

The World Series

Agbayani's hit helps Mets take one from Yankees

By Ronald Blum
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Benny Agbayani made the fans in Shea Stadium dance.

No, the Mets aren't going to fulfill his pre-Series prediction and beat the Yankees in five games.

He merely got the hit that sent the Mets to their first World Series win since 1986 and stopped the Yankees' record Series winning streak at 14.

"I didn't definitely say we were going to win in five," he said Tuesday night after his tiebreaking double led the Mets to a 4-2 win. "I just blurted it out."

With the score tied at 2 and the Mets needing to bust up Orlando Hernandez's perfect postseason record, up to the plate stepped Agbayani in the eighth inning with a runner on first.

The chubby 28-year-old Hawaiian, whose 13th-inning homer beat San Francisco in Game 2 of the first round, was supposed to be on the bench. Manager Bobby Valentine was supposed to start a left-hander against El Duque.

"We're here because of him," Valentine said. "He's been one of many key players our team."

On the top of his locker in the Mets clubhouse in a sign, a con-

stant reminder to the Mets of what it takes, what he tries to provide: "Faith, Passions, Consistency will give us VICTORY!!"

He took a ball, then drove El Duque's second pitch, his 133rd of the night, into the left-center field gap. Todd Zeile, not the speediest of runners, scored from first.

Valentine never wavered in his support, not even after Agbayani's Mets-in-5 prediction made front pages and was tacked up in the Yankees' dugout last Friday.

"He always has faith in me," Agbayani would say later. "He put me in today, and everybody told me I wasn't playing today before he

even told me."

Seattle loaded its lineup with left-handers against Hernandez. Some said the Mets should have put Darryl Hamilton in left and put Agbayani on the bench.

"I was a little bit baffled by people who followed our team all year thinking that maybe he shouldn't play today," Valentine said. "I never considered him not playing. I never considered pinch hitting for him, and I'm glad about that."

With the first-round series against San Francisco tied 1-1, with the Mets and Giants battling into extra innings to gain control of the series, Agbayani homered off

Aaron Fultz for a 3-2 New York win.

While bigger names grab the headlines, Agbayani manages to get his hits, day in and day out.

He has hit in all 12 postseason games now, no hit bigger than the one that ended El Duque's 8-0 mark of postseason perfection.

Back in Hawaii, Agbayani's a star. A TV station there sent a camera crew all the way to New York to cover his World Series exploits.

And when the crew goes home, so does he.

"I don't want to go back home yet," he said. "I don't want to pack my bags yet."

Former ace Franco gets biggest win of his career at age 40

By Josh Dubow
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — John Franco had probably never gotten so much joy out of pitching the eighth inning.

In a career filled with saves, Franco had never come up with a bigger win in 17 years.

Franco escaped an eighth-inning jam — retiring his nemesis Glennan Hill to get out of it — and helped the Mets get back into the Subway Series with a 4-2 victory in Game 3 Tuesday night that cut the Yankees lead to 2-1.

"It doesn't matter who gets the

win or who gets the save. We needed this game," said Franco, 40, the second oldest pitcher to win a World Series game. "We knew we couldn't go down 3-0. I was just in the right place at the right time."

Franco, whose 420 saves are the second most in major league history, is no longer the pitcher manager Bobby Valentine chooses to close games. The eighth has become his domain, and this might have been his most important inning.

He relieved a wild Dennis Cook with no outs in a 2-2 tie with Tino Martinez on first. Franco came out

throwing strikes.

He got in front of Jorge Posada 0-2, before Posada hit a hard grounder to third baseman Robin Ventura, who started a double play.

"Johnny's been pitching great all year," Ventura said. "He won't get a double play bigger than that one."

After Paul O'Neill singled, Yankees manager Joe Torre turned to Hill in the matchup he wanted.

Hill, a powerful right-handed hitter, had been 6-for-12 with three homers — including two game-winning shots — in his career

against the left-handed Franco.

Hill hit a harmless fly ball to right field to end the inning.

"He's gotten me over the years on some big hits," Franco said.


The Mets scored two runs in the eighth off Yankees October ace Orlando Hernandez to win the game and get back into the series.

It was only fitting that Franco got the Mets' first World Series win in 14 years. A Brooklyn kid who grew up adoring the Miracle Mets in the 1969 World Series, was making his first trip to the Series.

"Johnny's got to be like a kid in a candy store right now," teammate Todd Zeile said. "He's waited all his life to get here and now he is shutting guys down in front of his home family. I can't imagine the pride he must feel."

But this win was for his father, a Dodgers fan who died of a heart attack before he ever got a chance to see his son pitch in New York.

Franco wears an orange Department of Sanitation shirt under his jersey every game to honor his father, who spent his life working there.



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