

Team Player

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YOU HEAR THE WORDS “team player” all the time, just not in my time. You never heard it on our Yankees teams back when. Never heard of a go-to guy, either. Or someone throwing someone under the bus. Maybe we talked different in the 1950s and ’60s, I don’t know.

This was before e-mails, cell phones, and this blogging thing. This was before people started comparing sports and business all the time. I don’t remember coaches and bosses being control freaks, or managers being micromanagers. When we played there was a bullpen, not a bullpen by committee. To me “at the end of the day” simply meant going to bed. We took risks without having to think outside the box. Now if someone doesn’t get with the program or doesn’t get on the same page, there’s words for that person, too: “Not a team player.” I take that to mean a person who doesn’t play in the team spirit and is a potential pain in the neck.

Today's sayings are different. People always think I make up my own sayings, but they just come out. I don't know I say them. If you asked me to describe our old Yankees teams, the ones I played on from the late 1940s to the early '60s, what would I say? I'd say we were pretty good. We won an awful lot. In today's business talk we'd be called a high-performance work organization.

All I know is we were all teammates, team-first guys, because the team good came before all. I think it was a behavioral thing, what you learn as a kid. Those skills about getting along on the playground translated into the bigger playing field. Sure, our Yankees teams coordinated well with each other. We all accepted our roles and responsibilities. I always say we were like family. Did we have disagreements and times of trouble? What family doesn't? But we always pulled for each other, trusted each other, counted on each other. That's what all families and teams should do, but don't always.

Before I go on, I have to level. This is no self-help book. I'm no expert on mind games. Dizzy Trout, who used to pitch for the Detroit Tigers, used to tell people, "We pitch to Yogi with psychology because Yogi doesn't know what psychology is." That's true. To me it was hard to think and hit at the same time. Baseball can be a thinking game—90 percent of it is half mental, I said once—but it's still not exactly mental science.

Also, this is no how-to or business book. Baseball is huge business, that's undeniable. Players make small fortunes and teams have luxury taxes. Now there's a moneyball philosophy that values players based on certain statistics that I don't ever suspect about knowing. So I'm no business wizard, either.

What I know pretty good, being in and around sports my whole life, is teamwork. That's being a player on a team who makes a difference, a good difference. You don't need the most great players, just the most team-first, me-last players. Bill Bradley, the former basketball star and senator, said, "The great player is one who makes the worst player on the team good."

If you ask me, the true best players are those who influence their teammates positively. Joe DiMaggio and Mickey Mantle did it with us in our day. They set examples. They gutted through tough times, never made excuses. Everybody trusted and respected them because, to them, being a good teammate was more important than being a star. The Yankees' well-being came before theirs.

Every team has players who may be standouts. I just don't like when standouts try to stand out. In today's culture, it seems like attention-getters become celebrities. In sports you see more hey-look-at-me stuff during a game—players celebrating themselves. Some of these guys who make a tackle on a kickoff go into hysterics, thumping their chests all the way across the field. Why? They did their job. They made a tackle. That's what they're supposed to do.

I know I'm from a different time, and things aren't the same today. Now players are more like entertainers. Still, I wonder if they realize how self-centered and glory-minded they appear. Let me just say I'm not against excitement or exuberance or celebrating a great moment. Don't think we never got real exuberant. People ask if I had planned jumping in Don Larsen's arms during the World Series. All I planned on was giving my best in an important game. Planning



Me, Phil Rizzuto, and Whitey Ford paying tribute to Joe DiMaggio after his death in 1999. He was the best I ever played with.

on catching a perfect game wasn't planned. Sports are emotional. Still, I don't like players who stand and admire their home runs like they finished painting a masterpiece. Or put on a burlesque act after scoring a touchdown. It becomes more about self and showing off than teamwork and working together.

Mostly it doesn't build relationships or loyalty. And what every team and every business needs is loyalty. For me, loyalty to teammates trumped everything. Sure, sports is business, always has been, and there's less loyalty and it's a bigger business than ever. Sometimes I felt management could've been more loyal, at least more generous, during contract time. Actually I had seventeen one-year contracts, probably the most in Yankees history. It was my choice. The front office wanted to give me a two-year or three-year contract, but I felt it was an extra incentive to have the best year I could. I didn't want to get stuck. Of course, I couldn't achieve what I wanted to without the trust and help of my teammates. And vice versa. We just had a loyalty to each other. I know loyalty is more fragile in business. It's fragile in professional sports. People are more transient than ever. But being a trusted coworker or a good teammate should never go out of style.

That's the great thing about watching certain star players in different sports. They get what they give. Guys like Steve Nash and Tim Duncan in basketball, Mariano Rivera and David Ortiz in baseball, and Curtis Martin and Jerome Bettis recently in football; all feel a duty to their teammates. They do what their team needs them to do. They don't embarrass anybody. Teammates love being on their side; they forge a we're-in-it-together

atmosphere. When the pressure's on, they raise their game, and that can raise their teammates' play, too.

I used to play a lot of soccer as a kid and still watch it. It's near impossible to rush through the opposing team and be a one-man difference. Just look at David Beckham, and millions do. But I don't look at all the razzmatazz and personal life. The guy's a famous soccer player not because of his looks or goal-scoring, but because of his passing and crossing. A showboater he's not. He makes his teammates better and that matters most to him—"being a team player," he says.

Great players like Beckham will always get heaps of publicity, but what makes them truly great players is how they work within their team. If a teammate needs help, they reach out. Maybe it's a pat on the back or a helpful pointer, or always saying "we" and "us" instead of "me" and "I." Everything to them is team-oriented.

Tom Brady's a lot like that. Being a quarterback who looks like a movie star, he's always the main attraction, but he plays without ego. Bill Belichick, his coach with the Patriots, is a big baseball fan and visited the Yankees at spring training one day. He told me Brady is the first guy at practice and the last to leave. His effect on his teammates is for the good because he's all about the team good. Even in those commercials with his offensive linemen, he's the star simply being a teammate.

LaDainian Tomlinson of the Chargers is another team-first star you don't see enough. Sure he's a heck of an athlete, but he has a humbleness that builds team camaraderie, which you also don't see often. As well as

being a record-breaker, he's an attitude-setter with his effort and how much he cares. Right after Tomlinson broke the single-season touchdown record in 2006, he led the group celebration in the end zone. Then he personally thanked every teammate, including the coaches. With Tomlinson, there's never any look-at-me stuff—just respect and appreciation for his teammates.

When your star acts like a regular guy, the regular guys feel as important as the star.

On our Yankees teams, we had regular guys and stars. We didn't have jealousies or finger-pointers. If we had them, I didn't know them. Not everybody was buddy-buddy—you don't need perfect camaraderie to succeed. But we did have team chemistry, even if that word wasn't invented back then. On the Yankees we were all different personalities—some noisy, some not—but we brought out the best in each other. That's a big reason good teams are good teams, and like I said, we must've been pretty good because I played on ten of them that won championships. I also played in fourteen World Series in seventeen seasons, and that's not bad, either.

Here's what I learned in all that time: never prejudice someone, never make excuses and hide from responsibility, and never try not to help a teammate. Like if I saw something that wasn't working, especially with one of our pitchers, I'd try to help fix it in a positive manner. Maybe give a little encouragement, although one of our pitchers, Vic Raschi, wanted no part of my encouraging. Actually Raschi would cuss at me if I came out to talk. So my approach was to get him madder because he pitched better when he was maddest. I'd

take a few steps out to the mound and say, “Come on, Onionhead, how many years you’ve been pitching and you still can’t throw a strike? You ought to be ashamed of yourself.” Then Raschi would yell at me, “Get back behind your cage where you belong, you sawed-off gorilla.” That was real sweet. Then just like that, his fastball would zoom in harder, his control sharper. I guess the lesson is to know what makes your teammates tick.

You often hear people say, “I’m a team player,” but their actions say otherwise. Moping or brooding usually sends a bad message, a self-absorbed message. Mopers and brooders on any team can be a negative drag. Everyone can get in a cranky mood. Every ballplayer goes in an occasional slump. Everyone feels rotten once in a while. But bringing a bad case of a bad attitude to work does no good to nobody. That’s what Joe DiMaggio used to lay on me. In my second season, I was having trouble mastering being a catcher, so I was being used in right field. It might’ve affected my mood, because I got bothered at myself for making an out to end an inning and kind of clomped out to my position. DiMaggio, who was always the first guy out to the outfield—kind of like Derek Jeter does in the infield—just looked over at me. The next inning, he came up behind me and said, “Get moving, Yogi, start running.” So I started picking it up, with him running alongside me.

“Always run out to your position, Yogi,” he said. “It doesn’t look good otherwise. Can’t get down on yourself. Can’t let the other team think they got you down.”

Coming from the best player I ever played with, it left an impression. Later I saw DiMaggio go through frustrating stretches, including 1951, his last season, when he really struggled. Yet Joe never sulked. Never made excuses, always looked on the upside. If I'd had a few bad games, I learned not to go around feeling bad. What's sorrier than someone being sorry for himself? When I got home after a loss, my wife, Carmen, would remind me that she was in no mood for my mood, especially since she'd had a tough day herself with the kids. Leave it at the ballpark, she'd say.

If you have a problem, it should be your problem. Don't bring others into it. Once I had a real bad stretch, going 0-for-32, but never admitted I was in a slump—I just said I wasn't hitting.

If you feel bad, going into a shell won't help. DiMaggio was hitting .184 before he began his record fifty-six-game hitting streak. Willie Mays began his career 0-for-21. Jeter even tied me a couple of years ago by going 0-for-32. The good thing about Jeter was he never let it affect him. He was still the first guy to pull for his teammates, first guy on the dugout step. Some guys don't think about anyone else but themselves, but Jeter's head always stayed in the game. When he had that slump, I went over to his locker before a game and told him that Luis Aparicio, who's in the Hall of Fame, once went 0-for-44. I also mentioned that I snapped out of my skid with a home run. He smiled and said, "Thanks, Yog." That night, Jeter snapped out of it with a home run, too.

It seems people compare baseball to life all the time, especially in facing disappointment. Disappointment is

just part of life. It comes in every degree. Getting fired from a job is real disappointing. This I know, because I got fired three times as a manager. Being told by Branch Rickey that I'd never become a major-league ballplayer, that wasn't exactly cause for celebration, either. Sure I was disappointed, but disappointments have a bright side. They can make you more determined, tougher. And force you to look at your mistakes or weaknesses.

Facing disappointment is facing life. And it's okay to show emotions. Everyone gets angry and frustrated. Who hasn't flung something in disgust? But being on a team, it's important to keep control of yourself; don't do something you might regret. And you don't have to hide excitement if you've got something to be excited about. Like I said, jumping in Larsen's arms was the emotion of the moment, especially since a perfect game in the World Series had never happened before and hasn't happened since.

Being on a team or in the workplace, think how your emotions affect the people around you. I've been around enough moody, sulking people. Brooding and tantrums aren't going to make anybody around you do or feel any better.

Honestly, I always felt Paul O'Neill reminded me a lot of Mickey Mantle when he'd throw down his helmet or have some other frustration outburst. But all of us always kind of understood the root of Mickey's emotions; he'd be disgusted at himself because he put so much darn pressure on himself. If he failed, he believed he failed his teammates. Same with O'Neill. They were alike not so much because of their outbursts,

but because of their passion. They had burning desires to be excellent.

Nobody will ever say Mickey Mantle and Paul O'Neill weren't team-first players. They were. They had a strong influence on their teammates. They worked hard because they wanted to be the best they could. Winning meant more to them than any individual accomplishment. When your top players are focused on team achievements, it can only bring a team together.

Being in New Jersey, I always follow Rutgers even when the football team used to be bad. My son Dale—a real big Rutgers rooter—wouldn't let me write this book without reminding me how they turned the program around in 2006. Not a small reason was that their star runner, Brian Leonard, willingly switched to fullback in his senior year, blocking for tailback Ray Rice for the betterment of the team. Not necessarily for his betterment, since Leonard was a Heisman candidate entering that season. But Leonard got to thinking, "I am scoring and scoring and the team keeps losing and losing. Maybe we'd have a better chance if Rice got most of the carries," and that's exactly what happened. Leonard, who passed up a lot of NFL money to stay at Rutgers for that last season, set a heck of an example of sacrifice. Seeing Rutgers play, you know his selflessness helped their success.

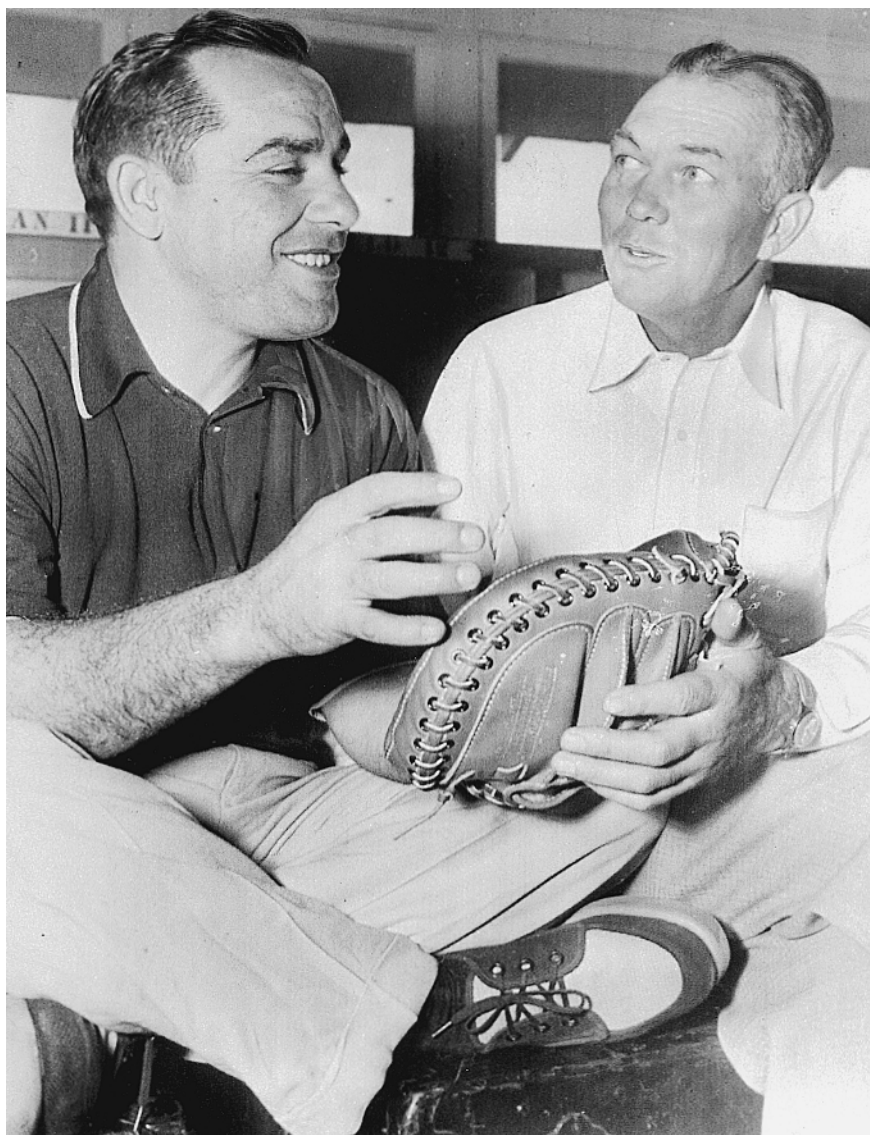
I also watch the New Jersey Devils a lot, and I'm not sure they get enough credit, either. One opposing coach called them "interchangeable parts." I call them one of the most successful teams in sports. Lou Lamoriello's system is the team system. Each player

surrenders individual honors for the good of the club—even their more skilled guys and dipsy doodlers. The Devils play great team defense. Their best players all do different things, all do the grunt work, and nobody outworks them.

In every sport, team play always works. Sure you need individual ability. But you also need a readiness to give up your own desires and glory for the sake of the team. It's more true now than ever. Talent is talent, but unless you get everyone pulling together, you're sunk. When some unhappy player wrote "Play for yourself" in the Toronto Blue Jays clubhouse a couple years ago, that was a pretty destructive message if you were his teammate.

Being on a team—any team—is a challenge. Whether you're on the Yankees or a sales team, your goal is always to make yourself the best you can. But it's also to do the little things that can make your teammates or coworkers better, make the team better. You have to emphasize the "we," not the "me," and that means getting your teammates' trust. As a catcher, it took me a bit to earn my pitchers' respect. Mostly because I was a lousy catcher. My first two years I'd throw the ball all over the place, my arm was so scattered. When I put down the sign, our pitchers used their own sign. People asked if the pitchers lost confidence in me. I didn't think so because they never had any.

I improved a lot after Bill Dickey learned me all of his experience, which is how I described it in spring training 1949. It wasn't good English, but it meant what I meant it to mean—Dickey was teaching and I was learning.



Bill Dickey (right), a great man who learned me all his experience. I owe everything to him.

Bill came out of retirement just to help me. He was a heck of a man and was once a heck of a catcher, and he explained that it was my job to quarterback the game. Take the worry out of the pitcher, use your observation to watch the hitters, know their strengths and weaknesses. Learn your pitcher, get a feel for what he does best and not so best. Pitchers think they're smart, but the catcher is there every day and is smarter about the hitters. After my first couple years, I got them to rely on my judgment. They had confidence in me, and I was confident telling them what they should know. I also knew I had to treat each pitcher different in tough spots. Some I had to nursemaid, some I'd have to whip like Raschi. With a guy like Bob Turley, you'd just have to soothe and sympathize. If he was in trouble, I'd say, "Come on, Bob, you're a good pitcher. These guys just got horseshoes in their pocket. You got good stuff. Now just mow 'em down." With someone like Whitey Ford, you never had to bawl or coax or do anything, really. If he was in a tough spot, I'd just tell him the movie I want to see starts at seven, and it's five now, so let's get this thing over with.

The main thing is to work together, not against each other. I wasn't big on lectures or pep rallies or state secrets at the mound; nobody talked into their gloves back in our day. Usually if I went out to chat, I tried to give the guy a little confidence, get him in tempo. If a guy was pressing, maybe I'd lighten him up. Dickey used to do that. In a tough situation, he'd come out and talk to pitchers about hunting and fishing. One time our relief pitcher Joe Page was struggling, so I went and asked if he had kids. He said no, and I told him he had

to have kids because it was the best thing for a family. He began to laugh, then got out of the inning with no trouble.

Now I see pitchers overanalyzing everything. I see them shake signs because they're overthinking or not trusting the catcher. I see unnecessary uncertainty, something you don't need. Look, the pitcher-catcher relationship is the most important in the game. It's almost like a marriage, or like beer and pretzels. It just has to be together, or it won't be. I always wanted my pitcher to believe that everything I did, every little detail or fact I stored in my head, was for the pitcher's own good. Heck, we had the advantage—two guys trying to get one man out. If I knew my business, I figured we were in business and my job was to get the pitcher to do his job. When Allie Reynolds threw two no-hitters in 1951, that's as good as you can do, but he wouldn't take the credit; he told everyone I was the one who did the thinking for him.

That in a nutshell was the kind of team we had. Nobody gloried in individual achievements. It was a shared achievement. Catching Don Larsen's perfect game in the 1956 World Series was my biggest thrill on a ballfield; it was something that's never been done in the history of baseball and never been done since and I was only glad to be part of it.

Reynolds was a great team guy—one of those who quietly did whatever needed to be done. He pitched in pain. One year he had these crackling elbow chips, but he still pitched and won. He took pride in pitching complete games, and completed games for other pitchers. Of course Reynolds also saved me from my worst

moment on a ballfield. All he needed was one more out for his second no-hitter, but I lunged and dropped Ted Williams's foul pop-up. I felt awful and wanted to crawl into a hole. Reynolds accidentally stepping on my hand didn't make me feel better, either. But Allie patted me on the back and said don't worry about it. Then as I returned to my position, good ol' Ted started ripping into me, calling me an SOB because now he had to bear down even more. "You had your chance, but you blew it," he said.

So I called the same pitch, same place, and he hit another twisting pop-up, almost in the same place, too. This time I squeezed it, and Reynolds bear-hugged me. It was as if he felt more glad for me than for himself.

When people asked if I liked being a catcher, I'd ask why. Why wouldn't I? It's sometimes a punishment position, but it's the best position because you're the defensive boss. You see the whole field and know where each of the seven fielders should be. You call the pitches and direct where they should go. You advise when advice is needed. You set the pace. It's like Miller Huggins, the manager on those old Yankees teams with Ruth and Gehrig, said: "A good catcher is the quarterback, the carburetor, the lead dog, the pulse taker, the traffic cop, and sometimes a lot of unprintable things, but no team gets very far without one."

A good catcher also does all the little things, which sometimes become the real important things. Me, personally, I always figured there were a bunch of different ways to help my team, regardless if I went 0-for-4 at the plate. I knew the team needed me to call a good game, keep our pitcher in a groove, block bad pitches,

throw runners out, and pop out of a squat and sprint to back up first on infield plays.

Catching's a great position and I got no regrets. But it's tough, too, don't get me wrong. Johnny Bench and any good catcher will tell you it can be pretty grueling. Johnny had it a little worse than me before he started playing another position. As a catcher, he had four broken bones in his feet, constant back pain, circulation problem in his hands, shoulder surgery, and gnarled toenails. *Sports Illustrated* figured he also did over 330,000 deep knee bends, one for each pitch. I was luckier. I was short and didn't have that far to squat. My worst injury was a foul tip by Bobby Avila of Cleveland in 1957 that cracked my double-bar mask and broke my nose.

If you want to be a catcher, you better want it. And you better work at it. You also better have an inner conceit, a confidence that you can meet any situation. If you see something wrong, do something. Me and Whitey Ford always had a perfect rapport, but one time in a World Series he threw a slider, which he never used to throw. After the batter got a hit, I walked to the mound and told him, "No more." And Whitey, who only was the winningest pitcher in Yankee history, gave me that smart-aleck smile and said, "Come on, Yog, I'm experimenting." I told him to experiment in the off-season, not the World Series, and that was that.

To me, one of the best parts about catching was being in the game. It's the most sociable position on the ballclub. I mean, you're there every pitch, you get to talk to the hitters, which I enjoyed because you find out what they're like. I didn't talk to the new ones

until I got to know them. Never did I distract a hitter by talking during the pitch—that's bad sportsmanship. But I'd make a little conversation, a little ribbing, and it was fun. That's how I became pals with Larry Doby and Ted Williams, asking about their family, where they were eating after the game, or recommending a movie I'd just seen. I'd ask Ted about fishing, which he loved as much as hitting. Yet Ted had his limits, and if I affected his concentration too much, he'd let me know. "Okay, shut up, you little dago," he'd say.

Maybe I talked a lot behind the plate, but I didn't compare to my pal Joe Garagiola. Joe made so many guys laugh, they had to step out of the batter's box. But he'll tell you at least once his gabbing blew up in his face. During a tight game in St. Louis, Joe tried to keep Stan Musial, his old Cardinals teammate, from concentrating on the pitch. "Hey, Stan," he said, "about ten of us fellows are coming over to your restaurant with our wives for dinner. Do we need to make a reservation?"

Stan didn't answer, just kept his eyes squared on the pitch, which was a strike.

"Should we take taxis, or do you have enough parking space near the restaurant?" Joe asked just before the next pitch. Stan still didn't answer and was starting to get a little annoyed.

Joe was sure now he'd really gotten Musial off stride. He called for the next pitch, which Musial smacked for a home run into the right-field bleachers at Sportsman's Park. After he rounded the bases, he turned to Garagiola as he crossed home and said, "How do you people like your steaks?"

To me, the best part of being a catcher was being able to help the team in different ways. Most important

was calling a good game, which I think I did good because I studied the hitters an awful lot. There were no computers or statistical stuff like today, so I just did old-fashioned observing. As I've said, you could observe a lot by watching, so I observed and watched and learned. Casey Stengel used to say I knew every hitter in the league except myself. That's because I never met a pitch I wouldn't swing at. My philosophy, if you want to call it that, was if I could see it, I could hit it. No question, I liked being a catcher. But I *loved* being a hitter.

Good team guys somehow find a way to do what's best for their team. Good team guys come through when it matters most. I've been on both sides, believe me. The Yankees probably suffered their toughest losses to swallow—the 1955 World Series and 2004 American League Championship Series (ALCS)—because of great efforts by great team players.

To this day, and it's been over a darn half century already, people always remind me of Jackie Robinson stealing home in game 1 of the 1955 World Series. Say "Jackie Robinson," I say "Out." He was called safe, but he was really out, and I'll never admit otherwise. But I've gotten calmer about it over the years, appreciating what Jackie did—even if he was out—for the benefit of his team. At that time, Jackie's legs were aching and brittle, he was thirty-six years old and not his old self. And at that time, we were winning 6–4 in the eighth inning, so Jackie's run didn't mean anything, or so everyone thought.

Nobody knew better than me what kind of competitor Jackie was—I played against him in the International League in 1946 when he was with Montreal and I was

at Newark. He did everything to eliminate us in the playoffs that year. As Leo Durocher used to say, Jackie Robinson could beat you in more ways than anybody he ever saw.

And in my rookie year with the Yankees in 1947, Jackie stole three bases off us—I blame me—in the World Series. When reporters asked me before the Series about him, I said I wasn't worried. I might've been trying to psych myself up because I hadn't been catching long. But Jackie helped upset my psyche. He just had a knack for unsettling a pitcher and a catcher and the entire defense with his baserunning.

Stealing home is the most daring, risky act in baseball, and something you never see anymore. Jackie did it some nineteen times.

Even though we had a two-run lead in the eighth inning in game 1 of the '55 World Series, Whitey Ford said he was kind of expecting Jackie to steal home. In fact, he dared him to do it by taking a long windup but still got me the ball in plenty of time. He got it right where it had to be, and Jackie slid right into the tag. No question about it, except Bill Summers was a short umpire and I don't think he saw it too good. Naturally I got aggressively upset and ranted at Summers for a good while. Maybe he knew he blew it, because he didn't eject me. And Frank Kellert, the Brooklyn batter during the play, also acknowledged later that Jackie was out. Actually he didn't say it until he got traded by the Dodgers a few days after the World Series, but Kellert had the best view of anyone.

Jackie's steal didn't change the game. The Dodgers still lost, 6–5. Afterward, I was still burned and thought

it wasn't a smart baseball play and said so. So did a lot of people, even accusing Jackie of showboating. But I learned later that he wasn't—he was just trying to ignite a spark. He feared his team was psychologically affected by the Yankees (we'd beaten them in our previous five World Series). And that was his way—stealing home on his own, no orders—to rouse his teammates. Remember, Jackie wasn't the same player in 1955; there was lots of talk that year that he was over the hill, that the Dodgers were going to get rid of him. But as he said before the season, "If I find out I can't do justice to myself and give the ballclub its due, I'll retire."

That season he platooned at third with Don Hoak and missed game 7 of the World Series because of an Achilles' strain. But he was still the ingredient that got the Dodgers boiling, and they finally beat us in '55 for the only time.

After Johnny Podres blanked us in game 7, I went into the visiting clubhouse where the Dodgers were celebrating like mad. I congratulated Podres and saw Pee Wee Reese and Jackie by their lockers. They were happy but looked drained. I think they knew their careers were almost over. But I knew how much beating us meant to them and congratulated them, too.

A year later, we returned the favor and beat the Dodgers in seven. Right after that '56 Series, Jackie came into our clubhouse and put his arm around me. He never played another game in baseball.

You won't hear me denying we had a fierce rivalry with the Dodgers. But we had great respect for those guys. We were friends. We barnstormed in the off-season together. They were largely a great team because Pee Wee

and Jackie were great team guys. Of course Pee Wee welcomed Jackie as he would any other ballplayer when he joined the team. He made it plain that if anyone said anything or did anything out of line, just because Jackie was black, he'd always defend Jackie's right to play for the Dodgers—if he was good enough.

As a teammate, you always want to count on your teammates. To me, that kind of sums up why the Red Sox made that comeback to win the ALCS against the Yankees in 2004. Sure, the Yankees should've won—heck, they were up 3–0 in games and three outs away from winning. The Red Sox were exhausted and reeling. Were the Yankees too confident? Maybe. But Boston's pitchers really made it happen. They sacrificed for their teammates, doing whatever was needed to get back in the Series. When the Red Sox were getting pummeled in game 3, they practically had no pitchers left. So Tim Wakefield, who was supposed to start game 4, walked up to manager Terry Francona and volunteered to help. That meant sacrificing his start and mopping up in a 19–8 blowout.

Don't think that unselfishness went unnoticed. Boston's other tired pitchers mustered enough to get them back in the Series. Francona knew it all started with Wakefield. He kept saying he was proud to manage a player with that attitude. That Red Sox team all had that attitude. Their cliques were just one clique; everybody got along and pulled together. It did remind me of our teams in the early '50s. If needed, Allie Reynolds would come in relief the day after he started. Some people told him he was crazy, warning him that he'd shorten his career. But Allie's feeling was that if he could help, he would.

In those 2004 playoffs, the Red Sox had the right karma, the Yankees didn't. Especially in game 7, when the Yankees had to use a veteran pitcher, Kevin Brown, who never really endeared himself to anyone. He'd hurt himself punching a wall earlier that season. When he got knocked out of the game early, he disappeared, like he wasn't part of the team.

I'll always be a Yankee fan, but I couldn't help but respect the Red Sox, who I never thought would ever beat us. I appreciated how Terry Francona (whose dad, Tito, I played against and always liked) never panicked and did a heck of a job.

And you had to appreciate Wakefield after his ordeal in 2003. Giving up a crushing homer like he did to Aaron Boone in the ALCS could've destroyed a lot of guys. But it didn't destroy Wakefield, and nobody respected that more than Joe Torre. After losing to the Red Sox, Joe congratulated Francona, then called Wakefield to tell him he wasn't happy he beat us but was glad for him getting to the World Series.

Over the last eight years, I've spent a lot of time in Joe's office when I go to Yankee Stadium. We've known each other a long time, and there's hardly anybody I respect more. Joe just does things the right way. He respects the game. He handles problems and pressure better than anyone I know. Calm, loyal, trusting, honest, he's everything you want in a manager. Plus he never loses perspective, and that's not easy in New York. People wanted him fired since he hadn't won a World Series since 2000. They forget the Yankees hadn't won since '78—until Joe got there.

That's when Joe brought a team-first attitude. He didn't tolerate moodiness or selfishness. Guys bought

into the fundamentals, doing the little things, supporting each other. The Yankees of the late '90s didn't necessarily have the biggest stars; they had the best working-together guys. That's what Joe emphasized, and that's why they won four world championships in five years.

One thing that really distinguishes the Yankees is how they honor the past—old past and new past. They're the only team that celebrates Old-Timers' Day. When guys like David Cone and Darryl Strawberry, who are both half my age, show up as Old-Timers, I'm wondering what that makes me.

I know Scott Brosius at first wasn't crazy about coming to the 2007 event. But I know he'll never regret or forget it, either. He got maybe the loudest ovation from the fans, louder than for Whitey or Reggie or any of the great Yankee stars. He couldn't believe it, either.

To me, that was the fans' way of saying thanks. Thanks for being a great team guy who helped the Yankees win championships. All this for a third baseman who nobody in baseball wanted after the 1997 season—there's not a big market for .203 hitters. But the Yankees saw something in Brosius, who played seven years in Oakland. They saw he was a hard worker. If he wasn't hitting, at least his defense never went in a slump. With the Yankees he was a bottom-of-the-order guy. But he never played better and became the MVP of the 1998 World Series. Why? I think the team's pride and teamwork got contagious. Brosius fit right in with a bunch of guys who did all the little things correctly.

People often asked me to compare those Yankees teams with our Yankees teams in the '50s and '60s.

The major similarity was the guys pulling together—individual goals never mattered. Paul Molitor, a Hall of Famer who was winding up his twenty-year career in 1998, said the Yankees that season may have been the best team he'd ever seen. "On top of pitching, defense, and the ability to run the bases, they have a very professional group of people," he said. "The thing that I think sets them apart is that they have great clutch hitters who are patient enough to wait for their pitch. If they walk, fine. The next guy can get it done. There's never a sense of urgency to be *the* guy." Brosius was basically a guy who was one of the guys. He was one of a bunch that included Paul O'Neill, Tino Martinez, and Luis Sojo. And the bigger or tighter the game, the tougher they were.

On our teams everyone's ego took a backseat to the team ego. That's what a lot of businesses emphasize today, people who are able to work in teams. Teamwork in sports is a lot like the working world. All teams are made up of individuals, all with different skills and experience. But unless you instill a team attitude, you'll lose the teamness in the team. It goes for all teams, whether it's a peewee hockey team or a business management team. You need unselfishness. You need to think positive and work together; our Yankees teams were positively close-knit. Not to sound like that psychology guy Dr. Phil, but if you don't have a good attitude in anything you do, nothing you do will be that good.

We were good because we motivated each other and never wanted to let anyone down. That's why nobody on our teams tolerated mental mistakes, which are the worst mistakes you can make. Errors everyone makes.

People are human. But bonehead mistakes—the mental ones—that’s another thing. They’re almost unforgivable because it means your head isn’t 100 percent in the game. They’re self-centered mistakes. In the late ’90s the Yankees had a second baseman, Chuck Knoblauch, who made a terrible lapse—he argued with an umpire while the ball was rolling away and still in play. Worse, it came in the playoffs. More worse, it cost the Yankees a game. It was such a bad mental breakdown that Knoblauch apologized to his teammates.

I don’t remember anyone apologizing to anyone on our teams. But if you messed up mentally—missed a sign, threw to the wrong base, or forgot the situation—you’d get a certain glare from Joe DiMaggio. Or a severe warning from Hank Bauer. And you didn’t dare ever do it again.

It can happen to the best, though. Not too many players I know played harder or were better team leaders than Frank Robinson. One time, though, he didn’t run all out on a long hit, thinking it was going over the fence, and got thrown out at second. After the game he left a hundred-dollar bill on his manager’s desk with a note: “I embarrassed you. I embarrassed the team. I embarrassed baseball and most of all I embarrassed myself.”

Everyone does something embarrassing at some point; people happen to be human. I had some moments I’d like to forget. Who wouldn’t? In the 1947 World Series, my rookie season, the Dodgers ran ragged on me. The writer Red Smith said they stole everything but my chest protector, and Connie Mack said he’d never seen worse catching in his life. That we won the Series

helped ease the sting, but I never forgot that brutal feeling.

One thing, it awakened my pride. Striking out at the plate was also a terrible feeling. To me that was personal failure, an embarrassment. To this day, I don't like when guys strike out, because it's an unproductive out that in no way helps the team. When people ask me what I'm individually proud of, I don't like to boast. But I tell them to look at my record in 1950. For the record, I had twelve strikeouts in 597 at-bats. People always ask when an athlete should quit. To me that's easy. When you can't help your team anymore. When I joined the Mets in 1965 as a coach, I'd been retired as a player. But they asked me to play a few games. When I struck out three times in one game against Tony Cloninger—I used to go a month without three strikeouts—that was it and I knew it.

I managed Willie Mays on the Mets in 1973, although he wasn't Willie Mays anymore. He was forty-one and couldn't do what he used to, so it was a tough situation. Baseball was his life. He wanted to go out on a high note in New York, where he'd started his career. He was good to our younger guys, real professional, but he had a couple of embarrassing moments on the field. That wasn't the Willie anyone wanted to remember, so he quit, a couple of seasons later than he should've.

Mickey Mantle once told me he wished he'd retired after the '64 season, when I managed him also. Although Mickey was semicrippled that year, he still hit thirty-five homers and drove in over a hundred runs. He liked to remind me I sucked out the last good

season from him. His good days were over. In those last gimpy years, though, he remained a good team guy, helping out Bobby Murcer, who was hyped as the “next Mantle”—both were Okies and originally shortstops who were rushed through the minors. But Mickey kept reminding Bobby to be himself, forget the comparisons. And he did by having a good career himself.

Before the '69 season, Mickey knew that he had overstayed, so he retired. When he said he never wanted to embarrass himself on the field, or hurt the team, that's what he believed. He always gave his most and more.

Knowing exactly when to quit is one thing. But if you always try as hard as you can, there's nothing to be sorry for. Saying something dumb after a loss, you may be sorry. Hurting your team by getting injured, of course you're sorry. But there's no need to apologize, unless you do something dumb-headed like bust up your hand by punching a wall.

When Hideki Matsui of the Yankees broke his wrist diving for a ball during the 2006 season, I think he felt worse for his teammates than for himself. He apologized to them. I know Joe Torre and the team were touched by his sincerity and Japanese attitude, where the team always comes above the individual. In Japan, where Matsui was a star, they always practice long and hard, maybe too much. The idea is toughening the player to prevent injuries. Well, that I don't know. As I said, my worst injury was getting my nose broken, but it was also my best injury since it really cleared my sinuses.