

Mets share Shea with the Yankees for just a day

The Yankees defeated the Angels in Game 1 of a unique doubleheader

By Hal Bock
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Everything seemed slightly out of place.

The Yankees walked off their buses into Shea Stadium fully dressed in their pinstripes.

The Anaheim Angels occupied the Mets' dugout.

George Steinbrenner sat in orange box seats, instead of a luxury suite.

The sonorous voice of the Yankees, Bob Sheppard, competed with the roar of jets zooming in and out of LaGuardia Airport.

When the New York Yankees and their fans finally found their way from the Bronx to Queens for the first game of an unprecedented doubleheader Wednesday, things were familiar — but not

quite right.

"Two teams from two leagues that have never gotten along, in the same ballpark by the same airport," said Yankees manager Joe Torre, who once was skipper of the Mets. "It's strange. It's just weird what's going on."

The Yankees were forced to borrow Shea for a day while Yankee Stadium was closed to the public after a 500-pound steel joint fell from the upper deck Monday. In the foreign surroundings, New York beat Anaheim, 6-3 in 2 hours, 53 minutes, just the third time this season they've played in under three hours.

Less than an hour after the game ended, the Mets were on the field, beginning warmups for their night game against the Chicago Cubs. It marked the first time this century two regular season games involving four teams were played in one stadium on the same day.

The last time a similar doubleheader was played was in 1885, when the New York Metropolitans of the American Association and the New York Giants of the National League shared the Polo Grounds, according to Tim Wiles, director of research at the Baseball Museum at Cooperstown, N.Y.

The Yankees began the day by reporting to Yankee Stadium, dressing for the game, and journeying over the Triborough Bridge in three buses with police escorts. It was as if they were a high school team dressing in their home gym and then traveling across town for a game.

Fans arriving by subway had to change their plans, too. Many rode the unfamiliar No. 7 train to Flushing, rather than the uptown D train to the Bronx.

Once at Shea, the Yankees used the visitors' dugout and clubhouse, where freshly pressed Cubs uniforms hung in front of

the lockers.

The Angels used the Mets' dugout, but Shea's landlords didn't want anyone in their locker room. That forced Anaheim to use the old dressing room once occupied by Joe Namath and the New York Jets.

It was a homecoming, of sorts, for several Yankees. Torre, pitching coach Mel Stottlemyre, third base coach Willie Randolph, pitcher David Cone and outfielder Darryl Strawberry all spent time with the Mets earlier in their careers.

Strawberry celebrated his return with three hits, including a 402-foot home run.

Once again, confusion struck.

The "Big Apple" that pops up to salute Mets' home runs at Shea began to rise from its huge top hat beyond the center field fence. Suddenly, it stopped moving when the operator apparently remembered it has a Mets logo on

it — and it was a Yankee home run.

"I've seen that apple a lot of times," said Strawberry, who has 127 home runs at Shea Stadium, 30 more than any other player. "It didn't go up all the way. That was a good sign."

The Mets still tried to be hospitable, erecting a sign over the Stadium's Diamond Club entrance that said: "Mets welcome Yankee Fans"

For the Yankees, it was a chance to get an early peek at Shea, where they will play a three-game interleague series against the Mets in June. They last played in Shea in 1974-75, spending two seasons there while Yankee Stadium was being refurbished.

When the game ended, the Yankees did not disturb the Cubs' dressing room, instead boarding buses to Yankee Stadium to shower and change.

Stadium celebrates 75 years on DL

Yankee Stadium was closed Monday after a 500-pound joint collapsed into the stadium's middle deck

By Tim Whitmire
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Yankee Stadium will spend its 75th birthday on the disabled list — and the city could be getting ready to give the ballpark its unconditional release.

Mayor Rudolph Giuliani said Wednesday that city inspectors examining the stadium — closed Monday after a steel-and-concrete joint collapsed — had found more problems, including concrete on the stadium's facade that has been damaged by seeping water.

Yankees owner George Steinbrenner said he expects a decision shortly on his team's future home — whether in the Bronx, Manhattan or New Jersey.

"I think we will see a decision in 1998," Steinbrenner said in a telephone interview with The Associated Press. "All our options are still the same, but we should make a decision this year."

For his part, Giuliani moved closer toward ruling out further renovations once the Yankees' lease runs out after the 2002 season.

"In many ways you are dealing with a 75-year-old baseball park, so that's something as we make plans for the future we have to take a good look at," the mayor said. "I think it means it's more likely that you would build a new ballpark than try to renovate it for a second or third time."

Addressing the issue of water damage to the facade, which was built during a 1974-75 remodeling, city buildings commissioner Gaston Silva said workers will erect scaffolding around the stadium and check for damage. Any weak area will be repaired, he said.

"You don't want these pieces floating off and hitting someone on the ground," Silva said.

Meanwhile, the Yankees' three-game weekend se-

ries against the Detroit Tigers, scheduled for Yankee Stadium, was switched to Tiger Stadium. That puts the Yankees on the road Saturday, the 75th anniversary of the day Babe Ruth opened Yankee Stadium with a home run.

Monday's collapse of the 500-pound joint into the stadium's middle deck already had forced the postponement of two games between the Yankees and Anaheim Angels. The teams played Wednesday at Shea Stadium, home of the Mets, with the Yankees winning 6-3.

Before attending that game, Giuliani said the joint collapse "underscores the need both (New York) teams have for a new baseball field."

The Mets already are negotiating with the city for a new stadium, and the accident Monday has prompted speculation that the Yankees would increase pressure for a new park.

"I feel no pressure," said Steinbrenner, who repeatedly has threatened to leave the Bronx when the team's lease on the city-owned stadium expires in four years.

One option mentioned by Steinbrenner has been New Jersey; another is midtown Manhattan, where a 1996 study commissioned by the city, state and team said a stadium with retractable dome, built over rail yards, would cost at least \$1 billion.

The last detailed inspection of Yankee Stadium's structure was in 1979, when cracks appeared in the concrete. City Parks Department spokesman Ed Skyler said Wednesday that the city "had not been inspecting Yankee Stadium cellar-to-roof" before Monday's collapse.

With this weekend's series moved to Detroit, the Yankees now are scheduled to return to their own stadium April 24, for a three-game weekend series against the Tigers that had been scheduled for Detroit.

"Obviously, issues of safety override all other considerations," AL president Gene Budig said in a statement. "Along with the Yankees and Mayor Giuliani, the league wants the unequivocal assurance of city inspectors that Yankee Stadium is a safe environment for our fans and our teams."



Johnson, Lofton, Alomar ejected after wild pitches

By Ken Berger
The Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Randy Johnson, Kenny Lofton and Sandy Alomar were ejected after Johnson threw at Lofton's head on consecutive pitches Wednesday night, causing both benches to clear. Seattle won the game 5-3.

With one out in the third inning of the game between the Seattle Mariners and Cleveland Indians, Johnson brushed Lofton off the plate with a fastball over his head. Lofton popped up, yelling at Johnson.

Lofton and the 6-foot-11 Johnson walked toward each other as the benches cleared, with Alomar the first to get between them. Things calmed down until manager Lou Piniella started screaming and going after Lofton.

With order finally restored, Johnson threw a second pitch in almost the same spot to set off another bench-clearer. Alomar, wearing his catching gear, was right in the middle of the crowd and appeared to be trying to get to Piniella or home

plate umpire Ed Hickox.

Alomar and Lofton were ejected. Alomar was the first to leave, and Lofton followed him off the field and threw his bat into the dugout. Johnson was the last to go, walking off the mound as the crowd chanted, "Sandy! Sandy!"

Bob Wells replaced Johnson on the mound for Seattle. Pat Borders batted for Lofton in the leadoff spot. Brian Giles was inserted in center field and Alomar's sixth spot in the order.

It was unclear what prompted Piniella's outburst, but he had spent several hours in one-on-one meetings with his pitchers before the game, raising his voice several times. The Mariners' bullpen blew its fourth save chance Tuesday and is 0-4 with an 8.84 ERA.

The Mariners came in 0-4 against the Indians this season and were trailing 1-0 on David Bell's inside the park homer in the second. Cleveland starter Bartolo Colon retired the first nine batters, striking out five. Colon was knocked out of the game when Joey Cora hit a liner off his pitching hand in the sixth. Colon was taken to the hospital for X-rays on his bruised right thumb.



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