

Mets Trade Tom Seaver and Dave Kingman

By JOSEPH DURSO

In one of the blockbuster trades in baseball history, the New York Mets sent Tom Seaver to the world champion Cincinnati Reds last night for four players of far less magnitude.

Seaver, the premier pitcher in baseball for the last decade, was traded after 14 months of public feuding with the chairman of the team's board of directors, M. Donald Grant.

But he also was traded after 11

years as a public favorite on the national sports scene, and the return value was surprisingly low: The Mets received Pat Zachry, a pitcher now in his second season in the major leagues; Doug Flynn, a utility infielder, and two minor league outfielders, Steve Henderson and Dan Norman.

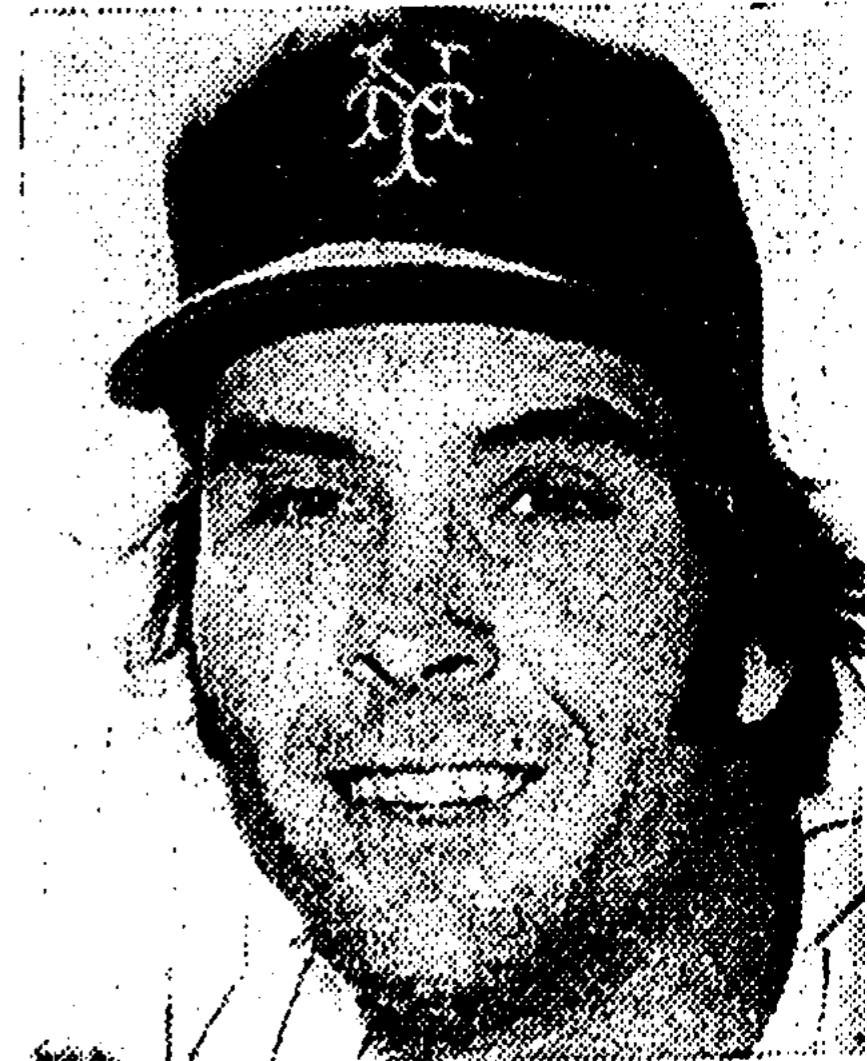
Not only that, but the directors of the Mets did not stop there in breaking up their last-place team as the annual deadline for trading players arrived. They sent the leading home-run hitter on the club, Dave Kingman, to the San Diego Padres at midnight for Bobby Valentine, a utility infielder, and Paul Siebert, a pitcher fresh from the minors.

Then, having divested themselves of their two ranking "contract problems," Seaver and Kingman, the Mets swung yet another midnight deal: Mike Phillips to the St. Louis Cardinals in exchange for Joel Youngblood, a reserve outfielder. Phillips was not a contract problem, but he was a utility infielder—and the Mets apparently were getting crowded with them.

The Mets' most stunning move in the flurry of trades, sending Seaver to the Reds, was announced simultaneously in three cities: in New York, where the board of directors met to approve the deal "with sincere regret," and in Atlanta, where the Mets were defeating the Braves while Seaver was flying home, and in Cincinnati, where the



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Tom Seaver



Dave Kingman

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Zachry, Flynn and Two Minor Leaguers Exchanged for Star Right-Hander

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Reds were beating the Philadelphia Phillies.

Before it could be announced, though Seaver and his antagonists in the front office went through a series of long-distance telephone conversations that poured even more melodrama into their vendetta. Because of his seniority, the 32-year-old pitcher held a veto over any trade. And on Tuesday night, he apparently cast his veto during a call to Joe McDonald, the general manager.

Seaver Changes Mind

But yesterday morning, while the owners of the team were discussing the situation, Seaver called again from Atlanta after a night of reflection and said: "Forget what I told Joe McDonald last night. I want out."

Even before it was completed, the trade had touched off angry protests from New York fans, who besieged the Shea Stadium switchboard with phone calls this week. But in Cincinnati, it touched off joy and optimism that the Reds could now overtake the first-place Los Angeles Dodgers and win their third straight title.

"This gives us the premier pitcher in baseball," exulted Sparky Anderson, manager of the Reds. "Seaver just keeps climbing, and he may be the all-time all-timer before he is through."

"It set the town on fire," said Dick Wagner, executive vice president of the Reds. "Everybody I met on the street kept asking me when we'd get Tom Seaver. It's kind of wild. We've lacked the big take-charge pitcher, and now we've got him."

But in Los Angeles, home of the Reds' chief rival in the National League's

West, the reaction was predictably worrisome.

"This makes the Reds definitely a stronger club," said Davey Lopes, the second baseman. "This has to be one of the biggest steals since the Babe Ruth trade [to the Yankees in 1920]. A trade is supposed to help both teams. But I don't think the Mets are as good a club as they were before. I can't see how they improved their team one iota."

The Mets, flying home from Atlanta, meantime mourned the departure of their No. 1 player, three times the winner of the Cy Young Award as the best pitcher in the National League, the winner of 189 games and one of the sport's record-breaking strikeout pitchers.

And Seaver placed the blame for the feud on the bad feelings that grew after he had signed a three-year contract in March, 1974. It guarantees him \$225,000 a season, the most ever paid by the Mets but below the soaring salaries of the free agents in baseball's revolutionary new era.

"From the time I signed my last contract," he has said, "feelings between me and Mr. Grant have been unbearable. The reason for all this fuss and furor goes back to that day."

To Grant, a stockbroker who runs the club for the family of the late Joan Whitney Payson, the problem was that Seaver became an "ingrate" who demanded to renegotiate his salary. To Seaver, the problem was that Grant had undermined his role as the team's leader and as a public figure. The passions intensified as the Mets fell into last place this season, and they were

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Doug Flynn



Steve Henderson



Pat Zachry

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Seaver Dealt To Reds for 4 Players

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still intense last night, two weeks after Joe Torre had replaced Joe Frazier as manager.

Wherever the trade left the Mets, it seemed certain to strengthen Cincinnati, already the strongest team in baseball despite its current standing in second place in the National League's Western Division. Four times in the last seven years, the Reds have won the league pennant and twice in the last two years the World Series. And suddenly they added the one ingredient they were missing much of that time: overpowering pitching. They also accomplished the deal without violating their recent decision "not to touch our regular eight men" in the lineup.

But not many persons were prepared for the trading of "Tom Terrific" to the world champions of baseball, since Seaver had led the Mets from their losing years to one world championship, one league pennant and prosperity.

Nor were many baseball people prepared for the apparently small value that the Mets received in return. They have been shopping around for hitters to supply some muscle to one of the weakest offenses in baseball, and that was one of the chief gripes expressed by Seaver and by Jon Matlack, another of their star pitchers, as well as by Kingman, who accused Grant of "operating in the Dark Ages."

Last weekend, the Reds talked to Seaver about a trade and apparently agreed to make some concessions in his contract. But the 6-foot right-hander from California insisted that his main reason for even considering a move was that "I cannot work with Grant."

The situation got thicker when the Reds offered New York one of their better relief pitchers, Rawly Eastwick. But Eastwick was still unsigned and indicated that he "would not sign with anybody during the season." So that deal collapsed, and the new package took shape yesterday.

In it, the only Cincinnati player with "credentials" was Zachry, a 25-year-old right-handed pitcher from Waco, Tex., who won 14 games and lost seven as a rookie last season. He also pitched one victory in the National League playoffs against Philadelphia and one in the World Series against the New York Yankees. He shared the league's rookie-of-the-year award with Butch Metzger, then of the San Diego Padres.

Henderson is a 24-year-old outfielder from Houston who hits with some power and runs with considerable speed. In three summers in the minor leagues, his best work was achieved last year at Three Rivers in the Eastern League, where he hit .312 with 17 home runs; and he stole a total of 90 bases in the three seasons before being farmed out to Indianapolis of the American Association this year.

Flynn is a 26-year-old infielder from Lexington, Ky., who has sat on the Cincinnati bench the last two seasons with occasional appearances as a pinch-hitter or reserve man at second base, third base and shortstop. Last year he got into 93 games, went to bat 219 times, averaged .283 and hit one home run. But mostly he watched while the stars of the Reds' cast won another world title.

In their "other" blockbuster of the night, the Mets finally unloaded Kingman, his big bat and his unsigned contract. The 28-year-old outfielder led the team with 36 home runs in 1975 and with 37 last year, but he refused to sign his contract this season in another running battle with Grant. The Mets offered him \$200,000; he demanded a five-year package for about \$2 million.

He then said he would play out his option and would offer himself as a free agent at the end of the season. He was the Mets' only established power hitter.

As a strange postscript to a strange night of swapping players, the Reds later traded Eastwick—the pitcher who prevented the Seaver deal earlier—to St. Louis for Doug Capilla, a left-handed pitcher no win the minor leagues. It was, all sides in all the deals agreed, a "wild night" in the baseball market.

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