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## Macho Row

William C. Kashatus

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# MACHO ROW

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# **MACHO ROW**

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**THE 1993 PHILLIES AND BASEBALL'S UNWRITTEN CODE**

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**WILLIAM C. KASHATUS**

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*For Chris Baumann, a Phillies fan for better and (mostly) worse*



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## INTRODUCTION

On Saturday evening, October 23, 1993, the Philadelphia Phillies were fighting for their baseball lives. Down three games to two in the World Series against the defending champion Toronto Blue Jays, the Phillies were clinging to a precarious 6–5 lead in Game Six.

Until now the Phillies had ridden the wave of a Cinderella season. The roguish band of veterans, rookies, and castoffs defied the experts by going from worst to first in the National League's (NL) Eastern Division. Somehow they defeated the Atlanta Braves, the most feared team in baseball, in the National League Championship Series (NLCS).<sup>1</sup> Now the Fightin' Phils had taken the heavily favored Blue Jays to a sixth game in a world championship Series that they, if nobody else, believed was theirs to win.

It was the bottom of the ninth inning at Toronto's SkyDome, and Mitch Williams, the Phils' erratic closer, took the mound, determined to preserve the one-run lead and force a seventh and deciding game. Williams, nicknamed "Wild Thing" because his unpredictable pitching unnerved his teammates, recorded a club record forty-three saves that year. But after sixty-five regular-season appearances and six more in the postseason, his arm was hanging by a thread. Worse, Williams was coming off a devastating blown save (sv) in Game Four, a dreadful performance that elicited death threats from some deranged Phillies fans.<sup>2</sup> Still, Phillies manager

Jim Fregosi refused to deviate from his routine, sending his closer out to pitch the ninth. Thus, the Phillies were pinning their hopes for a seventh game on Williams's tired left arm.

True to form, Wild Thing walked Toronto's lead-off hitter, Rickey Henderson, on four straight balls. Pitching coach Johnny Podres called time and ambled out to the mound. He suggested that Williams pitch from the slide step because the quicker delivery would prevent Henderson from stealing second base. First baseman John Kruk, a slovenly throwback from the hills of West Virginia, also trotted to the mound to offer his teammate some encouragement. "There's no fuckin' way we're losing this game!" snarled the burly Kruk. "Get them motherfuckers out!"<sup>3</sup>

Inspired by the support, Williams retired Devon White on a deep fly ball to left, but then served up a base hit to Jays designated hitter (DH) Paul Molitor. With runners on first and second and one out, Toronto's dangerous cleanup hitter, Joe Carter, stepped to the plate. Tension filled the Phillies' dugout.

Wild Thing, who once pitched for the American League's (AL) Texas Rangers, had faced Carter on four previous occasions, and the power hitter lost every single one of those battles, going 0 for 4. It looked as if Williams would prevail once again when he worked the count to 2-2. Carter chased a slider for the second strike and was guessing that Williams would throw another one. Behind the plate, catcher Darren "Dutch" Daulton was thinking the same thing and called for the slider. But Wild Thing shook him off. He wanted to throw a fastball up and away in the zone, figuring he could get Carter to chase it for a strike out or, at worst, force him to hit a lazy fly ball to the outfield. The catcher reluctantly agreed.

The stage was set. Wild Thing toed the rubber, looked in for the sign, and threw his fastball. He had the right idea but the wrong execution. Instead of throwing the heater up and away, he delivered the 2-2 pitch down and in. The slide step had altered his ability to locate the pitch. Carter, a natural low-ball hitter, drilled the delivery over the left-field fence to clinch the game and the World Series for Toronto.<sup>4</sup> Williams didn't bother to turn around; he knew the ball was gone the second he released it.

Lenny Dykstra, the Phils' impish center fielder, was stunned. "It was a weird feeling watching that ball go out," he told a group of reporters in the visitors' clubhouse afterward. "I can't describe it. I really thought this was meant to be our year."<sup>5</sup>

To his credit, Williams didn't run and hide from the wave upon wave of sportswriters who surrounded his locker after the game. Nor did he alibi or apologize. "Ain't nobody walking this earth that feels worse than I do," he said. "There are no excuses. I just didn't get the job done. I threw a fastball down and in. It was a bad pitch. I'll have to deal with it. But don't expect me to curl up and hide because I gave up a home run in a World Series."<sup>6</sup> He went on like that until well after midnight. Finally, pitcher Terry Mulholland walked over and grabbed him by the hand. "C'mon, Mitch, season's over," he said and led Williams into a trainer's room that was off-limits to the media.<sup>7</sup>

The Phillies' joyride had come to an inglorious end.

To be sure, no one expected the Philadelphia Phillies to go from worst to first in 1993. Contending was more than wishful thinking for the faithful. Appearing in the Fall Classic? Downright delusional. Yet the '93 Phillies made believers of their fans, the sportswriters, and the city of Philadelphia itself. The team was embraced not only because they won a pennant but because of the way they won it. They were "lovable" in a blue-collar way, much like the St. Louis Cardinals' famed "Gashouse Gang," who captured the 1934 World Series, or the more colorful Oakland A's, who fought and feuded their way to three straight world championships between 1972 and 1974. Pitchers threw inside, hitters glared at opposing hurlers, and runners crashed second base to break up double plays. The players performed with pain and reckless abandon, wore their emotions on their sleeves, and could care less about their personal appearances. In Philadelphia parlance, the '93 Phillies had "attytood," and for good reason. Most of the players were throwbacks from other organizations who had given up on them.

Only five of the twenty-five-man roster came through the Phillies' farm system: Kim Batiste, Darren Daulton, Ricky Jordan, Mickey Morandini, and Kevin Stocker. All the other players were signed

as free agents (Larry Andersen, Mariano Duncan, Jim Eisenreich, Tommy Greene, Pete Incaviglia, and Milt Thompson), acquired in trades (Wes Chamberlain, Lenny Dykstra, Danny Jackson, John Kruk, Tony Longmire, Roger Mason, Terry Mulholland, Ben Rivera, Curt Schilling, Bobby Thigpen, David West, and Mitch Williams), or drafted from other teams (Dave Hollins and Todd Pratt).<sup>8</sup> Collectively, they were also among the least expensive teams money could buy, with an average salary of \$916,383.<sup>9</sup>

Profane, arrogant, unkempt, and determined to overachieve, these Phillies had something to prove to the baseball world. No one wanted them. Except Lee Thomas, the Phillies' general manager (GM), who assembled the team, and Jim Fregosi, the individual who managed them on the playing field. "I like 'em," insisted Fregosi. "They play hard. They work hard. They police their own. That's what makes a good team."<sup>10</sup> If nothing else, those attributes make for good team chemistry, which was instrumental to the Phillies' success. But special chemistry wasn't the only reason they won.

The 1993 Phillies won because they played *smart* baseball. On the mound their pitchers knew how to set up hitters and get them out because they carefully studied the opposing lineup. Infielders and outfielders understood the responsibilities of their respective positions, the best defensive strategies in a given situation, and executed them well. At the plate Phillies' hitters were patient. If they saw that the pitcher was having difficulty locating, they'd make him throw strikes. Nor did they try to do too much in a single at bat. They knew the value of getting on base and that a walk was just as good as a hit. What made it all work was the fact that Fregosi knew his team. He never made wholesale changes to a lineup that had finished in last place the previous season. Instead, he kept the lineup intact, made effective use of platoons, and managed all of the players according to their capabilities.

The '93 Phillies also won because they played by *the Code*, baseball parlance for the unwritten rules of the game. The Code governs all aspects of baseball, from hitting, pitching, and base running to dealing with management, umpires, and the media. Designed to preserve the moral fabric of the game, the Code contains rules for

individual and team behavior in common situations, punishments for ignoring the rules, and the understanding that those rules must never be discussed outside the clubhouse. In short, the Code is about respect—respect for the team, respect for teammates, and, above all, respect for the game itself.<sup>11</sup> By the 1990s these idiosyncratic rules had become passé in Major League Baseball (MLB). Free agency had ushered in an era of multimillion-dollar athletes who placed personal success above the team. Most refused to risk injury by retaliating for another team's infringement of the Code. After all, the injury might prove to be career ending, costing them millions in income. Nothing—not even the game itself—was worth that for the high-priced athletes who placed money above anything else. The '93 Phillies were a refreshing change to that selfish attitude. They restored the significance of the Code and made it an integral part of their success. They were an “old school” *team* in every sense of the word. There were no superstars. Players seemed to check their egos at the clubhouse door and protected each other when a teammate was disrespected by an opponent, the media, or management.

Six players, in particular, reflected the club's colorful but gruff personality: Darren Daulton, Lenny Dykstra, John Kruk, Mitch Williams, Dave Hollins, and Pete Incaviglia. They lockered together at the far corner of the Phillies' fraternity-like clubhouse in a cozy but cluttered section called “the Ghetto,” or at least that's how the players referred to it. The beat writers, compelled to be politically correct, dubbed the area “Macho Row.”<sup>12</sup> Together, the six veterans gave the '93 Phillies a hard-core edge. They could be cantankerous, profane, and brutally candid, flaunting their image as outcasts and underdogs. Masters of the one-liner and no-holds-barred zingers, the veterans of Macho Row could make life miserable for a rookie until he proved himself. Few, if any, teammates dared to cross them.

At the same time, Daulton, Dykstra, Kruk, Williams, Hollins, and Incaviglia could be disarmingly funny, fiercely loyal, and remarkably insightful in their knowledge of the game. They endeared themselves to the fans, especially the clock punchers who wore their passion on their sleeves. And they embraced a blue-collar approach to the game. But the stars of Macho Row were cautious with the Phil-

adelphia beat writers and self-styled “analysts” of sports-talk radio known for their intrusiveness and arrogance. Only Darren Daulton, who’d been with the organization for more than a decade, had earned their begrudging respect. As a result, Daulton was the only player willing to protect his teammates from the media. While the savvy catcher met with the press in front of his locker, the other members of Macho Row often retreated to the trainer’s room. Afterward, Daulton would join them to talk baseball into the early-morning hours. As the season progressed they opened their inner sanctum to other teammates until nearly everyone spent some time in the trainer’s room after games. It became a ritual, a way of cultivating team loyalty among a diverse group of personalities.

“We accepted people for who they were,” explained Kruk, who loved the clubhouse so much he actually spent many nights sleeping over between games. “On most teams, you’d have the black guys in one corner or the Latin guys hanging out with each other and nobody would mix. Not with this team. We talked baseball, we busted on each other and we all went out together—blacks, Latinos and whites.”<sup>13</sup>

Darren Daulton presided over Macho Row from a secondhand lounge chair crammed inside his locker stall. Daulton, affectionately known to fans as “Dutch” and to teammates as “Bubba,” was a hard-edged catcher admired for overcoming a career-threatening knee injury to become a three-time All-Star. He was also the longest-tenured Phillie, the only homegrown regular, and the team’s uncontested leader. Daulton signed with the Phils in 1980 as a 170-pound catcher after being drafted in the twenty-fifth round out of Arkansas City High School in Kansas. Promoted to the Majors in 1983, the promising backstop suffered repeated injuries, postponing his rise to stardom for six years. Never did the setbacks alter his “take no prisoners” approach to the game, though.

Daulton was both physically and mentally tough, a “man’s man.” His chiseled physique and movie-star good looks made him the envy of male fans and an object of desire for females. When he spoke, teammates, coaches, and the manager listened. Most of the time, however, he chose to do his talking behind the plate or

up at bat. In '93 Dutch hit 24 homers and drove in 105 runs and was the National League's starting catcher in the All-Star Game. Behind the plate he got the very most out of a makeshift pitching staff and threw out 33 percent of the runners who attempted to steal on him.<sup>14</sup> For Daulton, the Code was more than the unwritten rules of the game; it was a way of life.

Lenny Dykstra, a feisty lead-off hitter and center fielder, was the team's most prominent castoff. Unwanted in New York, Dykstra was traded by the Mets to Philadelphia, where he found a home. A native of Southern California, he favored words like *dude* and *bro*, played with reckless abandon, indulged in high-stakes (and high-loss) gambling, and took pride in the fact that he never read a book because it would ruin his batting eye. Dykstra, appropriately nicknamed "Nails," endeared himself to the city's blue-collar fans with his arrogance, tobacco chewing, and scrappy play.<sup>15</sup> He was the type opposing teams and fans love to hate, a throwback to an earlier era when ballplayers played hard and partied even harder. On the road Dykstra would chide the opponent, "We're going to take your money and fuck your women."<sup>16</sup> Win or lose, he allegedly made good on the threat.

Like Daulton, Dykstra's career had been riddled with injury, though he had already begun to take measures to eliminate the problem by the time he arrived in Philadelphia in 1989. He was a gym rat who in the off-season could be found in the weight room pumping away feverishly to add muscle. He also took "vitamins" to build body mass, suggesting that they were nutritional supplements. In 1993 Dykstra reported to spring training thirty pounds over his normal 165-pound weight. It wasn't fat—it was muscle—thanks to performance-enhancing anabolic steroids.<sup>17</sup> PEDS not only improved Dykstra's recovery time from injury, but also increased his power hitting and speed on the base paths. The results were impressive, almost earning him the National League's Most Valuable Player (MVP) Award that year. In addition to batting .305, Nails led the league in runs (143), hits (194), and at bats (637).<sup>18</sup> He was the catalyst in the Phillies' batting order, the player who got the offense started.

At a time when Major League Baseball had no policy prohibiting the use of PEDs, Dykstra was free to use whatever edge the drugs provided. Even if baseball had had an established policy against steroids, Nails would have ignored it. “Cheating,” he once admitted, “is okay if that’s what it takes to win.”<sup>19</sup> And Lenny Dykstra played to win. To be sure, Dykstra’s use of PEDs was a violation of the Code because many players considered it a form of cheating even before Major League Baseball outlawed the practice. Nevertheless, there were players who were already juicing, like José Canseco and Mark McGwire of the Oakland A’s, Ken Caminiti of the San Diego Padres, and others who were highly suspect, like Pete Incaviglia, Dave Hollins, and Daulton of the Phillies.<sup>20</sup> At the same time, Dykstra’s steroid use was protected by the Code that prohibited his teammates from speaking about anything that was said or done in the clubhouse.<sup>21</sup>

First baseman John Kruk was a kindred spirit of Dykstra’s and the most slovenly looking player on the team. With his ample belly, shaggy hair, and fondness for beer, he looked more like a weekend softball player than an athlete. Kruk actually took pride in that fact, correcting a female fan who once berated him for being out of shape. “I ain’t an athlete, lady,” he replied. “I’m a ballplayer.”<sup>22</sup> Despite the denial and his portly appearance, Kruk was a remarkable athlete and a consistent .300 hitter, which made him the hero of many slovenly fans.

A third-round pick of the San Diego Padres in the June 1981 draft, Kruk earned a starting job in the Padres’ outfield in 1987 when he hit .313 with 20 home runs (HR) and 91 runs batted in (RBI). The following season was a nightmare, as his batting average plummeted to .241.<sup>23</sup> Once, owner Joan Kroc tried to shout some encouragement to him from her field box after he struck out. Without looking Kruk snapped, “Go fuck yourself!”<sup>24</sup> Thus, it was no surprise when the Padres, in June 1989, shipped the irreverent outfielder to Philadelphia, where he felt right at home.

Born on the West Virginia panhandle, Kruk flattered himself a “hillbilly” and exploited that self-deprecating image with the media. “In the minors, one of my managers said I reminded him of an

Alabama truck driver,” he once told Paul Hagen, a beat writer for the *Philadelphia Daily News*. “That followed me to the big leagues where I became a dumb hillbilly. Well, I live in the hills. But I don’t think I’m that dumb. I’m getting dumber every year, but I don’t think I’ve reached stupidity yet.”<sup>25</sup> A natural comedian, Kruk captured the national spotlight in ’93 when he appeared on *Late Night with David Letterman*. When asked later about the appearance, he said, “I drove two hours for five minutes on the show; that kind of sucked.”<sup>26</sup> It was all an act.

Kruk was arguably the smartest player on the ’93 Phils, and he used his baseball acumen to compensate for what he lacked in natural ability. He hit third in the lineup not only because he was the best hitter on the team, but because he somehow also managed to get his chubby body on base, advance runners, and drive them home. In 1993 Kruk hit .316 with 85 RBI and an on-base percentage (OBP) of .430, the highest of any regular on the team. He also made his third straight All-Star Game appearance that season, this time as the National League’s starting first baseman.<sup>27</sup> Like Daulton, Kruk considered the Code a way of life, and he would give the shirt off his back to any of his teammates, especially if it would help the Phillies win.

Mitch Williams, the team’s closer, was known for his proclivity for pitching into trouble before getting out of it. Signed by the San Diego Padres in 1982, Williams made it to the Majors in 1986 with the Texas Rangers. But Texas soon tired of his nerve-racking tendency to walk the bases loaded before striking out the side and shipped him to the Chicago Cubs.

Williams looked as if his career was over in 1991 when the hapless Phillies traded for him. If nothing else, Wild Thing was entertaining, as his unorthodox delivery sent his body flying sideways through the air, a sight made even scarier by his long, unruly hair. In fact, Kruk once observed that Williams “pitched like his hair was on fire.”<sup>28</sup> To his credit Williams never allowed his critics to get the best of him. Instead, he kept his job in proper perspective. “You need two things to be a closer: no mind and a short memory,” he explained. “I’m a genius when it comes to the ‘no mind’ stuff,” he added.<sup>29</sup>

There was no denying his success with the Phillies, though. In his three seasons in the City of Brotherly Love, Williams appeared in 207 games, including 7 in the postseason, compiling a total of 105 saves. In 1993 alone he set a new club record 43 saves, including 13 straight between July 18 and August 24. His 3.34 earned run average (ERA) in 65 appearances was good enough to propel the Phillies into the postseason that year.<sup>30</sup>

Wild Thing was also a clubhouse prankster who assaulted the star of a game with a shaving-cream pie in the face and challenged fellow reliever Larry Andersen to belching contests. He could also be extremely generous to others. During an off day, for example, Williams flew Andersen, pitcher Danny Jackson, and play-by-play announcer Harry Kalas out to Reno, Nevada, for a good time and paid for the entire trip.<sup>31</sup> On another occasion he purchased expensive ostrich boots for the entire bullpen staff to express his gratitude to them.<sup>32</sup> Nor did he forget the clubhouse staff. Wild Thing *always* left money (at least twenty dollars, but often fifty or a hundred) in the back pocket of his game pants, telling Pete Cera, who did the laundry, that if he found the bills, “they’re yours to keep.” Whenever Cera tried to return the money, telling him it was “too much,” the closer refused, insisting that “it’s only paper.”<sup>33</sup>

But Williams could be downright nasty when a save opportunity presented itself. No opponent was spared—veteran or rookie, journeyman or future Hall of Famer. Wild Thing would just as soon deck a batter with a high, hard, inside fastball than get beaten in the series of one-on-one battles that took place between hitter and closer in what was usually the final inning of play. Williams’s motto was “No Fear,” a core principle of the Code, which he embraced whenever he stepped onto the mound.

Third baseman Dave Hollins was the most intense member of Macho Row. Teammates claimed he had an alter ego named “Mikey,” who reflected his game face. In other words, *Dave* Hollins was a hustling third baseman and an enthusiastic player loved and admired by his teammates. But once he stepped into the clubhouse or onto the playing field, he became *Mikey*, a foul-mouthed, hotheaded son of a bitch who played the game with reckless abandon and brooded

about how much better he should have performed after it. “If you had twenty-five guys on the team like Hollins,” said Larry Bowa, the Phils’ third base coach, “they would have all killed each other by the third week of the season.”

An All-State quarterback at Orchard Park High School, near Buffalo, New York, Hollins began his professional career with the San Diego Padres. But in December 1989 when the team left Hollins off their roster, the Phillies swiped the switch-hitting infielder in the Rule Five draft. The move paid off big time. In 1992, his first full year in the Majors, Hollins hit .270 and was second in the National League with 104 runs and tied for fourth with 27 home runs and seventh with 93 RBI.

In '93 the six-foot-one, two-hundred-pound third baseman enjoyed another productive season. Named to the NL All-Star team, Hollins finished the regular season with a .273 batting average, 18 home runs, 30 doubles, and 104 RBI. When Hollins wasn't hitting so well, he was still determined to get on base, even if it meant taking a walk or getting plunked by a pitch. Once on base there was nobody better going from first to third or breaking up a double play. Nicknamed “Headly” for his disproportionately large skull, Hollins was arguably the most hard-nosed player on the team. He took the game so seriously that the other members of Macho Row made him the enforcer of the Code for the rest of the team.<sup>34</sup>

Finally, there was Pete Incaviglia, a burly outfielder who added to the often bawdy clubhouse with his witty one-liners and supplied some right-handed power to an overloaded left-handed lineup. At Oklahoma State Incaviglia's power hitting led the Cowboys to the College World Series for three straight seasons between 1982 and 1985. One of the greatest power hitters in National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I history, “Inky” hit a total of 100 home runs for a career slugging percentage (SLG) of .915 over his three-year collegiate baseball career. He was selected in the first round of the 1985 amateur draft by the Montreal Expos but was traded later the same year to the Texas Rangers.

Having never played a single game in the Minor Leagues, Incaviglia made his Major League debut on April 8, 1986, and went on to

hit 30 home runs, a new Rangers club record, and 88 RBI. It was a standard he was unable to match in subsequent years, as his home run total steadily dropped with Texas. Traded to the Detroit Tigers in 1991, Incaviglia became a part-time player, hitting just 11 homers and 38 RBI in ninety-seven games. He posted similar numbers the next year after he was traded to the Houston Astros. It looked like his career was over, until the Phillies signed him as a free agent after the '92 season. Inky resurrected his career in 1993, batting a career-best .274 with 24 homers and 89 RBI. His blue-collar approach to the game endeared Incaviglia to teammates and fans. Along with Hollins, Inky was dubbed an enforcer for Macho Row.<sup>35</sup>

Darren “Dutch” Daulton, Lenny “Nails” Dykstra, John “Krukker” Kruk, Mitch “Wild Thing” Williams, Dave “Mikey” Hollins, and Pete “Inky” Incaviglia—the motley sextet of Macho Row—lived by and enforced the Code. But they also made the game fun for each other, their teammates, and the fans. The 1993 Phillies were made for Philadelphia. The swaggering, trash-talking band of outcasts went from worst to first in a year when there were absolutely no expectations to succeed. Like their fans, those Phillies were diehards who lived in the same black-and-white world of heroes and bums. We embraced them because they showed their humanness—warts and all—and we admired them because they were throwbacks to the days when baseball was played for little more than the love of the game. Rooting for those wild, wacky, woefully wonderful Phillies was, for many of us, like cheering for ourselves.

*Macho Row* explores the 1993 Philadelphia Phillies and their remarkable season, which fell just short of a World Series title. The book goes beyond the existing accounts of the team by focusing on the six members of Macho Row.<sup>36</sup> It also examines the Phillies’ pennant-winning season in the context of baseball’s unwritten code of ethics and the beginnings of steroid use at the Major League level. The book does *not* pretend to be a comprehensive study of either subject. Readers interested in the Code or baseball’s steroids era can find many other books that are more suitable.<sup>37</sup> Instead, *Macho Row* offers a fresh examination of a team whose approach to the game was both historic and futuristic. Not only were the play-

ers throwbacks to an earlier era that emphasized team accountability, but they also anticipated changes on the horizon, specifically the so-called Moneyball system of player evaluation and the power explosion created by anabolic steroids.

Like the old-time players, the 1993 Phillies played hard and partied hard. That kind of lifestyle took an unforgiving toll. Cancer, alcoholism, drug abuse, bankruptcy, and jail time were among the reality checks for some of the key members of the team after their playing careers ended.

Ultimately, *Macho Row* is a story of winning and losing, success and failure, and the emotional highs and lows that accompany it. Uproariously funny and profoundly tragic, this is a very *human* story about baseball stars, their dreams, and the fragility of fame as well as of life itself.