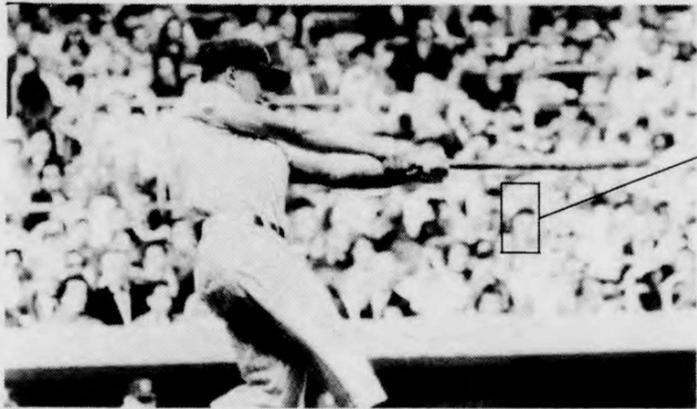


SPORTS FEATURE



Excalibur's World Series guide to Hypnosis



HYP-MO-TIZED? We're not saying that Roger Marris's 61 homeruns for the 1961 Yankees were psychically fixed but a blow-up of a photograph of the crowd shows a young Raveen paying close attention.

By RUPERT PUPKIN

At the time this article was written, The New York Mets had fallen two full games behind to the Boston Red Sox in the 1986 World Series. Even with their awesome hitting line-up, and the patented late inning comebacks that thwarted the Houston Astros in this month's National League Championship Series, things are looking grim for the Mets going back to Fenway. If this were 1919, one might be tempted to say that a comeback by the Mets at this point might smack of scandal; that the only way the Sox could lose would be if bookies, fearful of paying huge sums of money to fans who took the Red Sox, were to put some of their own money into the picture. Happily, since commissioner Peter Ueberroth took over as the President of Major League Baseball, cleaned up the drug problem, and made Mike Schmidt an overnight acting sensation, such shady dealings are no longer possible. But, as many great World Series champions know, there are other powers which can be drawn on, powers which make the old practices of payola, the breaking of pitchers' arms, and all such desperate thuggery a dinosaur of the past.

Even good teams have been guilty of putting too much faith in managers, pitching coaches, extra batting practice, team meetings and the like when the going gets tough. But when World Series Champions are on the ropes, they aren't looking for pep talks, statistics, or pseudo-scientific analysis of videotape to solve their woes. When World Series champions are down two games, they look for an impossibilist. They get on the blower, and call Raveen.

For a game as publicly scrutinized as baseball, with its obsessive fans pouring over statistics, scoring the games at home, it is hard to understand why Raveen, known among his peers as "Mr. Baseball," has gone largely unnoticed for three decades. Insiders, including legendary manager Casey Stengel, have long recognized the contribution made to the game by the science of hypnosis—and by its greatest practitioner, Raveen.

"The outfield is swell and the pitching is tremendous," said Stengel of his 1953 Yankees, "but if the Dodgers have that damn Australian [Raveen], we're sunk."

The art of hypnosis has a long history in competitive sports, but with a few minor exceptions, it is by no means an illustrious one. Before rising to stardom, the Great Houdini himself had a stint as the off-field "advisor" for the Brooklyn Dodgers. In a short time Houdini had broken down all scepticism; even those who refused to believe in the man's great suggestive powers felt that he was helping the club. The players believed in him, and the effect on their play was nothing short of amazing.

Houdini's methods were especially effective in the engineering of late-inning rallies. After planting hypnotic suggestions in the minds of the players in the clubhouse before the game, Houdini would take his place in the stands just behind the opposition's dugout. Aided by short, cryptic messages sent to the players in packages of chewing tobacco, Houdini would cash in those messages for home runs, RBIs, and key defensive plays, triggered by short bursts of light flashed onto the players' foreheads by a pocket-mirror-wielding Houdini in the stands. An exhaustive 1965 study of the whole affair showed a direct correlation between the Dodgers' success and the weather necessary for Houdini's reflected commands.

In reality, Houdini was the great-grandfather of sports hypnotists, and though many followed in his footsteps, none could match his success. After Houdini, baseball hypnotists went underground, away from the glare of the media, and by the



GIVE ME RAVEEN! Legendary New York Giants manager John McGraw found out quickly that the signs he flashed from the dugout were readily adaptable into hypnotic suggestions



RAVEEN THE TRICKSTER: Even professional hypnotists need to have some fun. Here Raveen "suggests" that President Woodrow Wilson throw an extra ball on the field at a key moment in the ninth inning of the seventh and deciding game of 1915's world series. Though the fans (including Raveen) appear to be enjoying the joke, security were not so amused. Moments later, President Wilson was escorted out of the stadium

'50s, the whole art form had been largely forgotten.

In fact, sports psychics did not appear in public again until the 1980s. The last public display ended in a humiliating failure for The Amazing Kreskin in 1982. After Kreskin had brought the 1982 Canucks, against all odds, into the Stanley Cup Finals, his powers suddenly deserted him, and the Vancouver hockey team bowed to the Islanders in four straight. Thus, the high-profile comeback of sports psychics arrived stillborn, and was buried under the weight of the "terrible towels" which rained down on a forlorn Kreskin, hastily exiting the Vancouver Arena, mumbling something about the intelligence of Harold Snepts.

The jobs of sports psychics everywhere were put in jeopardy. Many, including some who had held their clandestine positions for decades, were fired; the whole profession was discredited.

But in the midst of it all, the long silence of the '40s and '50s, the 'new metaphysics' of the '60s, through the cold, money-grubbing hypnotism of the '70s, toiled a sly, silent man—the only one truly worthy of inheriting the mantle handed down by the late Houdini. That man was and is Raveen the Impossibilist.

But who is this gleaming, bearded man, the man they call "Raveen"? Is he just another of those vacuum-selling shysters, or the real McCoy? Managers who have guided their teams to World Series championships—great baseball names like Connie Mach, John McGraw, Casey Stengel, Earl Weaver—would all say the latter. It is a fallacy that Earl Weaver keeps index cards on every player in the league; the key to his success, and the long-standing success of the Orioles, was Raveen. Nothing of this earth could explain John Lowenstein and Gary Roenicke's sudden home run prowess in the late '70s. It was Raveen

who "suggested" to the Oriole players that they hit all those three-run homers. But Earl let it go to his head—growing weary of Raveen's high price tag, his constant mocking in the clubhouse, and all those inexplicable expense account receipts from Denny's and Red Lobster Restaurants, Weaver did some hypnotism of his own; he convinced himself that the success of the Orioles had been his doing. He fired Raveen in 1982. And then, like the 10 plagues of Egypt, the wrath of Raveen descended on his unworthy head. But that's another story.

In a seller's market like the World Series, resources like Raveen's rarely go untapped. Taking his critically-acclaimed show on the road to

amazed, "super-conscious" audiences everywhere, Raveen is biding his time until the right offer comes along. Could the Mets be his next employer? Was that a dejected Davey Johnson, clinging to his last hopes of a World Series victory like a rat to a meat-truck, desperately attempting to reach Raveen at last Sunday's standing room only concert at the Music Hall in Toronto? Insiders say that they heard the swarthy, dark-eyed tyrant of the stage cackle maniacally into the phone:

"Where's your computer now, Daaaavey?"

It remains to be seen whether or not Raveen has accepted the challenge.

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