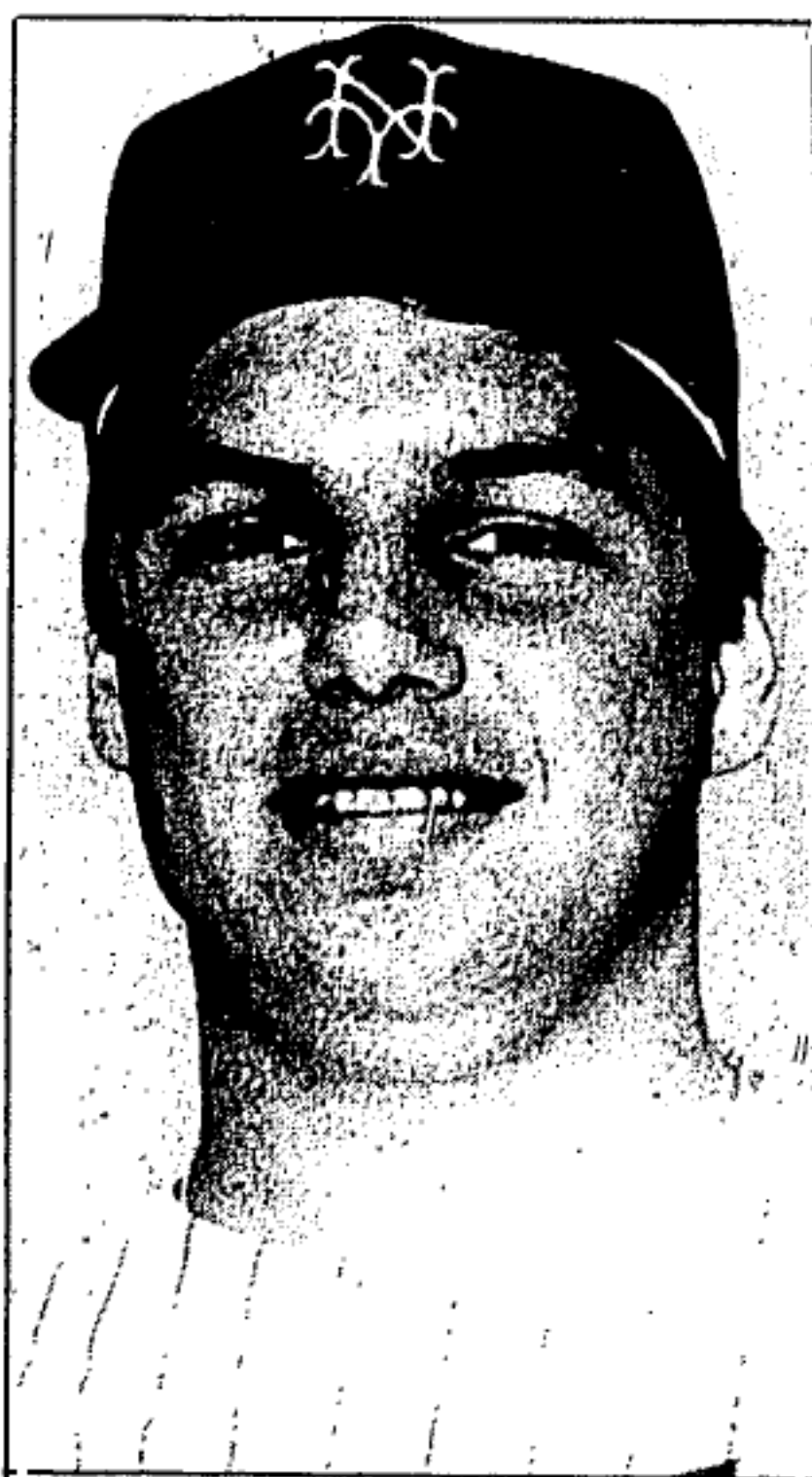
Both men were well ahead of most players of their day in IQ, general intellect and intelligence. Mathewson was graduated from Bucknell University in Pennsylvania, Seaver attended Fresno City College in Fresno and the University of Southern California.

Both men were the unofficial captains of their New York teams, players who were the real team leaders and men who commanded the respect of their fellows. Both smoked moderately,

Christy didn't drink or play Sunday ball. Tom takes an occasional social drink. Matty, springing from direct middleclass English stock, was more reticent than Seaver, but as articulate as Seaver, and, unlike many professional athletes, both found it unnecessary to spice their conversation, in and out of the clubhouse, with profanity and vulgarisms.

Expert at Bridge

Mathewson was recognized as the game's best bridge player in the 1904-1924 period, Seaver has few superiors among present-day players in the game of doubling and redoubling. Both were good dressers; Mathewson, of course, wore clothes more Victorian than Seaver's sometimes vivid mod at-



Tom Seaver

tire. Matty's hair was closely cropped. Seaver wears his hair reasonably long, as do most young men, with long sideburns.

Christy had a most attractive Junoesque wife, Jane Mathewson, an early college woman, who was Matty's No. 1 fan and adviser. Pert, pretty Nancy Seaver, six inches shorter than Jane, has a similar role in the Seaver household.

Both pitchers adored their wives, liked to have them in the stands when they played and consulted them on all matters pertaining to their careers.

Both in N. Y. Uniform

Both Christy and Tom broke in with New York National tailenders and were lucky to pitch for champion New York aggregations.

In their early years both men seemed to be headed elsewhere, but destiny or fate pulled them to the nation's metropolis. Matty had a 20-2 record with the 1900 Norfolk Virginia League club when the New York Giants, then tailenders, bought him in mid-season on a tryout basis. Matty was no immediate success. He was wild in his six games and had a 0-3 record when the Giants returned him to Norfolk.

However, the Cincinnati Reds drafted him from Norfolk the following fall. The Giants then had a change of heart, and regained Matty in a winter trade, Mathewson for Amos Rusie, New York's former ace pitcher, who was inactive because of illness in 1899 and 1900.

A's Lured Matty

During the hectic years of the National-American League war, New York twice came close to losing Big Six. Matty jumped to the Philadelphia A's, but jumped back to New York. After the 1902 season, he signed a contract

with the St. Louis Browns. When baseball peace came in January, 1903, Matty was claimed by both the Giants and Browns and, fortunately for Giant fans—also for Matty, the peace commissioners awarded him to New York.

373 Wins in N. L.

Under the able management of McGraw, Mathewson then went on to a glorious career in which he recorded 373 N. L. victories, a mark later tied by Grover Alexander.

He recorded 30 or more wins four times, 30 in 1903, 33 in 1904, 31 in 1905, and 37 in 1908. In the 1905 World Series with the Philadelphia Athletics, he won three shutouts within six days.

The fates also took a hand in landing Tom Seaver in New York. When Tom was a ball-playing



Christy Mathewson

undergraduate at the University of Southern California, the Atlanta Braves signed him in February, 1966, at a reported bonus of \$40,000. However, former Commissioner William Eckert nullified the transaction on the ground that it violated the college rule then in effect. After Southern Cal declared Tom ineligible for further college competition, Eckert ruled any club other than the Braves could put in a bid for Seaver.

The Indians, Phillies and Mets all were interested. Eckert put the names of the three clubs in a hat, shuffled it, and when the draw was on, out came the name of the lucky Mets. That was April 3, 1966.

Top Rookie in '67

After a 12-12 season with the Mets' Jacksonville farm club in 1966, Seaver was moved up to the parent Mets in '67, when he won Rookie of the Year honors with the then still tenth-place New Yorks.

He won 16 and lost 13. He had almost a similar record in '68, 16-12, when he helped pitch the Mets into ninth place. However, he really leaped to national fame in 1969, when he spearheaded the Mets' drive to their first pennant with 25 victories, most in both leagues. After losing the opening game of the Series to the Orioles, Tom made it three-one for New York with a brilliant 2-1, 10-inning victory over Mike Cuellar in the fourth game.

Then came glory and lots of cold cash: The Cy Young award for masterful pitching; a good second to Willie McCovey for the National League's Most Valuable Player award; runner-up to the Red Sox' Tony Conigliaro for the Fred Hutchinson award for "Most Courageous Ball Player," and the nation had found itself a new All-America boy!