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NL East Standings

Bill Madden Got It Right

If you ever spend any time in a newsroom, you'll quickly learn there's plenty that reporters and sportswriters know about their beats that doesn't make it into the paper, whether it's City Hall or Shea Stadium.

On Saturday, Daily News columnist Bill Madden shared what he knew about the Willie Randolph firing but never wrote in-depth about until then: that Mets VP Tony Bernazard has been a negative influence in the Mets clubhouse undermining Randolph's ability to manage the team effectively from the start.

It is the kind of story that only a veteran columnist of Madden's stature (he is a member of the Baseball Writers Association of America who votes to elect players to the Hall of Fame) can write, unfettered by the compromises that beat writers must make to stay in the good graces of their sources. In 30 years covering New York baseball, Madden had enough reliable sources to get the inside scoop without burning any bridges. He got the story right and knew exactly when to put it in ink.

It always seemed that there was more to this story than what made it into the papers. There were inklings in the past that Bernazard was undermining Randolph, but short of someone in the Mets organization coming out and saying it, or Bernazard grabbing a knife and literally stabbing Randolph in the back as he walked to the mound to make a pitching change, there was little any beat writer could do but allude to what was common knowledge to those in the know but wouldn't speak on the record.

And if you who think there's no such think as "off the record," as the reporter from The Record insists, guess again. Anyone who's ever covered a beat knows the consequences of betraying what's revealed in confidence or not printing what's told in the form of a leak: You get cut-off.

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What Madden knew about Bernazard as a columnist was not publishable without what's called a news "peg" – some newsworthy event to hang the valid but otherwise unprintable information on. Randolph's midnight firing provided the perfect opportunity.

Madden clearly drew on his background sources (people in the know whose statements could be printed as fact but without attribution) and painted a picture of the events leading to the Shakespearean demise of Willie Randolph, with Bernazard playing the part of Iago. Had Madden done so before Randolph's firing, it could have been interpreted as an unfair attack on Bernazard's character and made him look sympathetic. But once the chain of events unraveled last Monday, Madden had the news peg he needed to do what a lot of columnists love to do: mete out justice.

We are fortunate as Mets fans to have some of the finest sports columnists in the country writing about our local teams, and Bill Madden is certainly among that group.

Posted by Paul Curcio on June 23, 2008 10:14 PM | [Permalink](#)

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