

Former Cardinal player dreams of the old days

United Press International
NEW YORK — For a competitor like Bob Gibson, this is a completely novel transition, a period in his life when his subconscious sometimes still urges him to get up and go to the ballpark and his conscious says what for, nobody's waiting here for him anymore.

The sudden change from major league superstar to simple everyday private citizen never is an easy adjustment for any ballplayer to make, no matter how much or how well he prepared for it in his own mind.

In the case of Bob Gibson, who was so intense, so uncommonly committed, during the 17 years he pitched for the St. Louis Cardinals, the abrupt switch had to be more difficult.

"I don't have to work," he was saying one day this spring while visiting his old ball club, the St. Louis Cardinals, at their St. Petersburg training quarters.

That only goes so far and then you have to get something to do. You go nuts sitting around. I worked from 9 to 5 in a bank and thought I was going to die. I wasn't used to the regimentation."

Gibson, who retired at the end of 1975, holds more club records than anyone who ever pitched for the Cardinals. He won the most games, 31, struck out the most batters, 3,117, pitched the most shutouts, 56, and had the lowest earned run average for any one season, 1.12.

Since he quit pitching, the 41-year-old Gibson has been anything but idle. He's chairman of the board of station KOWH in Omaha and vice president of the Community Bank of Nebraska in that same city.

He also has done some baseball broadcasting on TV, drawing a couple of critical notices for one of the interviews he did with John Candelaria after the Pittsburgh left-hander no-hit the Dodgers last August. "I wasn't that bad, was I?" He was, although ordinarily he does a good job in front of the mike.

Gibson says he has been much more relaxed since he left baseball, and it shows.

"Everybody thought I was so cool and nonchalant every time I went

out there," Gibson said to Mike Shannon, who was one of his teammates with the Cardinals and now is one of their broadcasters.

"They never knew what really was going on inside me. I don't know that I could explain it. I was just tense and hyper. Reporters realized something was wrong with me. They could see I didn't want to talk before I had to go out and pitch a ball game. They thought I was being an ass, that I was purposely being difficult, but it wasn't that at all. I'd go home the night before a ball game and I didn't want to be around anybody. It wasn't that I was trying so hard to concentrate; it was my way of getting up."

"I remember one radio interview. The fellow doing it started out by saying, 'Bob, we all know you're not an emotional person. . . . I stopped him. 'I'm just as emotional as anybody else,' I told him. Maybe I didn't show it, but a lotta things bothered me, ate me up inside. When I lost a ball game, I was the hardest person in the world to get along with...."

Gibson laughed.

Sitting there on the bench alongside him, Shannon also laughed.

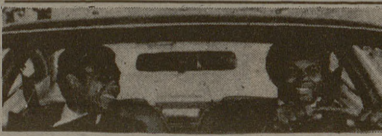
"I know what you mean," said the Cards' former third baseman. "I remember us getting beat bad by the Mets in St. Louis one day. It

was a big game for us, and when it was over, I went out to get a pizza. The girl who waited on me didn't really mean anything. She was only trying to be polite. 'How did you fellows do today?' she asked me. 'Never mind,' I hollered at her. 'Just gimme the gahdamn pizza.'"

Gibson never fraternized with any players from the other clubs when he was with the Cardinals. He was a loner. That was his way, almost his trademark.

"I believed the less the other team knew about me, the better off I was," he said. "I welcomed some players thinking I was unfriendly and a little bit mean. They weren't far from wrong. I was a little bit mean."

On the mound, yes; off it, never. Bob Gibson doesn't have a mean bone in his whole body. He's the kind of person who'd give you the shirt off his back, as long as he wasn't pitching against you. If he was, he'd give you nothing.



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Records fall in swim meet

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Art Smith of Dallas and Jamee Stewart set new standards for their age group events. Smith broke the 200-yard breast stroke record in the 20-34 men's age group. Stewart swam the 200-yard butterfly in the 25-29 women's age group in record time.

Sixty-one swimmers from five states participated in the third annual meet, at P.L. Downs Natatorium on April 30 and May 1.

Local swimmers won high point honors. Joyce Kohel of College Station, 40-44, and Jesse Coon of Bryan, 65-69, were most prolific.

Dr. Coon, retired Texas A&M physics professor, is ranked in the top 10 nationally in six events.

The meet, directed by Will Worley, was co-sponsored by the Texas A&M Aquatics Club, College Station/Bryan Swim Club, College Station Recreation Council and Savanis Club of College Station.

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