

Smith's Patience At An End With Big Bills, Small Crowds

Last December, when the decision was made to continue National League baseball in San Diego, Buzzie Bavasi decided he had discovered the identity of that jolly old fellow who comes around on Christmas morning in a pollution-free sleigh.

"There is only one Santa Claus in baseball," said Bavasi, "and his name is C. A. Smith."

But even Santa, it seems, won't go on pouring goodies into a stocking which leaks through a hole in the toe.

Smith's philanthropic spirit didn't last through the first month of the 1973 season.

On May 5, he met with Joseph Danzansky of the Giant Food chain, a Washington enterprise, in the Westgate Plaza Hotel here. The hotel delivered a typewriter to the two men and Danzansky worked out the rough version of a conditional sale, and they signed it.

The agreement stipulated that Smith will yield title to his baseball franchise to Washington in exchange for \$9 million in cash and take back a note for \$3 million. The \$9 million will become Smith's when the National League formally approves the sale.



C. Arnholt Smith

The original letter of intent was in such crude form that the two men, Smith and Danzansky, flew to Washington the following day and redrafted it. That night, May 6, they signed it a second time in the Madison Hotel.

Smith accepted a down payment of \$100,000 and the cancelled check is now in the possession of Marvin Willig, a Washington lawyer who is a member of the Danzansky group.

Bavasi says Smith told him of the letter of intent, or conditional agreement, on May 13.

The agreement contains two conditions: (1) Smith must obtain release from the ball club's 20-year stadium lease with the city; and (2) the league must be satisfied with that arrangement.

\$700,000 Annual Payments Hurt

Smith reportedly has offered Mayor Pete Wilson a proposal in which he would indemnify the city \$2.1 million — the full amount the ball club was to receive from its management-promotion contract over a seven-year period. The city had sought to bolster the club in its infancy with an annual subsidy of \$300,000.

This was to have been repaid over the last 13 years of the stadium lease from annual revenue over \$800,000.

But, alas, paid attendance never surpassed 644,272 (that in 1972) and Smith decided it was no longer prudent to make annual interest payments of \$700,000 on a \$10 million loan.

Smith's impatience was such that he initiated the second round of negotiations with Danzansky which resulted in a conditional sale on May 5. Smith's counsel contacted Joseph Tydings, former U.S. senator from Maryland, and Tydings communicated Smith's interest to Danzansky.

Danzansky then flew to San Diego for a clandestine meeting at Smith's hotel, the Westgate Plaza, and they agreed on the largest purchase price ever paid for a baseball team. The New York Yankees recently sold for \$10 million.

Among other things, this has the effect of relieving Buzzie Bavasi of his ownership position in the ball club. Had the club been moved to Washington and retained by Smith, Bavasi would have held his 32 per cent interest.

The new owners reportedly have offered Bavasi an annual salary of \$100,000 to head the club in Washington. This would represent an increase of about \$30,000 over his current wage as club president.

The Danzansky faction has purchased the assets of the San Diego ball club, but not the stock. Which is to say they bought player contracts, balls and bats, and a license to operate in the National League. They did not acquire the club's obligations, including debts and the stadium lease.

\$9 Million Might Save Club

Bavasi has expressed reluctance to leave San Diego, to start again under a group of men he doesn't know very well, and to yield his ownership role. Thus, he would not be displeased if San Diego interests would match or top the Washington offer for the purpose of keeping the team here.

This presumably would require \$9 million in cash, keeping in mind that Bavasi owns 32 per cent. Bavasi would have to find means to finance his share.

New San Diego ownership is possible, if unlikely. Such local sportsmen as John Mabey and Bob Breibard have shown interest in the project and presumably will be seeking partners now that the conditional sale is public knowledge.

Smith has not discouraged such overtures, but stipulates the buyers must produce cash. He will not accept payment over a long term.

If such investors materialize, they'll be gambling both on the team and the city. The team has been lightly supported because it doesn't win very often. Once it becomes a contender — always a slow process for an expansion club — attendance presumably would climb to the vicinity of 1 million annual paying customers, a profitable neighborhood.

The greatest need, in terms of San Diego baseball, is a Daddy Warbucks in search of a tax shelter.

Meanwhile, the season will go on four more months, quietly and resentfully. Washington sources say Smith offered to deliver the ball club to the capital immediately but Danzansky declined with thanks.

Thus comes a summer of baseball at the stadium which may resemble a silent movie as the San Diego-Washington team does its thing in the community which used to call itself a "city in motion."

Does anybody know how to get this thing out of reverse?

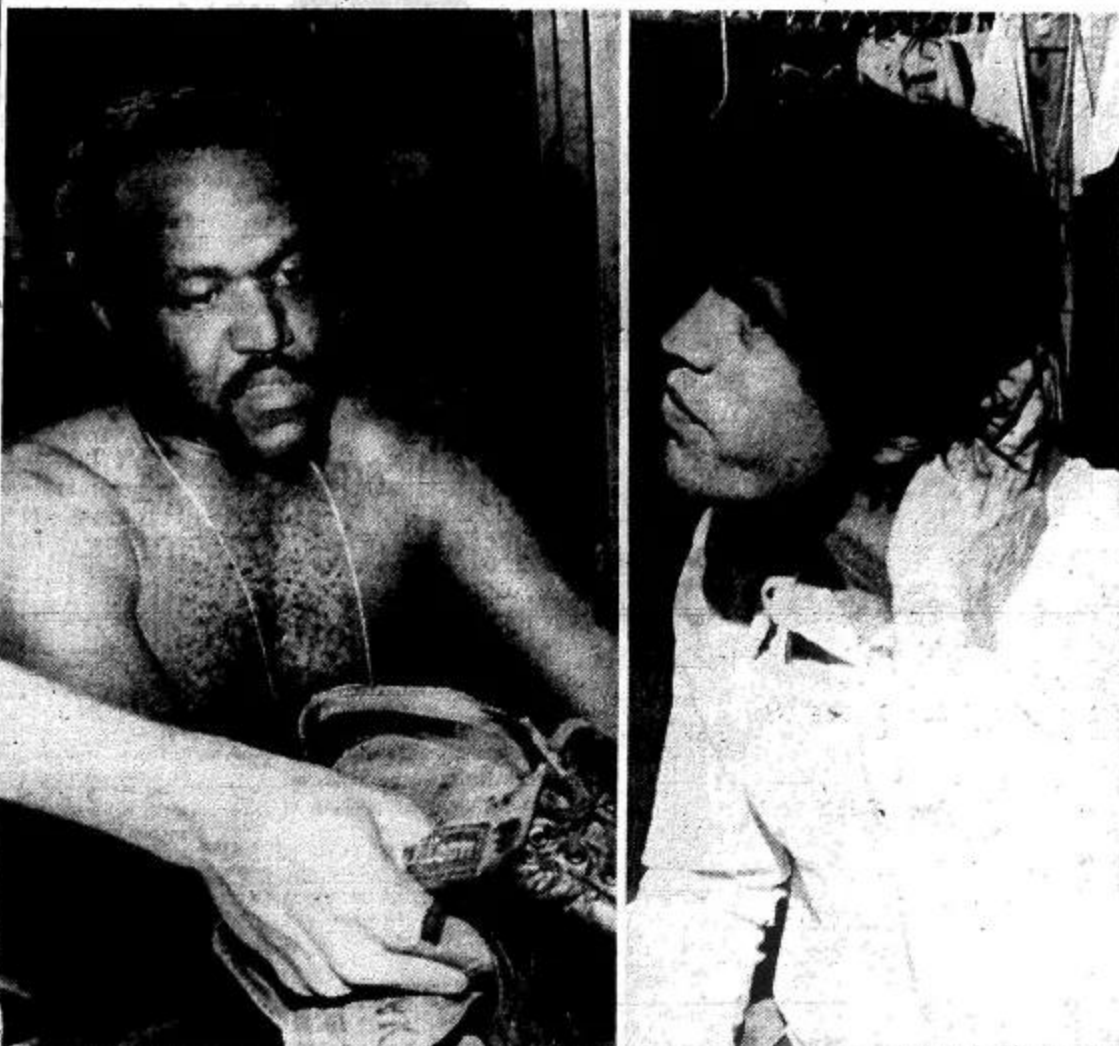
SAINT FANS WANT FOOTBALL

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — A group of Louisiana millionaires say they want home ownership for the New Orleans Saints, and that they're willing to match any offers made by out-of-town owners, says a local television station.

Following reports in local newspapers that owner John Mecom Jr. was considering an offer of \$20 million for the National Football League franchise, WWL quoted attorney Ben Toledano as saying that he represents a group of about 11 men who want the team.

Mecom was quoted Friday as saying he wants to sell, and the Times-Picayune reported that a group from Chicago has completed preliminary negotiations for the purchase.

Washington Buys Padres For Record \$12 Million



In the locker room after a doubleheader loss to Philadelphia, San Diego Padres Nate Colbert (left) and Dave Roberts look downcast on hearing the news that the Padres will be moving.

Smith Confirms Plan To Move Club Next Year

By JACK MURPHY Sports Editor, The San Diego Union

The San Diego Padres have been sold to a group of Washington businessmen headed by Joseph Danzansky, with the franchise being delivered to the capital at the conclusion of the current National League season.

The sale occurred the day of the Kentucky Derby, May 5, in San Diego when C. Arnholt Smith, principal owner of the Padres, signed a letter of intent which obligated the Danzansky faction to a purchase price of \$12 million.

Smith reportedly has accepted a down payment of \$100,000 and Marvin Willig, one of Danzansky's partners, has the cancelled check in his possession.

The \$12 million purchase price is the highest ever paid for a baseball team, some \$2 million more than was paid recently for the New York Yankees.

The timing of the sale had the effect of memorial services for baseball in San Diego during the Memorial Day holiday. The team will continue here on a lame duck basis, but the mood will be vastly changed.

Smith acknowledged the Padres' awkward position when asked why he would sign the letter of intent when four months remain in the 1973 season.

NEED TIME

"Because the opportunity came along now," replied the banker-sportsman. "The people in Washington need time to get their deal together."

Smith said there is nothing in his agreement with the Danzansky group which gives San Diego interests an opportunity to purchase the franchise and keep it in this city. However, this remains a possibility, a remote possibility in Smith's judgement.

"I'd be the happiest man in San Diego if the team were to remain here," said Smith, "but it seems unlikely. How can someone else make it work if we couldn't?"

And the figures will be even more depressing now that the club is winding up its business in San Diego.

"I know it will kill interest and attendance here," said Smith.

20-YEAR LEASE

Sale of the club will not become final until the Washington people fulfill Smith's terms of \$12 million and until the shift is approved by the National League. Further, there is the complication of the ball club's 20-year lease on San Diego Stadium.

It was learned that Smith has contacted Mayor Pete Wilson about the possibility of being released of his stadium obligations. The Padres are in the

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Padres React Differently To News Of Move

By PHIL COLLIER

"When the fans hear about this, we won't be playing in front of nobody," said Nate Colbert.

That was one of the varied reactions the San Diego Padres had yesterday when they left the field after 4-3 and 6-4 losses to Philadelphia and learned that majority owner C. Arnholt Smith has signed a letter of intent to sell the club to Washington, D.C. interests.

"If we're going, I hope I go," said manager Don Zimmer after his last place team extended its losing streak to four games.

"Any time a major league team leaves a city it is a surprise. It would be kind of a shame to leave a ballpark like this (San Diego Stadium)."

"I still don't believe it will happen," said second baseman Derrel Thomas, "and I won't until I read about the Washington Padres."

"No, we would be the Washington Capitals," suggested righthander Clay Kirby, who wasted five strong innings of relief pitching in yesterday's second game.

"That's unbelievable," Kirby said when told that the club is apt to move. "I like it here, but if we have to move then Washington is the best place for me." Kirby was born in the District of Columbia and grew up in the area.

Every player was quick to ask if the move would be made now or at the end of the season. They were told of an opinion offered by club president Buzzie Bavasi.

"I really know nothing about the plans," Bavasi said, "but I don't see how they could move the franchise in the middle of the season."

"My reaction (to Smith's move) is that I have to be guided by Mr. Smith's good judgement," Bavasi said. "I

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Life Cycle Upsets Cougar In Invitational

By NELSON FISHER Turf Editor, The San Diego Union

INGLEWOOD — Prosperity proved too much for Cougar 11, newest horse millionaire, in the \$125,000 Hollywood Invitational yesterday when he settled for third money in the 1 1/2-mile marathon over Hollywood Park's turf course.

Peter Florida's Life Cycle, from Florida, led the parade to the finish a length and one-quarter ahead of the Daybreak Farm's Wing Out with Cougar third, beaten a neck for second place.

Life Cycle equaled the course record of 2:25 3/5 set by Fiddle Isle in 1970.

Had Cougar, a smashing winner over those first two in the Century Handicap that pushed his earnings above the \$1 million mark, gained only the \$25,000 second money, he would have advanced to No. 9 behind Citation on the list of 11 horses reaching the million-dollar plateau. So now he remains No. 11, the \$15,000 third place pot leaving him at \$1,021,641 just below Dr. Fager at \$1,022,642.

The deserving victory for Life Cycle, a 4-year-old son of Wolfram and Katira, earned him \$75,000 first money. In the mile and three-furlong Century Handicap here May 5, he was

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'CAPTAINS' ABANDON SHIP

Disappointed Padres Turn To Writers

By WAYNE LOCKWOOD

It was not exactly a moment in the grand tradition of the sea.

While officers of the good ship S.D. Padre assembled on the bridge to hear that the vessel was being scuttled, the crew milled in the forecastle watching the waters of uncertainty rise about them.

Manager Don Zimmer and his coaching staff were gone from the Padre dressing room, having been summoned to a front office meeting to be told of the club's impending sale to Washington, D.C.

The players remained, having been told nothing.

In angry desperation, they turned for information to that most unreliable of sources, sports writers.

Those reporters were greeted with a mixture of resignation, disappointment and gallows humor.

There was little surprise. There had been too long a Flying Dutchman air about this franchise — too many rumors, too many financial reporters from the Washington Post poking about the clubhouse — for anything to come as a surprise.

"So it finally happened," was the general response.

"If there's such a thing as

precognition, I guess this is it," said Dave Campbell. "I've had bad vibes all day."

It might have meant that the Padres were about to lose a doubleheader to the Philadelphia Phillies.

Instead, it meant that Campbell and the half-dozen or so other San Diego homeowners on the Padres were now commuters.

"My house is going for \$46,000," Campbell advertised. "That's fully air-conditioned and landscaped."

He was laughing because grown men aren't supposed to cry.

There was overall a feeling of bitterness.

"Boy, they're not going to do anything up there now," said Clarence Gaston, noting the lame-duck status of the franchise.

"They weren't going to do

anything anyway," responded Leron Lee.

There was a sense of betrayal.

"If it's just a financial thing, then it really didn't matter how we played anyway, did it?" wondered Nate Colbert. "They were going to sell the team anyway."

"I just work here," shrugged Clay Kirby, a Washington native who had just enjoyed his best outing of the season in the second game.

"I don't know anything. I'm just an employee."

Some chose to relate the move with attendance.

"If you can't draw, you can't draw," observed Ivan Murrell.

"If you're not a winner, you can't draw in San Diego. And we're sure not a winner."

"I'm not going," announced

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Threatening Weather Endangers Indy 500

By JOHNNY McDONALD Motor Sports Writer, The San Diego Union

INDIANAPOLIS — A 70 per cent chance of rain and 25-mile-per-hour winds hang over the Indianapolis Motor Speedway today as 300,000 spectators await the running of the 500-mile race.

The area last night was under a tornado watch. Not since 1915 has the 500 been postponed by weather, and rain has only twice disrupted the event in the past quarter century. But yesterday's forecast called for temperatures falling below the 70 degree mark, with the chance of rain increasing into the afternoon hours and the winds picking up.

The million-dollar race is scheduled for an 11 a.m. Indy

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Padre manager Don Zimmer, left, tells Phil Collier, The San Diego Union's baseball writer, his reaction to the news the San Diego club has been sold to Washington, D.C., interest.

Wohlhuter Snaps Ryun's 880 Record

By WILL WATSON Sports Writer, The San Diego Union

LOS ANGELES — Rick Wohlhuter, who fell in his preliminary heat at Munich last year and failed to qualify, stamped his name into the record books here yesterday by breaking Jim Ryun's world record in the 880-yard run at the Vons Track Classic.

Wohlhuter, who works as a claims adjuster for an insurance firm in Chicago, took advantage of a blazing pace and passed South Africa's Danie Malan in the last 150 yards to record a time of 1:44.6, three-tenths faster than Ryun's performance in Terre Haute, Ind., seven years ago.

Mark Winzenried — did the work in the early part of the race which made the record possible. Winzenried ran the first quarter in :52.0; Malan and then Wohlhuter passed Winzenried on the backstretch and when the two went past the 600 mark in 1:18, the crowd of 10,003 started to buzz.

Wohlhuter overtook Malan coming off the final curve and (Continued on C-5, Col. 1)