

# Ah! Wonderful life in Florida

## Area sportscaster loves his job, but . . .

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"I've heard people call players like Dennis Polnich 'cemenheads.' But what amazes me is that guys like him get the most cheers. For the most part, Detroit fans are knowledgeable and want a winner."

Ratings, however, represent the biggest challenge.

"When you get up this high, it all goes on how you sound," said Bell. "It's a very competitive field and it's not very secure."

"In some ways I feel like a professional athlete; I'm afraid to buy a house because as soon as I do, I could be moving, or out of a job. You can't plan very far ahead. Eventually, I'd like to get into TV sports, but right now I'm just taking it one day at a time."

"That's the nature of the beast." John Bell Sr. still hasn't said "I told you so."

Observations while vacationing in Florida:

It's as real treat to watch a spring training game. There's a relaxed atmosphere, and, if you're lucky, you may find yourself chatting with one of the ballplayers.

In Lakeland, where the Detroit Tigers are based, I bumped into Detroit coach Gates Brown. The "Gater," of course, was a star pinch hitter during his storied career in the Motor City.

What was one of his biggest personal thrills? He recalled a doubleheader against Boston during the 1968 championship season when he supplied both game-winning RBIs. And winning the World Series was a great achievement, he said.

I also watched the Tigers play an exhibition game against the Montreal Expos at West Palm Beach.

It was interesting as the public address announcer spoke in both French and English, and most park signs were bilingual. There seemed to be more Tiger than Expo fans in attendance — at least they were louder.

JACK MORRIS looked like an all-star as he held *des Expos de Montreal* hitless through seven innings. The Tigers had a second-string line up that included Darrell Brown in center field, Glenn Gulliver at third base, Rick Leach at first and Bill Fahey catching. They won easily, 4-1.

Incidentally, the Expos have a unique camp of "entertainment" (training center), located right off of Interstate-95. They share the stadium with another National League team — the Atlanta Braves. When Montreal plays at West Palm, the Braves are on the road, and vice-versa.

Speaking of spring training camps, the New York Yankees have a beautiful facility further south in Fort Lauderdale.

With a star-gutted lineup that includes the likes of Reggie Jackson, Dave Winfield, Graig Nettles and Tommy John, the Yanks are a tremendous attraction.

As a matter of fact, the Yankees were "adopted" as Southern Florida's home team in a poll conducted by The Miami Herald newspaper. New York received more votes than the Baltimore Orioles, whose home base is downtown Miami. The Tigers



Marty Budner

finished 15th in the poll with a mere 0.99 percent of the vote.

IN A NIGHT game against the Texas Rangers, the Yankees were 2-1 winners behind the fine pitching of rookie Gene Nelson and fireballing reliever Rich "Goose" Gossage.

Former Detroit Tiger Aurelio Rodriguez, a forgotten man among the more popular pillars, played two innings at second base. With talented third baseman like Nettles and Eric Soderholm, you may find Rodriguez popping up around second base at times during the regular season in relief of Willie Randolph.

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