

Sports

Yankees want to reel in Astros' Bass for Winfield in fishy blockbuster deal

New York Yankees' owner George Steinbrenner recently hung a sign on the door of his office that said, "Gone fishin'."



Anthony Wilson
Sports viewpoint

And Steinbrenner's not after minnows, either. Nor is he looking for trout, tuna or carp. Steinbrenner wants a trophy big enough to match his ego to adorn right field of the House that Ruth built, a.k.a. Yankee Stadium. Steinbrenner's fishing for Bass — as in Kevin Bass. Bass is the Houston Astros' versatile right fielder. Bass is a switch hitter who combines a rare blend of speed and power. Last season he was one of an elite group of players who hit 20 home runs and stole 20 bases. The former All-Star is a major cog along with Billy Hatcher and Gerald Young, in what many are calling the best young outfield in the major leagues. Despite being relegated to a pinch-hitting role in all but two of Houston's seven games because of a

slow-healing hamstring, Bass has performed marvelously this season. He is toting a .455 batting average with eight runs batted in.

Bass hit the second grand slam of his career Sunday in the ninth inning against the Cincinnati Reds to cap a big 12-3 Astros win.

So why would the Astros consider trading Bass? Well, there are three possible reasons.

The first possibility is that the Astros believe the bait Steinbrenner is casting out, Dave Winfield, is too good to pass up.

The second possibility involves members of the Astros' front office ingesting large amounts of illegal hallucinogens.

The third possibility combines the first along with the fact that general manager Al Wood believes that the Astros MUST win it ALL this year.

Let's examine each one:

First, it's true that Dave Winfield is an extraordinary talent. When he left college the 6-foot-8 rightfielder was drafted in professional basketball, football and baseball. Winfield was one of the best players in the game.

But notice the tense of that last statement. I said WAS.

If the Yankees had offered Winfield for anyone on the Astros a few years ago, I would have met him at the airport and carried his luggage to the Dome.

But Winfield is now 36 years old and in the twilight of his career. He

may have one or two more great years left.

Of course, he may have only three or four years — good or bad — left at all.

Bass on the other hand is just entering the prime of his career. If he remains injury-free, he will be one of the best players in the game.

Notice the tense of the last statement. I said WILL BE.

Bass is 29 years old and is coming into his own. After working his way into the starting lineup, he has had three productive seasons.

He should have seven or eight great years left and may play as many as nine or ten more seasons.

As young as Hatcher and Young are, the Astros' outfield should stay intact for many years to come.

Second, it's fairly certain that owner John McMullen, manager Hal Lanier and Wood are not using drugs. Those guys have never been known as partyers.

Third, Wood may believe that the Astros pitching staff is too old to last much longer. Wagner may be ready to risk it all this season and hope that Winfield would have a better year than Bass.

Rebuilding a pitching staff is a general manager's toughest challenge and greatest fear.

Pitching in the major leagues is already at an all-time low. The only way to obtain quality pitching is to develop them in the farm system or trade for them. And since good

pitching is so scarce, a team often has to trade its biggest offensive star.

The Astros staff includes veterans Nolan Ryan, Mike Scott, Bob Knepper, Larry Andersen, Danny Darwin, Joaquin Andujar and Dave Smith — not what one would call a group of spring chickens.

This may be the end of the line for most of those old timers.

But the rest of the team is fairly young with Glenn Davis at first, Billy Doran at second, Rafael Ramirez at shortstop, Chuck Jackson at third and Mark Bailey at catcher.

Houston also has third baseman Ken Caminiti and outfielder Cameron Drew gaining experience in the minors.

So splitting up the strongest point of the team on a nervous whim seems to be a little hasty.

If the Astros want to trade for someone, why not try to get a young, starting pitcher rather, a supposed weak spot, rather than another right fielder, a reliable strong spot?

Bass is a key member of the team. He has announced that he wants to stay in Houston.

In order for the Astros to be successful, it is imperative that he has his head on straight. Continuing trade rumors will not be healthy for Bass or the Astros. So Wood should be grateful he's got a Bass on his team and not look a gift fish in the mouth.

Davis' home run helps Astros crush Reds 9-3

HOUSTON (AP) — Glenn Davis drove in five runs with a three-run homer and a pair of singles, leading the Houston Astros to a 9-3 victory over the Cincinnati Reds Thursday night.

Danny Darwin, 1-0, allowed three runs in 8 1-3 innings.

He lost his shutout in the eighth inning on Barry Larkin's RBI single, then allowed two runs in the ninth on a balk and Nick Esasky's run-scoring single.

Until Cincinnati scored, Astros

pitchers had gone 24 innings without allowing a run.

Darwin is taking the place of Joaquin Andujar in the rotation.

Andujar was placed on the 21-day disabled list because of strained muscles in his left side.

Davis' fifth home run of the season scored Gerald Young and Billy Hatcher in the first inning.

Young and Hatcher reached base

on infield hits off Dennis Rasmussen, 0-1.

Davis, who also drove in runs with singles in the fourth and seventh innings, equaled his career high with five runs batted in, matching his RBI total in a three-home run performance at San Diego last Sept. 10.

Bill Doran's two-run double highlighted Houston's four-run fourth inning, chasing Rasmussen.

Rafael Ramirez singled to start the Astros' fourth, took second on Ras-

mussen's balk and scored on a double by Darwin.

After Hatcher walked, Doran's double scored Darwin and Hatcher, and Davis' single off reliever Frank Williams scored Darwin.

Alan Ashby reached base on a forceout and scored on Chuck Jackson's double in the seventh.

Houston and the Reds will play again Friday at 7:30 and at 12:35 Saturday.

12th Man Scoreboard

Swift Ags to race Horns in Austin

Roadrunners

The Texas A&M Roadrunners hope to make the University of Texas eat dust this weekend when they travel to Austin for their third annual road-burning showdown with Longhorns.

The Aggies have never won the event but they have more serious runners competing this

year, club president Larry Isham said.

"This year we have the best chance to win," Isham said.

This is the only competition for the 25-year-old club and about eight to 20 runners will participate.

Ags to test Bryan waters Saturday

Sailing

The sailing team continues its windy season Saturday when it sets its sails in Bryan Utilities Lake for the "Barnyard Bazaar" Regatta.

A&M finished third in the March team racing district championships and ended up fifth at the Clemson Intersectional. The women breezed their way to two second-place finishes last month, including the A&M Invitational

on April 2. The Lady Ags sank to fourth place last weekend at the women's district championships in Austin. The Lady Longhorns won the event.

David Hiebert, with the wind at his back, continues a successful season in the Laser single-handed competition taking top honors at the A&M invitational.

Horns win tourney at A&M's home pool

Water Polo

The Aggies' archrival, the University of Texas, was the only team with its head above water at the end of the A&M Spring Invitational last weekend. A&M splashed to a second-place finish behind the Longhorns.

A&M's B team placed fourth in the event behind an independent club's third-place finish.

The tournament was A&M's last of the season.

Baylor bears brunt of A&M netters in SWC showdown

The Texas A&M men's tennis team rebounded from a pair of tough losses by edging Baylor 5-4 Thursday in Waco.

The Aggies, who improved 3-3 in Southwest Conference play, will play Texas Tech Saturday in their final home match of the season 1:30 at the Omar Smith Tennis Center.

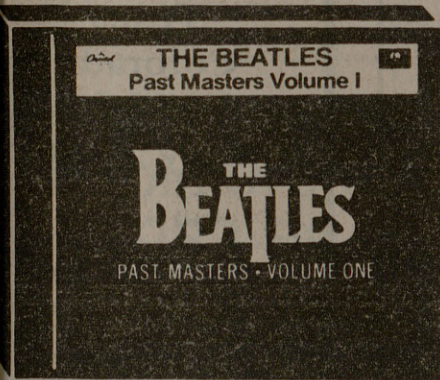
In singles play, Baylor's Bob Henderson defeated Dean Johnson in the No. 1 bracket 6-4, 6-4; Craig Smythe beat Shaun O'Donovan 3-6, 6-2, 6-2, and Steve Kennedy of A&M

defeated Reich Chandler in No. 3 singles play.

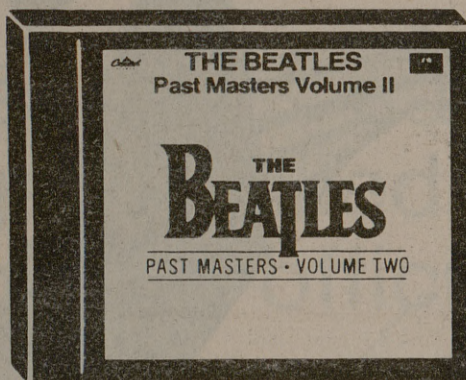
In other matches, the Aggies' Craig Whitteker got past Baylor's Monte Horne 6-4, 6-4; Jeff Engelke beat A&M's Mike Chambers 6-3, 4-6, 7-6, and A&M's Wayne Green beat Chris Wade 7-5, 6-3.

In doubles play, A&M's top team of Kennedy and O'Donovan defeated Henderson and McSmythe 6-4, 7-6, and Chandler and Horne defeated Whitteker and Johnson 7-6, 3-6, 6-3.

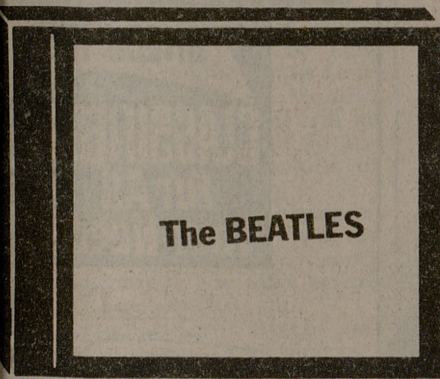
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