

Pest control, Mr. Nice Guy, and other notes

by Mal Florence
Los Angeles Times

New York Giant cornerback Jason Sehorn didn't impress his wife, actress Angie Harmon, when he came home with a customized \$60,000 Cadillac Escalade SUV, but he was pretty pleased.

"When you put it in reverse, four spotlights shoot out of the back bumpers, and there's a (closed-circuit TV) screen so you don't have to turn around and look to back up," he told People magazine. "I just want to go to the store. I don't want to dock the Star Trek Enterprise, you know?"

Comment from Tom FitzGerald of the San Francisco Chronicle: "We've seen Sehorn get burned often enough to know why he's worried about going in reverse."



PHOTO COURTESY OF ANGELFIRE.COM
Harmon and Seahorn

Trivia time: Who was UCLA's first consensus All-American in basketball?

Revelation: Stricter visa regulations in the wake of Sept. 11 have forced several Latin American big leaguers to reveal they're older than we thought.

According to Baseball America, "Fifteen players have added years to

their lives, and we expect to find out about more."

Said Dan Daly of the Washington Times: "On the plus side, they'll qualify for their pensions that much sooner."

Party line: Rudy Martzke in USA Today: "Despite another Match Play Championship without major names in the final, PGA Commissioner Tim Finchem insisted to ABC's Mike Tirico that match play is "great for golf."

Mr. Nice Guy: Skip Bayless in the San Jose Mercury News, on whether Oakland Raider Owner Al Davis might go after Steve Mariucci as a coaching replacement for Jon Gruden: "The Raider hierarchy views Mariucci as softer than Charmin. He's a little too college rah-rah, too tearfully sentimental, too country club, too corny, too melodramatic, too thin-skinned and too needy of pats on the head to be a Raider coach."

Shhh!: Demonstrating a base-stealing lesson for reporters, new Boston Red Sox outfielder Rickey Henderson said it's important to take the first step toward second base with the right foot. Most players start with a crossover of their left foot, he said.

"Don't tell them," teammate Johnny Damon chimed in. "They'll tell their kids and we'll lose our jobs."

Out of place?: Comedy writer Jerry Perisho: "During the closing ceremonies of the Winter Olympics, the rock band KISS with Gene Simmons played for the crowd. Watching KISS play in Salt Lake must be like seeing the Mormon Tabernacle Choir at Woodstock."

Put-down: From Jay Leno: "We love Bob Costas, and you know he loves the Olympics. Like tonight, he said when he saw the Americans with all that gold, it made him feel 5 feet tall."

Trivia answer: Dick Linticum in 1931 and 1932.

And finally: Mike Lupica in the New York Daily News on the Lakers'

roust of the Knicks on Sunday: "Shaq was Shaq, the giant of the game at the weakest center position in 40 years. ... (He) did whatever he wanted. The Kings won't stop him in the playoffs, the Mavericks won't. No one will.

"But it is Kobe (Bryant) who makes them a joy to watch. ... It's a shame the Garden only sees him once a year. He might be the best player in the sport."

Ken Maguire of The Associated Press writes that Boston Red Sox fans will go to any depth to break the Curse of the Bambino.

"On Saturday, a group went to the bottom of a suburban Boston pond in search of Babe Ruth's piano, which, the story goes, was tossed into the water by the slugger in 1918.

"The group hopes to refurbish the piano and play it again, just as the Babe did in 1918, the last time the Red Sox won the World Series. A season later, Ruth was sold to the New York Yankees, who have since won 26 championships."

More piano: It hasn't been found yet, but organizers say they have proof the piano is there. An infrared camera identified a rectangular shape with wiry weeds at the bottom, 15 feet below the surface and near shore.

Trivia time: What former major leaguer grounded into only 33 double plays in 4,553 at-bats — the best in history with one for every 138 at-bats? Hint: He also played football for a local university.

The West way: Skip Bayless of the San Jose Mercury News suggests that the Golden State Warriors entice Jerry West out of retirement to rebuild the floundering franchise.

"West is the best at identifying, drafting and luring talent. Jerry St. West He would do in the front office what Rick Barry once did on the court. For the first time in a long, long time the Lakers would glance uneasily at Northern California."

Dream on, Skip.
Required reading: A footnote to

the story about the Canadian writer who locked himself out of his Salt Lake City hotel room — in the nude.

"He covered himself with a newspaper," said Michael Ventre of MSNBC.com. "This is a great argument for getting your news the old-fashioned way instead of downloading it with one of those Palm organizers."

Pest control: Scott Ostler in the San Francisco Chronicle: "Mystery to me: why the Japanese players in America seem to treat the Japanese media like lepers. Ichiro Suzuki barely spoke to the legion of Japanese scribes who followed him all last season.

"Sure, we media are annoying, but those poor ink-stained Japanese wretches are the players' link to their loyal fans back home."

It's fiction now: Ron Rapoport in the Chicago Sun-Times: "John Feinstein hasn't seen ESPN's movie 'A Season on the Brink,' which will air March 10, but he read the script that was adapted from his book about Bob Knight and hated it.

"Aside from the factual inaccuracies, Feinstein told the Lubbock Avalanche-Journal, the movie uses made-up characters, including a halftime tirade that didn't happen and has 'just the general feeling that they went more for melodramatic screaming scenes.'"

Trivia answer: Don Buford, who played for USC's baseball and football teams in the late 1950s.

And finally: Jerry Magee of the San Diego Union-Tribune, commenting on Jon Gruden, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers' new coach: "The man daily gets up a few minutes after 3 in the morning during an NFL season in order to begin his scheming.

"Excuse me, but this doesn't impress me. The late Paul Brown, as accomplished a coach as ever lived, did not work nights and neither did Chuck Noll, who did pretty well in four Super Bowls."

Big stars taking verbal hits early on in spring training

by Jon Heyman
Newsday

Not one baseball has been thrown or batted yet, at least not in a game. Yet it already has been an active spring training. The barbs and rips are flying around like never before, and superstars are taking the brunt of it.

The jig is practically up for Ken Griffey Jr., whose image as self-centered superstar is about solidified with the latest barrage of comments from former teammates. Griffey keeps saying it comes with the territory of superstardom, but that's not so. Some superstars simply act in such a way as to separate themselves from their teammates, and, with the possible exception of Frank Thomas, Griffey might be the most glaring example.

Former Red Pokey Reese ripped Griffey, telling the Cincinnati Enquirer, "It's 25 of us, not one. I know he's Ken Griffey Jr., but someone should have said, 'We're all in this together.'"

Another former Red, Dmitri Young, now a Tiger, said Reese was "dead on."

Praising his new Tigers teammates in comparison to Griffey, Young told Michigan's Booth Newspapers, "They're not about, 'I'm on this billboard. I'm on that billboard.'"

"You sit there and joke around, and he'll go, 'How many home runs have you got?' Or 'How much money do you make?'"

Young said Griffey made it so bad in Cincinnati that getting to Detroit feels like "heaven." That's an unlikely characterization for Detroit. Reese might be in a bad mood after rejecting a \$21-million Reds offer in April, only to sign in Pittsburgh for \$5 million. But it looks bad that yet another solid citizen, Young, has piled on.

Griffey said the problem is that he isn't the rah-rah guy that Greg Vaughn was. But it has to be more than that. Griffey also pointed out that he played

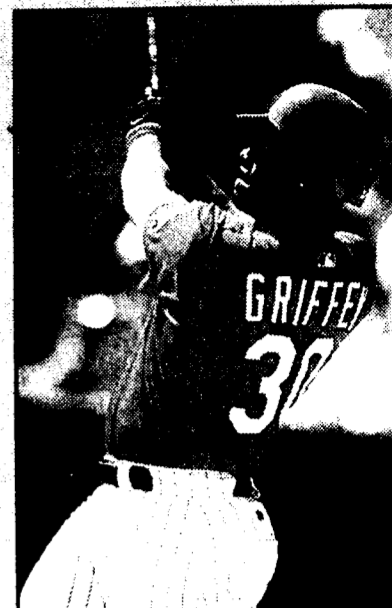


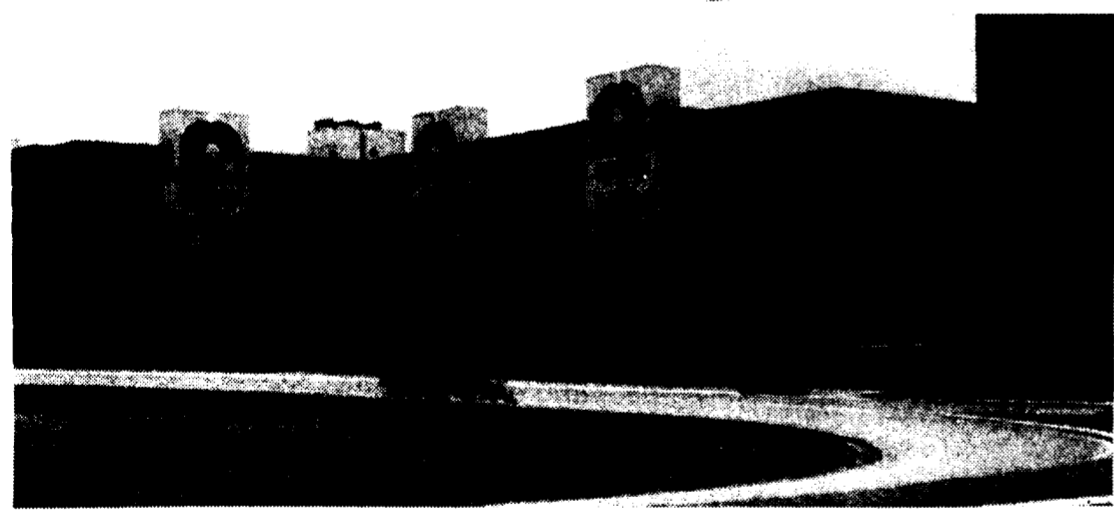
PHOTO COURTESY OF GRIFFEYJR.COM
Ken Griffey has gotten slammed by former teammates.

95 of the last 97 games "when everyone said to shut it down," as if playing two-thirds of a season was a feat. Griffey's remark might have been a veiled reference to Reese missing the final 20 Reds games with a sore shoulder.

Griffey wasn't the only superstar to become embroiled in early controversy. Manny Ramirez was a day late in arriving at Red Sox camp, prompting some surprisingly harsh comments from Trot Nixon, who pointed out to the Hartford Courant, "You want to know why the Yankees win so many championships? I'll tell you why. Everyone shows up ready to play baseball. They figure out some way to jell together.

"The younger guys are in awe. They don't start strolling in, pimping around and doing this and that. Bernie Williams shows up. Derek Jeter makes \$20 million (\$18.9 million, actually). You can guarantee he shows up on time."

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