



SOMETIMES SPORTS FOLKS SAY AND DO SOME REALLY FUNNY AND CRAZY STUFF.

By Kerry Schmidt 08-10-2008

NOTE: I am writing this column on Tuesday, Aug. 5, as I am leaving for Monterrey, CA this evening. As such, some of this column is taken from a combination of 4-5 previous ones, dating back 3-4 years, but there are also a good bit of new stuff I have never written before.

As such, if your mind is as far gone as mine, you will not remember them, so that is good.

I noticed that the average high temp. in Monterrey/Salinas will be 78 and the average low will be 59, as the fog rolls in from the ocean.

I sure will miss the 95-95 – heat/humidity here in LA.

NOTE 2: There is one current tidbit here.

Just days after Georgia was named the pre-season NO.1 college football team for 2008, their 7th and 8th players were arrested. ALL RIGHT! “We’re No 1 in the land – in criminals on our roster. Sports, taken so seriously by too many, have plenty of funny sides to them if you are not so serious.

‘Tis the stretch run for baseball season, so I will start with some of the many funny and/or whackos. Whether quotes or actions, you gotta love em.

Two players alone could take up this entire space, but let’s start with the second string.

John Kruk, now an announcer for ESPN, was known as

”The Krukster” back in his playing days with the Phillies.

The All-Star Kruk was overweight and smoked like a chimney. In the locker room after a game, on a special kids promotion, one little girl saw him smoking and asked how an athlete could smoke.

“Sweetie,” he replied, “we’re not athletes, we’re baseball players.”

My other favorite Kruk moment came in an All-Star game. Randy Johnson was pitching and the first delivery to Kruk was a 98 mph strike. Kruk stepped out of the batters box, stared at Johnson, quickly jumped back in, swung the bat twice before Johnson could pitch again, and walked back to the dugout. “Hell, I couldn’t hit that, so why waste time.”

Steve Lyons of the Chicago White Sox had his moments. Once, he slid into first trying to beat the throw, and accumulated a good amount of infield dirt in his britches. Not caring where he was, he undid his pants and they promptly fell down to his ankles. Women in the stands quickly pulled out dollar bills and started waving them.

Jose Canseco, the first steroid king back in the 80’s, could hit home runs, but not much else.

Playing right field, a fly ball was hit pretty deep. He backed up routinely to the warning track, reached up with his glove, and the ball promptly hit him square on top of his head and bounced 10 feet into the stands for a home run.

Former Mets manager Bobby Valentine got tossed by the umpire – not an unusual occurrence for Bobby. He went into the clubhouse, donned a Groucho Marx mask and came back to the dugout. He was tossed again.

Al, “The Mad Hungarian” Robowski, a pitcher for the Braves in the 70’s, virtually before every pitch, would walk off the mound, his back to home plate, and begin screaming at himself and thumping like a gorilla. He then would slam the ball into his glove and jump to the mound, glaring in at the hitter. More entertaining than the game.

Gaylord Perry, an All-Star pitcher and the ultimate inventor of the infamous spitball, spent time with eight or nine teams, so one day he came to the mound with a special jersey – bearing the names of every team he played for.



OFF THE WALL SPORTS

There are many more, but one player REALLY stands out so far he is baseball's top nut case. Bill "Spaceman" Lee. When you read on, you will know why the nickname. His catcher came to the mound once because Spaceman threw the wrong pitch. His catcher asked him what he was thinking. Spacey replied, "the 'cosmic snowball' theory. In a few million years, the sun burns out and the earth is one giant snowball. When that happens, it won't matter if I get this guy out or not."

The media once asked him about mandatory drug testing. He said, "I've believed in it all along. All through the 60's, I tested everything there was."

Another time, questioned by his manager about his behavior, he said, "Your have a right and a left hemisphere in your brain. The right tells the left what to do and (vice versa). Therefore, only left-handers (as Lee was) are in their right minds."

Lee, who pitched from 1969-1982, once summed up his game. "All you have to do is sit on your ass and chew tobacco and nod at the stupid things the manager says."

Other Lee stories abound, but time sends me to the other all time goofball, Jimmy Piersall. Now in fairness, Jimmy had a mental breakdown and was hospitalized for a time. He once hit a homer, dropped his drawers and ran backwards around the bases. He played 17 seasons, and while in Cleveland, he would go sit on top of the outfield fence and when the fans would say the men in white coats were coming, he'd yell back. One time in Yankee Stadium, he got kicked out of the game. He promptly raced out to second base, did jumping jacks, then ran out to the outfield monuments and sat down. Among his other antics, he climbed the screen behind home plate and spread his arms like an airplane; he dropped his bat and imitated a pitcher's motion; left the batters box once and ran to first to whisper to his runner there. And in the minors, when he was called out on strikes, he pulled out a water pistol and sprayed home plate, saying, "maybe now you can see it."

Now Yogi Berra was in a class by himself! He had so many you could write a whole column on just him. My two favorites. "Baseball is 90% mental and the other half is physical," or, "It ain't over 'til; its over." (as well as "it ain't over 'til the fat lady sings)."

Former Milwaukee pitcher Joe Adcock once said, "Trying to sneak a fastball past Hank Aaron is like trying to sneak a sunrise past a rooster."

Baseball writer Warren Brown on the 1945 WS between Detroit and the Cubs: I don't think either team is capable of winning it."

Baseball's super funny man, Bob Uecker: "Anyone with talent can play in the majors; for someone like me to stay around as long as I did, I think that is a much greater accomplishment."

Even basketball types get into the act. Shelby Metcalf, coach at Texas A&M in '87, told a player who received four F's and a D, "Son, it seems like you're spending too much time on one subject." Good stuff!

Pat Williams, GM of the Orlando Magic in '92, on his team's 7-27 start: "We can't win at home and we can't win on the road. Damned if I can figure out where else to play."

Other managerial mess up statements. Former Dodger manager Tommy Lasorda was a walking, talking notebook. He was once asked what Mexican pitching sensation Fernando Valenzuela would ask for in his next contract. "He wants Texas back," said Lasorda. During a losing streak, he was asked how he handled them. "You never tell anyone your troubles," he said, "cause 80% don't give a damn and the other 20% are glad you got 'em. On why he rarely argued with the media," he said, "Never get in an argument with someone who buys printing ink by the barrel."



OFF THE WALL SPORTS

Now football is in a league all to itself. Crazy does not even begin to cover these Neanderthals. Frank Gifford summed up this sport. “Football is like nuclear warfare. There are no winners, only survivors.”

And former 49’ers star and now announcer Randy Cross described football thusly: “The NFL, like life, is full of idiots.”

Hall-of-Famer John Elway, in his first game, against Pittsburgh, as he lined up under center for his first-ever snap, said, “I look across the line and there is this ‘creature’ (Jack Lambert) staring at me.

He has blood coming out on one eye socket, no teeth and slobber rolling down his chin and it’s only the first play of the game!

“I called time out, went to my coach and said, ‘I graduated from Stanford. I don’t need this, I’ll be an accountant.’”

Back in the 70’s when John McKay, then coach of Tampa Bay who had lost 17 straight games, was asked about his team’s execution.

“I’m all for it,” he replied.

“Minor surgery is when it is on someone else.” Kerry Schmidt, 1979, after my then 17th operation. (I now am up to 26), all “major.”

I define major only if it took four hours or longer, thus some 8-10 others I don’t count.

My main man, my idol. Dick Butkis.

He is the only player that I heard others admitting that they were truly scared of him!

Butkis, in the last game of another dismal year, with his team down by 20 some points, the temperature about 32 degrees with sleet and snow and a 30 plus MPH wind, less than two minutes left and the other team was just kneeling down to run out the clock.

Butkis called time out! One of his teammates runs up to him and starts screaming, “What the F are you doing. We just want to get the F out of here!”

Butkis grabs his facemask and nearly rips the guy’s head off and growled, “It’ll be six bleeping months before I get to legally try to kill some SOB, and I want this to last!” One crazy, scary dude!

This next one is my all-time favorite! In the late 50’s – early 60’s, Baltimore Colts’ All-PRO DE and now Hall-of-Famer, was trying to negotiate his new contract with then coach Weeb Eubank.

(NOTE: Back then, no agents, not much money and only one sign-on bonus had ever been given.

NOTE 2: The only signing bonus had just been given to a rookie teammate of Donovan, kid named Johnny Unitas. He had received a then incredible \$500 sign on.

Donavan was adamant that if “some bleeping skinny ass little rookie gets (a sign-on), I sure as hell have to get mine.”

Donavan loved his beer, and Baltimore - brewed Balantine beer was his drink of choice.

They finally agreed that Donovan’s “bonus” would be two cases, but Eubank said, “You have to share it with me. I get half.”

So Donovan goes out and comes back with the two cases.

He sets them both on a table across from the small desk of Eubank in his tiny, cramped office.

Eubank asks for his case, and Donovan tell his to shut the F up.

As the story goes, and Eubank says it did happen just like this, Donovan, within about 10 minutes, chugged one entire case of brew.

He then walked over to Eubank’s desk, leaned over and threw up all over it, and, wiping off his face with some papers that were on Eubank’s desk, barked, “There’s your F...ing half!” True story!

A few other brilliant comments from the mouths of “geniuses.”



OFF THE WALL SPORTS

Announcer Joe Theisman: “Nobody in football is a genius. Norman Einstein is a genius.” NOTE: During Theisman’ senior year at Notre Dame, he changed the pronunciation of his name, from “Theesman” to Theisman. He wanted to have it rhyme with Heisman, as in trophy. He did not win.

I have met Theisman many times and have a number of stories on him. He is a pompous ass and as self-admiring as any person alive, but there really isn’t anything funny about him. He is just an a.. hole.

Steve Sprier, then Florida coach, told Gator fans one year that a fire in the Auburn football dorm had destroyed 20 books. “The real tragedy is that 15 hadn’t been colored yet,” he quipped.

Football analyst Lee Corso had this bit of wisdom. “Hawaii doesn’t win many games in the U.S.” Former NFL running back, George Rogers: “I want to rush for 1,000 or 1,500 yards, whichever comes first.”

As you can imagine, football coaches and academic types have different views of college football.

Vince Lombardi: “A school without football is in danger of deteriorating into a medieval study hall.”

His counterpart, scientist Elbert Hubbard: “College football is a sport that bears the same relation to education as bull-fighting does to agriculture.”

Maybe, but football pays your salary, Hubby boy.

Shaquille O’Neal, whose bank account is bigger than the budget of many countries, said, “I’m tired of hearing about money. I just want to play the game, drink Pepsi and wear Rebooks.”

One final for the golf world.

Greg Norman, after winning a major. “I owe a lot to my parents, especially my mom and dad.”

Just goes to show that while athletes may not all be brilliant, some are quite funny, even if they don’t intend to be.

As you read this, I will have spent some time at a quaint little place known as the “Pelican’s Nest,” overlooking the Pacific Ocean and will have had 2-3 single malts.