

Yankees win to set up first Subway Series since 1956

by Mike DiGiovanna
Los Angeles Times
October 18, 2000

NEW YORK - The New York Yankees, the Humongous Engine That Could and Then Some, filled the other half of New York's highly anticipated Subway Series on Tuesday night, clinching their 37th American League pennant in dramatic fashion to set up a World Series showdown against the cross-town rival New York Mets.

With his team trailing by a run in the seventh inning, David Justice blasted a three-run home run into the upper deck in right field to push the Yankees toward a 9-7 victory over the Seattle Mariners in Game 6 of the American League championship series.

Justice's shot off Mariner reliever Arthur Rhodes highlighted a six-run inning that sent a crowd of 56,598 into a frenzy and made old Yankee Stadium literally quiver with excitement. Elation quickly turned to anxiety in the eighth, though, when the Mariners scored three runs off starter Orlando "El Duque" Hernandez and closer Mariano Rivera, snapping Rivera's 34-inning playoff scoreless streak dating back to 1997 and pulling to within 9-7.

But Rivera blew a fastball by pinch-hitter Jay Buhner to end an inning that included Alex Rodriguez's homer and Mark McLemore's two-run double, and then blanked the Mariners in the ninth to send the crowd into delirium again and bring new meaning to Frank Sinatra's "New York, New York," which punctuates most Yankee home victories.

With the stubborn Mariners finally eliminated, the Yankees - and the rest of this sports-crazed city - can finally focus on what has infatuated New Yorkers from the time the playoffs began - the first Subway Series since the Yankees played the Brooklyn

Dodgers in 1956.

It will be a borough battle between the Queens and the Bronx - does Manhattan play the role of Switzerland here? - the 7 train and the 4 train, the Amazins and the Bombers, Nelson Doubleday/Fred Wilpon and George Steinbrenner, Jerry Seinfeld and Billy Crystal, the Haves and the Have Even Mores.

Combined payrolls of the Mets and Yankees: Almost \$200 million.



"It's gonna turn this city upside down, it's gonna be wild," Yankee first baseman Tino Martinez said. "I can't even imagine what it's gonna be like. We're just gonna have to stay indoors until it's all over."

Justice, whose Game 6 home run in the 1995 World Series lifted the Atlanta Braves to a Series-clinching 1-0 victory over the Cleveland Indians, was named the ALCS most valuable player after setting a major league record with 51 playoff runs batted in, breaking Reggie Jackson's previous mark of 48.

"This city is gonna be on fire," Justice said. "Everything is right here. We don't have to leave the city limits. It's going to be incredible for everyone involved."

New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani was in the middle of the Yankees' champagne-soaked clubhouse after-

ward, but he was already playing diplomat.

"A New York team will be coming up the Canyon of Heroes in another week or so - you'll just have to fill in the blank," Giuliani said. "I wish we could honor both teams, because they both deserve a ticker-tape parade. They've already produced one of the most exciting years in sports history." Crystal, a huge Yankee fan who is making a movie about the 1961 Yankees of Roger Maris and Mickey Mantle, was also part of the celebration and couldn't resist a jab at Seinfeld, a fellow comedian and known Met supporter.

"I hope I get a chance to smack Seinfeld around a bit," Crystal said. "If it's anything like the Yankees smacked Rhodes around in the seventh inning Tuesday night, Seinfeld is going to need some smelling salts."

After RBI doubles by Rodriguez and Edgar Martinez in the first and Carlos Guillen's two-run homer in the fourth gave Seattle a 4-0 lead, New York came back with a three-run fourth that featured Jorge Posada's two-run double and Paul O'Neill's RBI single off starter John Halama.

Jose Vizcaino then opened the seventh with an infield single off reliever Jose Paniagua and took second on Chuck Knoblauch's sacrifice bunt. Jeter singled to left, a seeing-eye grounder, to put runners on first and third.

Seattle Manager Lou Piniella summoned the left-hander Rhodes, who was ripped for three runs on four hits in the eighth inning of Game 2. Rhodes fell behind Justice, 3-1, and grooved a fastball that Justice ripped for his 13th postseason home run and a 6-4 Yankee lead.

"This was right behind the (World Series homer)," Justice said. "It's like

the 100 meters in the Olympics. The gold medal was the 9.7 and this was a 9.71. It was just magic when I ran the bases, just to see this place erupt and the fact it put us up by two runs."

The Yankees weren't done, though. Williams singled to right, and Martinez hit a ground-rule double to left. Rhodes walked Posada intentionally to load the bases, and up stepped O'Neill, who had been pinch-hit for twice with Rhodes on the mound this series.

Tired of watching Glenallen Hill strike out against Rhodes, Yankee Manager Joe Torre let O'Neill hit, and O'Neill rewarded the decision by grounding a two-run single to right for an 8-4 lead. Vizcaino capped the rally with a sacrifice fly off Jose Mesa to make it 9-4.

Seattle put a good scare into the Yankees in the eighth, but that didn't prevent Hernandez, who gave up six runs on seven hits in seven gutsy innings, from improving his career postseason record to 8-0.

Rodriguez greeted Hernandez with a towering homer to left-center in the eighth, Martinez walked, and Torre made that slow walk to the mound as he called for Rivera.

Rivera allowed McLemore's two-out double that hit the bag at first base, stunning Yankee fans, but he restored order in the ninth, as the chants of "Subway Series, Subway Series," echoed through the stadium.

"I have a feeling this city is not going to be the same for the next 10 days, and maybe for some time after that," Torre said. "I hope it's a clean series. And I hope people behave themselves, because it's going to split a few families up."

Perhaps no one captured the excitement around the city better than O'Neill, who was asked to sum up his feelings in one word.

"I think you need two words," O'Neill said. "New York, New York."

Mets' pennant means the most to John Franco

by Marty Noble
Newsday
October 18, 2000

NEW YORK - The pennant party had entered its second hour, and the clubhouse carpet and those dancing on it were saturated. Mike Piazza jerked and gyrated as if break-dancing and convulsions were one and the same. Pat Mahomes, included on the postseason dancing roster, flopped on the floor like the proverbial fish out of water. And he looked so right doing it.

Bobby Valentine performed a bump and grind Tina Turner would have admired, his mouth open wide, his tongue extended like Gene Simmons' as players used champagne for shampoo.

Robin Ventura and Lenny Harris performed a brief, impromptu do-si-do. A high-five executed by Todd Zeile and Darryl Hamilton morphed into a hug and an abbreviated waltz. And Timo Perez boogied.

"The Mets are going to the big dance," Benny Agbayani hollered.

And there they were, practicing for it. Right there, in the middle of their clubhouse, in the middle of the night in the middle of October, dancing in the park. Pennant No. 4, Mambo No. 5.

They seemed to have the steps down - score early, pitch well and win. One, two three in: the Division Series; one, two, three, four in the NLCS. The only toes they stepped on were the Cardinals'.

Danced on their faces, too. Mets 7, Cardinals 0 Monday night made it Mets four victories, Cardinals one in the best-of-seven series. They had waltzed to victory and farther into the postseason than any Mets team in 14 years.

When Piazza bounced around the clubhouse at 1:35 a.m., Matt Franco understood his teammate's awkwardness. "What's the matter," Matt Franco yelled. "Ain't you ever been to the World Series before?"

Nobody danced more than John Franco late Monday night into early Tuesday morning. Others might have danced better, but no one felt the rhythm and the release as Franco did.

"Seventeen years," he said more than once. And to think, he could have left last winter. "I didn't know for sure what it would be like," he said. "I didn't even know we'd get to this point. But I was sure I didn't want to miss this if it did happen."

Franco's dance card was full, as if

he were the prom queen, sans escort. After he led the Mets' requisite victory lap around the Shea Stadium field, he was everybody's party partner.

Fred Wilpon sought him out, then Steve Phillips made a point of congratulating the veteran relief pitcher. Players made sure they shook the hand of the player who has the deepest Mets roots.

"I know I was a Mets fan, and I came to Shea," Al Leiter said. "But Johnny was here more, I'm sure. He came a lot by subway. He's the New Yorker here. Everybody feels good. Everyone feels best for him."

As Leiter spoke, Hamilton skipped through the custom-sounded CD that was the soundtrack for the celebration. For a few seconds, the Ad-Libs' 1965 hit, "The Boy From New York City," played, as if in tribute to Franco, the kid from Brooklyn who moved to Staten Island and stood as the King of Queens in the din of the clubhouse.

"Maybe we'll be in the Bronx," Franco said.

Franco poured, partook and participated like no one else in the Mets' celebration. "I missed the last one by two years," he said. "I was here when we were really bad. But look at this now."

His wife, Rose, looked and wondered what she saw. "Who is that man?" she said. "I've never seen this kind of emotion from him. Look how happy he is."

The Franco family was well represented - wife, daughter, son, brother, mother-in-law. An orange T-shirt of the Department of Sanitation for the City of New York was in Franco's locker. He wears one for every game. It meant his late father was partying, too.

As Franco and the others danced, Stephanie Ventura left her husband's side and approached Phillips. "Thank you for bringing us here," she said.

"I'm glad she feels that way," Phillips said. "I've had a few people say that. The trading deadline guys (Mike Bordick, Rick White and Bubba Trammell), they did."

"So who do I have to thank," Franco said. "Al Harazin? Frank (Cashen), Mr. Wilpon? Nelson (Doubleday)?"

"No," Phillips said. "We thank Johnny Franco for being Johnny Franco."

Mourning to miss upcoming season with kidney ailment

by Barry Jackson
Knight-Ridder Newspapers
October 17, 2000

MIAMI - Alonzo Mourning walked into the AmericanAirlines Arena conference room, grinning widely, looking healthy and happy. His facial expression and demeanor belied the news that followed.

The Miami Heat announced on Monday that Mourning, the team's All-Star center and one of the National Basketball Association's top players, will miss this season to concentrate on his battle with a kidney disease that eventually requires a transplant or dialysis in about half the documented cases.

Mourning, 30, was diagnosed with focal glomerulosclerosis, a disease that damages the kidney, which filters waste from the blood. He will begin taking oral medication shortly and would require a transplant only if initial treatment fails over a period of months or years. Doctors do not know what caused the condition.

"I feel great," Mourning said. "We have a hold on the whole situation. Right now, my main objective is to get healthy so I can live my life normally, so I can see my babies grow up, so I can enjoy my family, and possibly do the thing that I know and love - the game of basketball."

Mourning and his wife, Tracy, have a son, Alonzo III, 4, and a daughter, Myka Sydney, who was born in September.

Mourning's disease is the same condition that afflicted San Antonio Spurs forward Sean Elliott, who played seven years before undergoing a kidney transplant 14 months ago. Elliott returned to the NBA seven months after the transplant.

Although Elliott did not miss any playing time before the transplant, doctors advised Mourning not to play this season. That news was surprising, because Mourning had told Seattle center Patrick Ewing and others that he intended to play. Several

officials in the Heat organization also had expected him to return sooner.

Mourning's physicians declined to comment on Elliott's case and did not explain why they advised him not to play while taking medication.

"We're totally convinced that the only thing that should be on his mind, and our mind, is to get healthy," said Pat Riley, the Heat's coach and president. "He wants to play, but Zo wants to get healthy. Playing is secondary. He doesn't need the pressure of, 'Is he going to make free throws in the fourth quarter?' This is the proper course and the only course. The best thing is that Alonzo is going to live a long and productive life. I feel seriously optimistic about Zo's chances. It's not grim."

Dr. Gabriel Valle, a nephrologist at Holy Cross Hospital in Fort Lauderdale, said that playing while taking medication could lead to dehydration and other complications.

"If you add to that the stress of a professional athlete, that could be negative for him," said Valle, who has not examined Mourning but has treated members of the Dolphins and Marlins teams for kidney problems.

"A kidney that is leaking protein or retaining salt and fluids should not be put under duress. You give him rest and try to make everything as positive as you can, so the drug he's going to take as treatment will be most effective."

Mourning will begin taking medication shortly, and it will be known in four to six months whether the treatment is working. If successful, Mourning can resume playing, said Dr. Gerald B. Appel, director of Clinical Nephrology at Columbia Presbyterian Hospital in New York. If unsuccessful, other medication would be tried.

Mourning, who commented only briefly and did not take questions, expressed optimism about his future.

"It has been a tough week and a half listening to all the information that has been given to me," Mourning

said. "At the same time, it has been quite interesting. There have been some down moments and some very positive moments, more positive than down. What has gotten me to this point is staying positive."

NO DONORS

Appel said Mourning does not need a kidney transplant at this time and has not been placed on any lists seeking a donor.

"Right now, his kidney function is good," Appel said. "But if untreated, I would be very confident in a year or two, he would be on di-

alysis or go to transplantation. Treated right now in the United States, we can cure this disease in up to 50 percent of patients. We feel with Alonzo's good attitude, and with good efforts by the team of his doctors and everybody else, we should be able to achieve success here."

Appel did not rule out the possibility of Mourning returning this season.

"Currently, the plan is Alonzo taking the year off to get better. I can never predict what's going to happen. I'm a doctor, not God."

In Mourning, the Heat loses the NBA's Defensive Player of the Year the past two seasons and the player considered the second-best center in the league behind Shaquille O'Neal of the Los Angeles Lakers.

Mourning, arguably South

"There have been some down moments and some very positive moments, more positive than down. What has gotten me to this point is staying positive."

-Alonzo Mourning, center for the Miami Heat, who will not be playing for one year due to a kidney ailment

Florida's most recognizable active athlete, also has left an imprint on the community. He founded Zo's Summer Groove, an annual event that has raised more than \$1 million for the Children's Home Society and 100 Black Men of South Florida.

On the court, Mourning's absence has serious ramifications on the Heat and the NBA's Eastern Conference. With Mourning, the Heat was considered the favorite to advance to the NBA Finals.

Without him, Miami's chances of making the Finals appear remote. Still, the Heat cannot automatically

be eliminated because none of its prime competition - New York, Indiana, Orlando, Philadelphia, Charlotte and Milwaukee - has a dominating center.

"Without Zo, everything changes," Heat point guard Tim Hardaway said. "No one will give us any pity. We have to play harder and smarter and with more urgency."

Mourning's ailment was diagnosed last week by Dr. Victor Richards of the Miami Kidney Group. After returning from the Sydney Olympics two weeks ago, Mourning displayed one symptom of the ailment - swelling in his hips and back.

Blood tests revealed abnormal kidney functions, low body proteins and very high urine proteins. All had been normal during his last team physical a year ago.

said.

Four leading kidney specialists examined his biopsy and made the same diagnosis. Mourning's disease is not rare, Appel said, and is common among young black men and other young people.

Blacks, who make up 12 percent of the U.S. population, account for 30 percent of the kidney disease patients, according to the National Kidney Foundation.

THE CAUSE

Appel also said that taking anti-inflammatory drugs - or any drug - was not a cause.

"I'm very confident in the blood tests and looking at the biopsy ... this is not related to HIV, drug abuse, steroids or anything," he said. "We do not know the cause."

Mourning will take several medications, some of which are designed to control swelling, high cholesterol and blood pressure. Another immune suppressant medication will attempt to stop the filters from leaking protein, which would eliminate the need for dialysis or a transplant.

If Mourning's condition does not respond to medication, a transplant would be the preference over dialysis, Richards said.

The kidneys separate water and waste from the blood and excrete them as urine through the bladder.

Focal glomerulosclerosis attacks

the tiny filters in the kidney that remove waste from the blood. That makes the kidney spill protein from blood into the urine. The resulting kidney damage can lead to kidney failure, which requires dialysis or a transplant.

Mourning's athletic physique does not necessarily help his chances of beating the disease, "but it doesn't hurt his chances," Appel said.

Mourning, who has been placed on a low-sodium diet, will not participate in vigorous activity until the medication has had a chance to work.

"Everyone who has given me support and love, who has written and called, that has been very, very uplifting," said Mourning, who is guaranteed the remaining \$56 million on his seven-year, \$105 million contract.

"All the speculation made the situation a whole lot harder. . . . When I knew I was ready to address the media, I wanted to make sure I had all the information I needed, and talk to the experts on the whole diagnosis."

"I've always said I'm a blessed individual. God has blessed me with a great deal, and I know there's a whole lot of other people who are a whole lot worse off than me. What's going to get me through it is everybody being positive and upbeat around me, and thinking nothing but good things."