

# Grant's Wednesday Night Massacre

In the emotional, aftermath of M. Donald Grant's Wednesday Night Massacre, one significant fact emerged yesterday: Contrary to what the Mets' chairman of the board had been saying and his tame columnist had been writing, Tom Seaver was not demanding renegotiation of his contract. He was not welshing. He was prepared to fulfill the commitments that extended through the 1978 season, provided the club would start negotiations now on a new agreement for the seasons of 1979-80-81. He would, of

course, have sought a salary for those years comparable with the pay now drawn by lesser players who became free agents last fall. The best pitcher in baseball made this clear to the passel of reporters, photographers and broadcasters who flocked to Shea Stadium to watch him clear out his locker and depart for the Cincinnati Reds. He also set the record straight on national television.

## Sports of The Times

Grant had been saying that Seaver had demanded to be traded. "It is with sincere regret," M. Donald's statement read, "that we have met Tom Seaver's request and traded him to Cincinnati."

"I never demanded to be traded," Tom Seaver said, "until Wednesday."

"They didn't want to renegotiate," he said of the Mets, "and I can understand that. But they did seem willing to talk about 1979-80-81."

They seemed that way Tuesday when Seaver, in Atlanta with team, talked by phone with Lorinda de Roulet, the Mets' president. She was "reasonable and lovely," said Tom's wife, Nancy.

## The Great Giveaway

The next day Seaver read some garbage to the effect that his troubles with the brass stemmed from Nancy's resentment of the fact that Nolan Ryan, husband of her friend Ruth, got a bigger salary than Tom's for pitching for the California Angels. That tore it. "I want out," Seaver told New York. Even as he did, he sensed that the club's attitude had stiffened since his talk with Mrs. de Roulet. He suspected that Grant was infuriated because the pitcher had gone over his head.

For weeks Joe McDonald, the general manager, had been trying to get something of value for Seaver, without success because other clubs knew he was in a bind. Wednesday

night he accepted the inevitable—a sophomore pitcher, two minor league outfielders and a utility infielder. Pat Zachry, the pitcher, was a good rookie last year but hasn't been getting people out this season. To replace Doug Flynn, the infielder, Cincinnati got Rick Auerbach, whom the Texas Rangers had picked up after the Mets turned him loose.

Before bringing off that clinker, the Mets had telephoned San Diego to ask: "Would you accept Dave Kingman for Valentine and another player?"

Robert John Valentine is a part-time infielder-outfielder with a crooked leg and a batting average of .172. He was considered a bright prospect when he got out of Stanford University, but in 1973 he ran into the wall in Anaheim, Calif., and suffered a double fracture of the right leg. The next year he had a shoulder separation. The Padres hadn't thought of trading for Kingman, but "it was a deal we had to make," said Alvin Dark, their manager. As the "other players" the Mets had asked for, San Diego selected Paul Siebert, a pitcher fresh from the minors known primarily as the son of an old first baseman with the Philadelphia Athletics, Dick Siebert.

## What Might Have Been

From the talent pool that had enabled them to reach last place in their division, the Mets had now subtracted the best pitcher in baseball and one of the best home run hitters. They also subtracted Mike Phillips, a utility infielder who can hit for distance. To replace these three they received seven silhouettes but not one regular player.

Perhaps all seven will become useful players, maybe stars, though the laws of probability are against it. So is the record of the club's earlier adventures in the flesh market. While the Shea Stadium clientele surveyed the wreckage, some wondered what might have been. Suppose this team had its present personnel plus Seaver, Kingman, Nolan Ryan, Rusty Staub and Amos Otis, all former Mets. It would be in first place, or near it.

"How about Bowie Kuhn?" one fan asked. "He has vetoed other deals. Does he feel this one is in the best interests of baseball?"

Having Tom Seaver pitch for the Reds is not in the best interests of Walter O'Malley's Dodgers, whose fat lead over Cincinnati has been dwindling. When Walter discovers that Sparky Anderson has already calculated Seaver's place in the rotation so he will be fit and rested for a start against the Dodgers next weekend, Bowie's phone may start ringing.