

Daulton, Dykstra, Kruk: They can win, but can they pitch?

Endorsement contracts aren't exactly overwhelming the Phillies despite the public's fascination with their gritty, winning ways. Here's why, according to one sports management executive.

By Frank Fitzpatrick
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Gritty and grungy, the Phillies seemed destined for cult status last October. The public's fascination with the pennant-winning team's beards, bellies and baseball abilities appeared to put Philadelphia's best-known players in a position to reap substantial endorsement dollars.

Surely Darren Daulton, an all-star catcher with movie-star looks, could sell plenty to men and women. And who better to pitch power saws or trucks than grizzly John Kruk?

Yet, other than Lenny Dykstra's deal with Starter athletic wear, the Phillies remain virtually endorsement-free.

Brandon Steiner of Steiner Sports Management in New York recently surveyed 250 large U.S. companies on what sports figures they considered hot advertising prospects. The Phillies were nearly shut out.

"Dykstra's name came up a couple of times," said Steiner of a list that was headed by Shaquille O'Neal and Nancy Kerrigan. "But he's probably done more to hurt himself than help himself. Other than him, none of those other guys were mentioned."

If Knicks coach Pat Riley finished fifth in the survey, largely on the basis of sex appeal,

then shouldn't Daulton have gotten some consideration?

"Without trying to be condescending, I sent Darren Daulton down Madison Avenue, all he would be likely to get is directions," Steiner said. "It requires more than what someone looks like or what they do on the field. I'd say Daulton has to spend more energy and time working himself into the front part of the newspaper, doing community service, that kind of thing."

Steiner said Dykstra's problem is that New York-based business and advertising people know him too well from his early days as a wild New York Met. And if you don't think recognition among New Yorkers is a huge factor, then how do you explain the New York Rangers' Adam Graves finishing tenth?

"Dykstra's got the notoriety, but for all the wrong reasons. He has to work on cleaning his reputation up," Steiner said. "Advertisers don't want to deal with that kind of crap. I thought he took some steps in the right direction this off-season with the trip to Europe and some other things."

And what about Kruk?

"He's an interesting case," Steiner said. "He probably has more potential than any of them. He's got a grungy, blue-collar, everyday-guy kind of appeal. And if he continues to have success on the field and does some

things off of it, he could find a niche.

"I mean, if you don't put him behind the wheel of a Chevy S-10 Blazer, who do you put there? I could see him with some power tools or cutting wood, that kind of thing."

Fregosi's dilemma: A few hours after the Phillies and Red Sox had completed their trade last week, but before it was announced, Phils manager Jim Fregosi faced a dilemma.

With his club trailing, 7-4, in the sixth inning and runners at second and third, Fregosi needed a pinch-hitter. After Tony Longmire was announced, Cubs manager Tom Treblehorn brought in lefthander Dan Plesac, and Fregosi called Longmire back to the dugout. He needed a righthanded batter.

Was Chamberlain, 2 for 3 lifetime off Plesac with a homer and two RBIs, would have been the natural choice. But Fregosi knew Chamberlain was headed for Boston and that, if he put him on the field, he risked an injury that might void the deal. So the manager went with Pete Incaviglia, who was hitless in 14 lifetime at-bats off Plesac. Incaviglia struck out.

When the need for a righthanded pinch-hitter arose later, however, Fregosi had to use Chamberlain, and in his last Phillies at-bat, the outfielder fanned.

Did you notice that . . .

- All banners and signs have been banned from Riverfront Stadium? After a fan was told to remove one that simply named a Bible verse — John 3:16 — he threatened legal action. The Reds then said all banners had to

refer to baseball. So the same fan brought one in that read, "Go Reds! John 3:16."

- Official scorers at Busch Stadium never give Ozzie Smith an error? Granted Smith is the best defensive shortstop of all time, but in a recent Phils game, a softly struck ground ball rolled under his glove and was ruled a hit.

- Tommy Greene was very relieved when a tear was discovered in his shoulder? "He looked five years younger, didn't he?" one Phillie said.

- As remarkable as Dykstra's run-scoring pace is, Frank Thomas began the weekend with nine more (60-51)?

- Another Cleveland pitcher was touched by tragedy last week? Reliever Matt Turner was diagnosed with Hodgkin's disease. Earlier this spring, Jerry DiPoto was lost with thyroid cancer. And in 1993, Cleveland lost four pitchers in a much-publicized boating accident and a subsequent car crash.

- The White Sox appear interested in Tony LaRussa, who apparently won't be back in Oakland after this dreadful season?

- New Phils pitcher Paul Quantrill is a descendant of Col. William Clarke Quantrill, whose bloody raid on Lawrence, Kan., helped precipitate the Civil War? The Phils' Quantrill was born in Canada, which is where the infamous Quantrill and the survivors of his raid fled.

- While members of the Phillies' rotation continually break down, the Braves never lose a start to injury? Maybe there is something to be said for Atlanta pitching coach Leo Mazzone's practice of having his starters

throw twice between starts. Most teams, the Phils included, have their pitchers throw once in that span.

- The baseball draft often penalizes the very teams it is meant to help? Small-market teams that finish poorly get the highest draft picks. So the teams that are least-equipped to pay big salaries end up drafting the players who demand the highest ones.

Rumblings and grumbings. You haven't heard the last of the Dave Hollins-to-right-field possibility. Tom Quinlan's excellent glove work in last week's Chicago series reminded players and club officials of how defense can win games for you as easily as a home run. In fact, it's why Quinlan is still with the club and receiving personalized hitting instruction from Fregosi. Besides, with Milt Thompson, Incaviglia and Jim Eisenreich all possibilities to be playing elsewhere next season, the Phils will need outfielders . . . Ken Howell, once the ace of a very bad Phillies staff, is now pitching in single-A ball with the independent San Bernardino Spirit of the California League. In four appearances, Howell, 33, is 0-1 with a 9.00 ERA . . . Wouldn't Kyle Abbott, under contract in Japan, look pretty good in a Phils bullpen that yearns for another lefthander? And speaking of ex-Phils relievers in Japan, Bobby Thigpen recently signed with the Fukuoka Daiei Hawks . . . The Phillies are considering shifting the start time for weekday home games from 7:35 to 7:05.