

Yankees' Dent finally finds a father

By BILL BRUBAKER
Cox News Service

FORT LAUDERDALE — Bucky Dent thought about 1977 and smiled. "It was a pretty good year," the New York Yankees' shortstop said. "It was the year I was traded (from the Chicago White Sox) to the Yankees . . . the year I played in my first World Series . . . the year I finally met my father."

He calls his childhood "a funny situation." Funny, as in strange. Funny, as in confusing.

Bucky Dent was born Russell Earl Stanford, 26 years ago, in Savannah, Ga.

He was abandoned by his parents as an infant and sent to Miami to live with an aunt and uncle.

He took his uncle's name, rarely saw his mother, whose grandparents

were Cherokee Indians, and never met his father — until last year.

"My mother had never wanted me to meet my father," Dent said yesterday, in the Yankees' Fort Lauderdale Stadium clubhouse. "I'd been wanting to find my father for years, but I knew I just couldn't go up to the man and say, 'Hey, I'm your son and I've been looking for you for 20 years.' You've got to do it the right way because he might not know he has a son."

Dent began searching for his father last year, before reporting for spring training with the White Sox in Sarasota.

"I called my mother, who still lives in Georgia, and I said, 'Where can I find my father?' " Dent said. "They'd been divorced for a long, long time and my mother didn't want me to find him, but she finally told me his real name."

"I went to Savannah and started searching. I went to the City Hall, then to a lawyer's office and I got his address. I knocked on his door but nobody answered. The next-door neighbor drove up and I said, 'Does Russell Stanford live here?' She said, 'Yeah, but he's at work.' She told me where he works, I went there, walked in — wow! — what an experience. There he was."

"I said, 'Mr. Stanford?' And he said, 'Yeah?' I said, 'My name is Bucky Dent.' He said, 'Yeah, Russell.' He knew all about me, but I didn't know anything about him."

Bucky learned his father wasn't a sports fan, but that he had followed his career with the White Sox with interest.

"I told my father, 'What have you been up to? I've been looking for you for 10 years,' " Dent said. "He said, 'I've been here at the same address for the last 15 years, but your

mother would never tell you.' He said he never tried to contact me because he thought I'd be a little standoffish."

"He's a country fellow," Dent said. "He's 51 or 52 now and he looks a lot like me."

Bucky invited his father to a game.

"He drove to Texas to watch us play the Rangers because he has some relatives out there," Dent said. "That was the first major league game my father ever saw. Then I brought him up to New York to watch the first two games of the (World Series).

"It was tough meeting him at first, but it turned out well. We keep in touch."

Last November, Russell Stanford threw a party in Savannah for his new-found son.

"I'd never known anybody on my father's side," Bucky said. "When I met him, I found out he had 11 brothers and sisters. So now I have 11 more aunts and uncles. I met 'em all. There were about 75 people at the reunion. I found out that they'd all been following me, too. They were excited that I'd decided to search for my father and that I finally found him."

"I was excited, too."

The Yankees, who will be in West Palm Beach for a 1:30 game Tuesday against the Atlanta Braves, beat Baltimore 9-4 Sunday.

The Braves were also winning 5-3 over the Los Angeles Dodgers at Vero Beach. Atlanta goes to Miami today to play the Baltimore Orioles. Adrian Devine will pitch for the Braves in an A squad game. The Braves B team comes here to face the Yankees.

Strong legs, quick feet give Saez pelota edge

By LARRY BUSH
Times Sports Editor

It's his legs which make the difference, Saez says. Legs and speed which separate this 25-year-old Basque from the 44 other jai-alai players on the roster at the West Palm Beach fronton.

"He has lots of energy," adds player manager Pedro Elordi, "with good power and control, and a lot of natural ability. Also, he is very calm under pressure."

Others agree, offering such critiques as "never makes mental errors . . . maybe a little better coordinated than the others . . . has the killer instinct . . ."

Playing in his sixth season here, Saez is about to prove beyond a doubt what observers have been saying all along — that he is the best player at the West Palm Beach fronton.

He'll be going after the third leg of jai-alai's Triple Crown this week in the Golden Cesta doubles tournament after claiming the International Singles Championship and setting a season's wins record Saturday night.

He's teamed with Atano, with whom he has a 35 percent in-the-money mark in 75 games this season, in eight rounds during as many performances from all eight post positions, climaxed by the finals Saturday night.

Saez and Aretio won the doubles title here last year but the latter has been sidelined recently with a pulled muscle in his right forearm. Aretio set the world speed record here last month, throwing a pelota 180 miles an hour.

Saez won the singles title Saturday night in a 12-point partido with Goros following the regular program after they had tied at 17 points apiece in the week-long tournament.

And paired with Lasarta and Anso-la, Saez won the ninth and 10th games in the evening program to break the all-time wins record at the local fronton, 120 victories by Javier in 1969.

Saez now has 121 wins, 52 places and 79 shows in 646 games. This means he has won almost 19 percent of the time, or nearly once in every five appearances, and has an in-the-money average of 39 percent.

"Good legs," he said when asked his advantage over the other players, "and I am fast." His chances in the doubles? "Feel good." Saez is one of the few local players who speaks some English.

Plans were made to stage the partido after the 12th game Saturday between the two top players and it was only coincidence that they tied. Saez won the first nine points, Goros the next six, then Saez emerged 12-7.

Though third heading into the final round, Goros won the 12th game, twice beating Saez on the court. The later was third behind Tomas II.

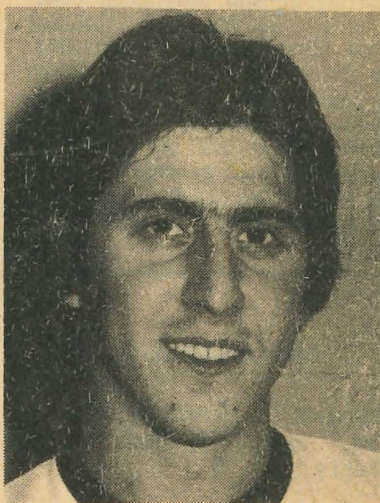
Following Saez and Goros in the final point standings were Egur, 15; Tomas II, 11; Egurbide, 9; Altuna, 2; Lopetegui, 1; and Laca, 0.

Saez earned an extra \$250, Goros \$100.

"Goros is a very practical player," said Elordi. "He is not spectacular, but he doesn't miss many. He is always in control."

"I was surprised I got so far ahead of him" in the partido, Saez said.

The lineup for the opening round of the doubles this afternoon, to be



SAEZ

played in the 11th game of each program:

1, Altuna-Laca. 2, Julio-Egur. 3, Saez Atano. 4, Goros-Mendia. 5, Oguiza-Tomas II. 6, Egurbide-Ansollo. 7, Lopetegui-Zola. 8, Solozabal-Alfonso.

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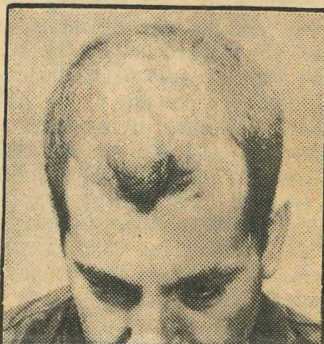
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