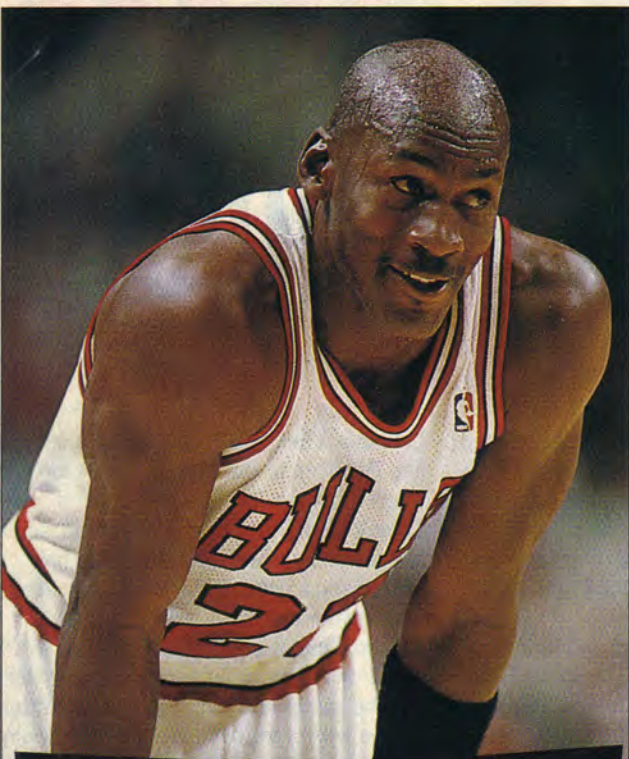


there isn't film available, I rely on the scouting report from our advance scout. I hate being surprised. I want to know what a guy is all about, what he throws. I also want to know about his makeup, what makes him tick, what may throw him off his game. But then, none of that may matter if you get the wrong umpiring crew.

IS: What do you mean?

BB: Well, there are certain umpires who just don't like you or your team or your



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"I wish I was loved like Michael, but there's nothing I can do about it now. It's over."

manager, and they stick it to you. It's really sad that you have unprofessional people out there, but it happens. You don't have to be like Barry Bonds, but when you put that uniform on you cannot hold a grudge or a personal vendetta against him. It's unprofessional.

IS: Is there an umpire who has a vendetta against you?

BB: Paul Runge. For some reason he hates me, which is fine with me—he doesn't have to like me—but you still have to be professional, and he isn't. There was one game against San Diego this year when he was calling pitches strikes that were a foot outside. It was unbelievable. I can't believe

Runge can look himself in the mirror and honestly believe he did a professional job. I know he's going to read this and he's going to hate me more, and he's going to carry this personal vendetta against me for the rest of my career.

IS: What happened between you and Runge?

BB: We've never gotten along from the first day I was in the majors. Here's what happened: There were some balls that were

sent over to our locker room to sign for the umps. I said, "Forget it, I'm not signing." Later, when I was walking out to left field, Runge said, "How come you're such a jerk?" I said, "Excuse me? I don't even know you, I've never even had a conversation with you, and you're calling me a jerk?" Then it dawned on me: *I didn't sign.* Ever since then, he's hated me. But he hasn't hurt me as much as he's hurt the Giants and the fans. He's embarrassed himself by calling pitches strikes that are two feet out of the strike zone. It's laughable. Even the catcher has said, "Hey, what's up with you two?"

IS: Has Runge ever cost your team a victory because of the way he's called a game?

BB: I don't know, because even if I was

given a fair opportunity to hit, who knows what I would have done? So I won't go that far and say he's cost us a game. But the thing I detest more than anything is being unprofessional. When you put on that umpire uniform, you have an obligation to major league baseball to be fair, to not let your personal feelings get in the way of your professional judgment, and he has. What he's done is force me into a position to swing at everything, and that's hurt me and hurt my team. If he doesn't like me, fine. I'll take my uniform off, he can take off his, and let's get to knuckles. Just tell me where you want to meet, and we can deal with it.

IS: Have you asked Runge to meet you outside the park to try to straighten out your differences?

BB: No, but I'm saying it now: Be a man. Let's meet anywhere and deal with this.

IS: Have you considered giving him a signed ball to end this so-called vendetta?

BB: I've done it. That's what makes this thing so preposterous. I'm the first one to admit I made a mistake. For example, the day I reached 300-300 [homers-stolen bases], I got thrown out of the game by Mark Hirschbeck because I argued a call. I immediately went to look at the tape, and I immediately realized I was wrong. I said, "Barry, you're a dick." After the game, I went to the umpires' room and told Hirschbeck that he was right and had every right to throw me out. The point I'm making is that I was professional about it. I admitted I was wrong.

IS: You've made a conscious effort lately to show your more appealing side. Why?

BB: I'm older, I'm more mature, I'm finally happy with myself and my life and with what I've done. I used to play real angry. I was angry at everybody and everything. I was angry with my godfather [Willie Mays], my father, my cousin [Reggie Jackson], the media, baseball, the world.

IS: Why?

BB: Well, I always wanted to be like Michael Jordan, Babe Ruth, Willie Mays, Joe Montana, Magic Johnson. When they came into pro sports, they got to be themselves. They weren't compared to anyone. When I came up it was, "Bobby, oops, Barry Bonds." It was, "Barry, are you ever gonna be as good as your godfather, Willie Mays? Are you ever gonna be as good as your father, Bobby? Are you ever gonna be as good as your cousin, Mr. October?" Well, I rebelled against that. I was working hard to be me, to be Barry, but no one noticed. I was fighting my own teammates, I was fighting opposing players. I didn't like them. I didn't like anybody. I didn't want to be around anybody—not my teammates, and especially not the media. I was just so angry because I didn't feel like I got a fair opportunity to be me.

IS: You're similar to Jordan in that you're a great athlete, you're articulate and good-looking, and you have charisma. Yet you're not viewed with the awe Michael is. Does that bother you?

BB: Of course it does. But there's nothing I can do about it now. It's over. I wish I was loved like Michael, like Magic, like Joe Montana, but it ain't ever gonna be that way. Even though I've done some great