



# ANCIENT EX-MARINERS DEFY FATHER TIME

**T**hey could not be more different. One sees the world from 6 feet 10 inches above the ground. It's never been possible for him to blend into the background. That fact combined with a sometimes-combative personality means he's occasionally brought negative attention to himself. On the field he's used devastating power to overwhelm batter after batter.

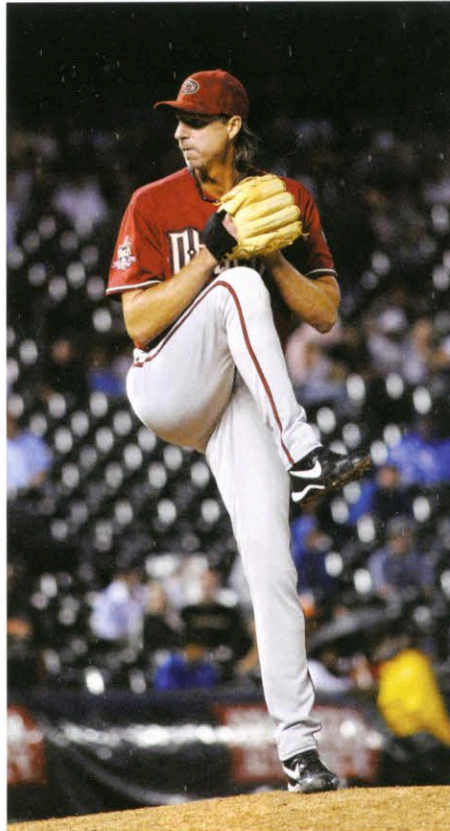
The other one is the epitome of the everyman. He looks like he could be the neighborhood pharmacist. Almost a foot shorter, he's easily blended into the background for much of his career. On the field he's used a craftsman's touch to frustrate batter after batter.

**RANDY JOHNSON** and **JAMIE MOYER** have pitched almost 8,000 combined innings. They've won 541 games. They enter 2009 as the two oldest active major league players. From 1989 to 2006 one or the other was in the Mariner rotation. For an all too brief period (mid-1996 to mid-1998) they were Seattle teammates. In 1997, their one full year together, Johnson won 20 games and Moyer won 17.

The two most successful pitchers in Mariners history are in spring training camps—again—this month. Sadly, neither is with Seattle.

It's fruitless (but fun) to speculate how things might be if both had remained with the M's. This potentially devastating fire and ice combination would have meant how many extra wins for this franchise?

Johnson won 3 games with Montreal and then racked up 130 wins in 9 years with Seattle. A back injury caused him to miss most of the 1996 season. He came back with a great year in 1997 but was miffed that he couldn't reach



agreement on a long-term deal. The M's were reluctant due in part to concerns about his back.

After leaving Seattle he's gone on to win 162 more games, 4 Cy Youngs, a World Series ring and World Series MVP award. He's second to Nolan Ryan on the all time strike-out list. With his fifth win this season he'll become the 23rd pitcher in history to win 300 games.

Moyer arrived in mid-season 1996 (due in part to Johnson's back injury, which left the M's rotation somewhat depleted). Over the next decade he won 145 games before departing.

His total post-Seattle numbers obviously aren't nearly as gaudy as >>>



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Johnson's. But he's 35 and 21 in 2-plus years in Philly. He's come within a whisker of 200 innings both full seasons he's been there and helped pitch the Phillies to a World Series title last year.

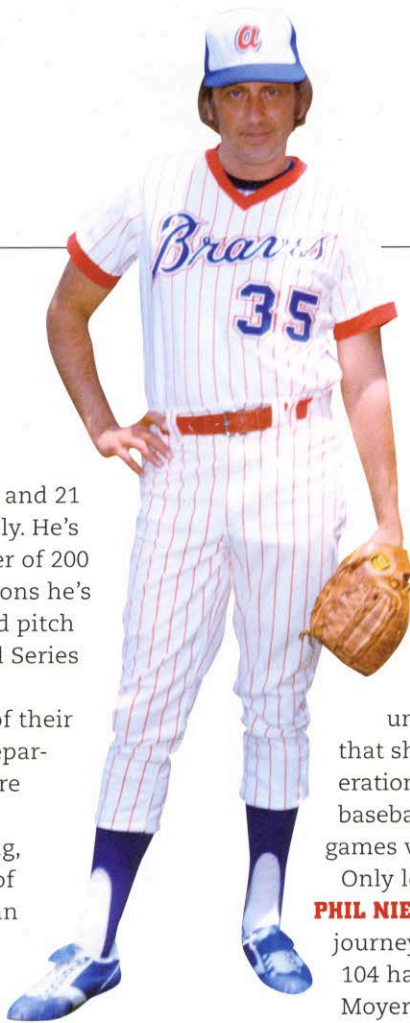
Somewhat typical of their personalities, their departures from Seattle were also very different.

Johnson's was a long, protracted affair full of drama. He left with fan allegations that he tanked his last season with the M's to force a trade ringing in his ears.

Moyer quietly turned down one trade (to Houston) in 2005 before giving his blessing to an August 2006 deal that shipped him to Philadelphia. He left after calling the M's post-game radio show and delivering an emotional farewell.

Will both pitchers end up in the Hall of Fame? Johnson would seem a lock particularly if he is able to get to the "magic number" of 300 wins. Moyer's case is a bit more complex and may take some lobbying to get the attention of the voters.

Unlike Johnson he doesn't possess a trophy case full of Cy Young Awards. His awards have been for community service above and beyond the call of duty due to relentless fundraising work on behalf of his foundation. Indeed, he's won every major baseball humanitar-



ian award: the Branch Rickey, the Roberto Clemente, the Lou Gehrig, the Hutch.

But Moyer's career has been about more than community service. He likely won't get to 300 but he enters 2009 with a unique statistical quirk that should merit HOF consideration. Moyer ranks third in baseball history on the list of games won after turning 40.

Only longtime Braves star **PHIL NIEKRO** with 121 wins and journeyman Jack Quinn with 104 have been better than Moyer and his 82 wins after hitting the big 4-0.

The stat sounds contrived but it's not. Talent combined with longevity is a rare commodity and is worthy of being in the Hall of Fame discussion. Moyer's ability to maintain effectiveness past the age when most guys have hung it up should be considered seriously by voters.

Due to the longevity of their respective careers, it's fun to trace Johnson and Moyer's big league bloodlines. In doing so an interesting coincidence emerges.

In Johnson's fourth start with Montreal in 1988 he was lifted for a pinch hitter in the 6th inning. The pinch hitter was Graig Nettles, who was making his last at bat in a career that began in 1967. Nettles once faced

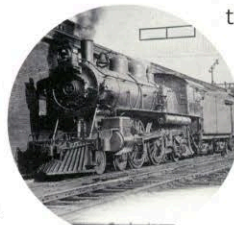
Hoyt Wilhelm in a game. Wilhelm pitched against Dutch Leonard who was a teammate of Lefty O'Doul's who once played alongside **BABE RUTH**.

Moyer made his first major start in 1986 and got the win for the Cubs over Steve Carlton of the Phillies. In his second big league start in 1965, Carlton faced Ernie Banks. Banks broke into the big leagues in 1953 and was teammates with Dutch Leonard who...well you know the rest. And you get the picture.

We're talking about a couple of modern day **IRON HORSES** here. It's fun to day dream—especially this time of year when dreaming is the primary currency of every baseball fan—about what things might have been like if Johnson and Moyer had spent their careers working together in Seattle.

Reality dictates otherwise and leaves us with the not altogether unsatisfying option of watching the two best pitchers in club history continue their ridiculous assault on the conventions of Father Time and his usually ruthless ability to deal with athletes at the end of their careers. Each time they take the mound is another blow to conventional athletic longevity wisdom as well as a wonderful reminder of youth.

Theirs' and ours. **SNW**



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS; BABE RUTH: LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

PHIL NIEKRO: BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY; COOPERSTC