

Manager develops talent, spirituality

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

ROCHESTER — On Phil Roof's scorecard for personal development, the top of the lineup consists of faith in God, physical growth and mental growth.

"I think all three of them have to be nourished in order to be a complete human being — and in the order I mentioned," Roof stated.

Which is why the second-year Rochester Red Wings manager insists on weekly team prayer services and encourages his players to attend Sunday Mass whenever possible.

Granted, religion is not as titillating a baseball topic as steroid and corked-bat scandals, or Derek Jeter's nightlife exploits. Roof, on the other hand, enjoys chatting at length about his Catholic faith.

"Players don't talk about it openly and the media doesn't delve into it.

Sports

"I'm not about to hide it," he remarked on a recent Thursday afternoon at Frontier Field, the Red Wings' home ballpark.

Roof showed his Knights of Columbus membership card to a visitor while detailing his substantial off-season involvement in K of C fundraisers to support charities and Catholic education. He then accessed his K of C council's Web site from a lap-top computer in his clubhouse office, noting a photo of a billboard sign erected by his council last Christmas. The sign states, "Mary was pro-life and her son Jesus changed the world: Choose life."

"Abortion is absolutely wrong. It's the killing of a fetus," Roof stated.

Roof's religious priorities are reflected in his support of the Sunday interfaith services at Frontier Field, conducted by Pastor Mike Metzger from First Bible Baptist Church. "I give up infield practice and at least half the team is there," Roof said.

Although he doesn't force his faith on young players, Roof said he stresses the value of these services — as well as attending Mass — at the start of each season. "I try to get the boys to go to Mass on Sunday morning, and some of them do," he said, adding that if players don't have transportation to church, "I'll pick up the cab fee."

Roof, meanwhile, never misses a weekend Mass: "(Former Minnesota Twins teammate) Jim Kaat said to me a long time ago that I didn't have



Mike Crupi/Catholic Courier

Rochester Red Wings manager Phil Roof waves to fans at Frontier Field July 2 before the start of a game against the Ottawa Lynx. Roof, who is Catholic, tries to instill in his players the value of faith.

to go to Mass if I went to chapel service. I said 'No, Jim, the Mass always comes first.'"

Throughout his 40-plus years as a player and manager, Roof, 63, has always found a way to access a Catholic church — even in small minor-league towns. "I've had bus drivers at the lower levels where if they brought me to Mass, I'd buy them breakfast," he said.

Catholicism runs deeply throughout Roof's large family; he is one of 10 boys. A Knight of Columbus since 1961, Roof is a founding member of Council 10962 at St. John the Evangelist Parish in his home town of Paducah, Ky. His brother Louis was the charter Grand Knight of that council in 1992 and brother Gerald, also a council member, is a state K of C deputy. Yet another brother, Father Frank Roof, is a U.S. penitentiary chaplain who ministered to the late Timothy McVeigh, the convicted Oklahoma City bomber.

Roof is dedicated to baseball as well as his faith. A catcher who specialized on defense, Roof played for nine major-league teams between 1961 and 1977 — including 1971-76 with Minnesota, now the Red Wings'

parent club. As a manager, Roof is one of the most successful in minor-league history. On June 22 he earned his 1,000th career minor-league win, only the 13th person to attain that milestone.

The 2004 Red Wings have remained above the .500 mark and challenged for a playoff spot all year long. Roof said he's enjoying the Rochester area as well as his team's success: "I can't say enough nice things about the community."

Roof resides in Kentucky during the off-season with his wife of 40 years, Marie; they have four daughters and six grandchildren. While in Rochester he attends

St. Anne Church on Mount Hope Avenue. He also noted that he has a dinner date planned in August with Bishop Matthew H. Clark. "The fact that he has been bishop in the same area for 25 years is outstanding," Roof remarked.

Roof was on hand for Bishop Clark's 25th-anniversary Appreciation Night at Frontier in mid-May. He was due to catch the bishop's ceremonial first pitch but passed that honor to outfielder Michael Restovich, described by Roof as "a strong young Catholic." Roof commended Bishop Clark's pitching style: "For his age, he's pretty good," he said with a laugh.

But of course a bishop doesn't come to the ball park every day, so Roof takes on the day-to-day role of guiding players with their personal priorities.

"These youngsters will grow, they'll grow in their spirituality. They're so keyed on one thing right now — getting to the majors — but they'll find their spirituality as they get older," he said.

Thanks, at least in part, to a manager who believes that faith always bats leadoff in life.

**"IF YOU'VE MADE
A WILL, THERE'S ONE
MORE THING TO DO...**
make your PreNeed or Medicaid
arrangements with us."

Crawford
FUNERAL HOME INC.

585-482-0400
495 N. Winton Rd. • Rochester, NY 14610

**DANIEL O'DONNELL & MARY DUFF
PLUS
CARMEL QUINN & ROBBIE O'CONNELL**

Rochester, N.Y., Blue Cross Arena
Concerts in the Round

DANIEL O'DONNELL
7:00 PM August 25, 2004
Tickets: \$39 - \$47 - \$55

CARMEL QUINN
1:00 PM August 26, 2004
Tickets: \$29 - \$34 - \$39

For Group and Individual Tickets
Please Call

PATHWAY PRODUCTIONS
1-800-265-7900



Daniel O'Donnell
& Mary Duff
August 25, 2004



Carmel Quinn
August 26, 2004

Master Carpenter/Skilled Painter

Over 25 Years of Beautifying Homes in the NY Area

- Expert General Carpentry • Unique Outdoor Decks
- Quality Kitchen Renovations • Unused Basements Finished
- Faux Finish Painting • Wallpaper Borders Hung

J.J. CLARKE CONSTRUCTION

You've tried the rest now go with the best!

Call for estimates: 585-248-2692