Lyle enjoys memories of 'Bronx Zoo'

By MILTON RICHMAN
UPI Sports Editor

POMPANO BEACH, Fla. — Sparky Lyle was talking one day about all the screeching, scrapping and back-biting that went on in the New York Yankees' clubhouse and suddenly the phrase came out naturally, almost automatically.

It was just like "the Bronx Zoo," he said.

That was long before the second half of last season, when he pitched so little he nearly died of neglect and couldn't wait to get out of the Bronx Zoo.

Now that he has, would you believe this — he misses it.

"I'm happy here," he says, meaning with the Texas Rangers, who dealt for him last November, "but I had a good rapport with all the guys over there. That's what you miss most, the guys you spent so much time with. There's a bunch of nice guys here, too. I've got a lotta memories from my time over there. Good and bad. But you know how that is. You forgive and forget."

Among the better memories is how Lyle led the American League twice in saves while he was with the Yankees and how he won the Cy Young Award as the No. 1 pitcher in the circuit two years ago.

Among the bad ones, is how he hardly ever was called upon to pitch after last year's All Star break. A year before, whenever the game was on the line, the call would go out to the bullpen for him. Last year, Goose Gossage was the one who always got the call.

Lyle never complained once. He caught up on a lot of sleep in the bullpen because he knew he wouldn't be called upon.

"People wondered why I wasn't bitching" he said, toweling his chest after showering in the Rangers' clubhouse. "It's so simple. Who are you gonna pitch if one guy is making four-fifty and the other guy is making one-thirty? You pitch the guy making four-fifty. I'd have done the same thing. George (Steinbrenner) didn't have any choice. They would've crucified him if I had pitched and done well."

The "four-fifty" Lyle was talking about was the $450,000 a year being paid Gossage, and the "one-thirty" was the $130,000 being paid him. Lyle's salary always was a source of unhappiness with him, particularly after he became the first relief pitcher ever to win the Cy Young Award in 1977.

If you ask the 34-year-old lefthander the last time he pitched last year, other than his one brief appearance in the playoff with Kansas City, he says he doesn't remember. Press him on it, and he tries to think and then says he still doesn't remember.

"It bothered me at first but after awhile, it didn't anymore," he explains regarding his inactivity. "I knew I was gonna be traded at the end of the season. I knew it almost from the beginning. When the deal finally was made, I was happy. It was something I wanted. I don't want to waste what years I do have left just sitting around and not doing anything."

Lyle, who still has one of the best hard sliders in the business, put his spare time to some use last year by collaborating on a book about his experiences with the Yankees.

"It's not gonna be a 'Ball Four' or anything like that," he says. "They're calling it 'The Bronx Zoo.' The publishers picked the name out, not me. It's kind of c[illegible] guess."

For the most part, Lyle [illegible] the problems that arose in th[illegible] kees' quarters were not that [illegible] different than those in any [illegible] clubhouse.

"The same two guys who [illegible] each other in the clubhouse [illegible] be fighting side by side [illegible] field," he says. "The imp[illegible] thing is what goes on betwe[illegible] white lines, and in that r[illegible] those guys (the Yankees) wer[illegible] pletely united. Whatever [illegible] ences they had in the clu[illegible] were the same ones you'll [illegible] every clubhouse. They'd just [illegible] right out and say it straight [illegible] face, and I think that makes [illegible] better club."

Sparky Lyle can't see a[illegible] beating the Yankees in the E[illegible] Division this year.

"I think they'll win again[illegible] says. "Who's gonna stop 'em[illegible]

Guthrie to race at TWS

United Press International

HOUSTON — Race car [illegible] Janet Guthrie Tuesday said [illegible] crashes in stock car races wer[illegible] for the gate but not necessarily [illegible] for the future of the motor sp[illegible]

"I really believe the sp[illegible] who comes back race afte[illegible] comes there to see the good [illegible] the exciting driving and [illegible] crashes," said Guthrie as she [illegible] break in her preparation for [illegible] USAC race of the year.

"I believe," she said, "th[illegible] tators who come to see the [illegible] are temporary and will go aw[illegible] find more gratifying, [illegible] participatory violence, i.e. [illegible] key or boxing."

More competitive races in[illegible] all the participants was nee[illegible] improve the gate on a long [illegible] basis, she said. She added th[illegible] believed the governing bo[illegible] race car driving were strivi[illegible] that goal.

"The cost of championship [illegible] petition has gotten out of [illegible] That's why you see such a g[illegible] tween front runners and ba[illegible] ners," Guthrie said. "In any [illegible] racing more money buys [illegible] speed. In NASCAR more [illegible] buys smaller increments of [illegible] (than in championship racing [illegible] believe USAC is moving in th[illegible] rection. This will be extremel[illegible] ful to competition."

Guthrie's decision to rej[illegible] United States Auto Club [illegible] dropped its "conflict rule" le[illegible] unexpected offer of a spon[illegible]

Janet Guthrie

for Sunday's Aggieland 250 [illegible] Texas World Speedway. Befo[illegible] got the offer, the first woman [illegible] in the Indianapolis 500 was p[illegible] ing already for this year's Ind[illegible] and Tom Bigelow drove new [illegible] Ontario two weeks ago.

"We both have new [illegible] Cosworths, the same kind th[illegible] all three 500-mile races last [illegible] she said. "Before we took the [illegible] two weeks ago we would no[illegible] believe it if someone had t[illegible] that we would have run right [illegible] (Indy) qualifying times despite [illegible] 12 inches less boost than wa[illegible] last year. We are both abs[illegible] tickled."

Despite her sponsor bein[illegible] out from under" her in 1978, [illegible] rie still showed the passion [illegible] helped convert her from phys[illegible] race car driver in the 1960s.

"Racing is not a sensible ch[illegible] vocation," she said. "It's som[illegible] you do when you cannot bea[illegible] otherwise."

Guthrie, 41, said the la[illegible] years have been good to her [illegible] cially.

"But I would probably b[illegible] ahead of the game if I had d[illegible] to be a physicist," she said. H[illegible] job in that field was working [illegible] advanced orbiting solar obse[illegible] where she had to convince [illegible] modynamicist that "he didn't [illegible] two-inch hold in the sun-facin[illegible] of the observatory."

She has recently appea[illegible] television ads for a motor oil [illegible] explained that the endorseme[illegible] part of her package deal wi[illegible] sponsor, a major oil company.

"I still make more (money) [illegible] ing," she said.

She does not believe h[illegible] down speeds will make c[illegible] pionship car racing any safer.

"My opinion is that the diffe[illegible] between 195 and 200 mph [illegible] percent," she said.

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