



IN THE BEGINNING

The early days of the Mariners were, to put it kindly, a struggle. The people of Seattle, though, would not give up on their baseball team

ON APRIL 6, 1977, in Seattle, a 38-year-old Mariners righthander named Diego Segui took the mound to face the California Angels in front of 57,762 fans at the Kingdome, marking the start of the second professional baseball season—and the Mariners' first—in the city's history. (The easily forgotten Seattle Pilots, after just one season, 1969, had run off to Milwaukee to become the Brewers.) Segui wasted no time in setting the tone for the franchise for, oh, about the next 15 years. He walked Angels leadoff hitter Jerry Renny, allowed two stolen bases, then a double, and

handed his lineup a 1–0 hole before it had picked up a bat. Things did not get better. Segui surrendered five more runs in 3 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings, his defense chipped in two errors, and the brand new M's fell 7–0, the first of 98 losses that season. Did we mention things didn't get better? Indeed, any Mariners fans born that year would have to wait until the 9th grade to see a winning season (1991), and by that point it looked like the team would be relocated to Florida.

But we're getting ahead of ourselves. No, the inaugural season didn't go well nor did the next 13—overall record through '90: 937–1,275 (.424), worst in baseball But if



ENJOY THE SHOW
Entertainer Danny Kaye, an original team owner, welcomed his Mariners to the majors in spring training of '77.

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futility was an annual practice, the M's in the process became something of a small jewel in the Emerald City, fans embracing relative nobodies (righty Mike Moore, third baseman Mike Presley) but also, of course, future Hall of Fame broadcaster Dave Niehaus, there from the beginning, keeping baseball's pulse beating in Seattle. Even failure could be honored: M's shortstop Mario Mendoza was the origin, beginning in the spring of '79, of the now common phrase "the Mendoza line"—a batting average of .200. The losing, though, did not sit well with George Argyros (team owner from 1981 to '89); in '81 he ordered the club's trident logo changed, believing the downward prongs were a symbol of bad luck in Greek mythology.

While the Kingdome was sort of ugly (attendance was bottom-three in the league nine straight seasons), it was home, and for a price of admission as cheap as a hot dog, you could watch baseball from the outfield seats. Each summer the team stitched itself a little further into Seattle's fabric, the little brother the city was allowed to pick on but no one else was.

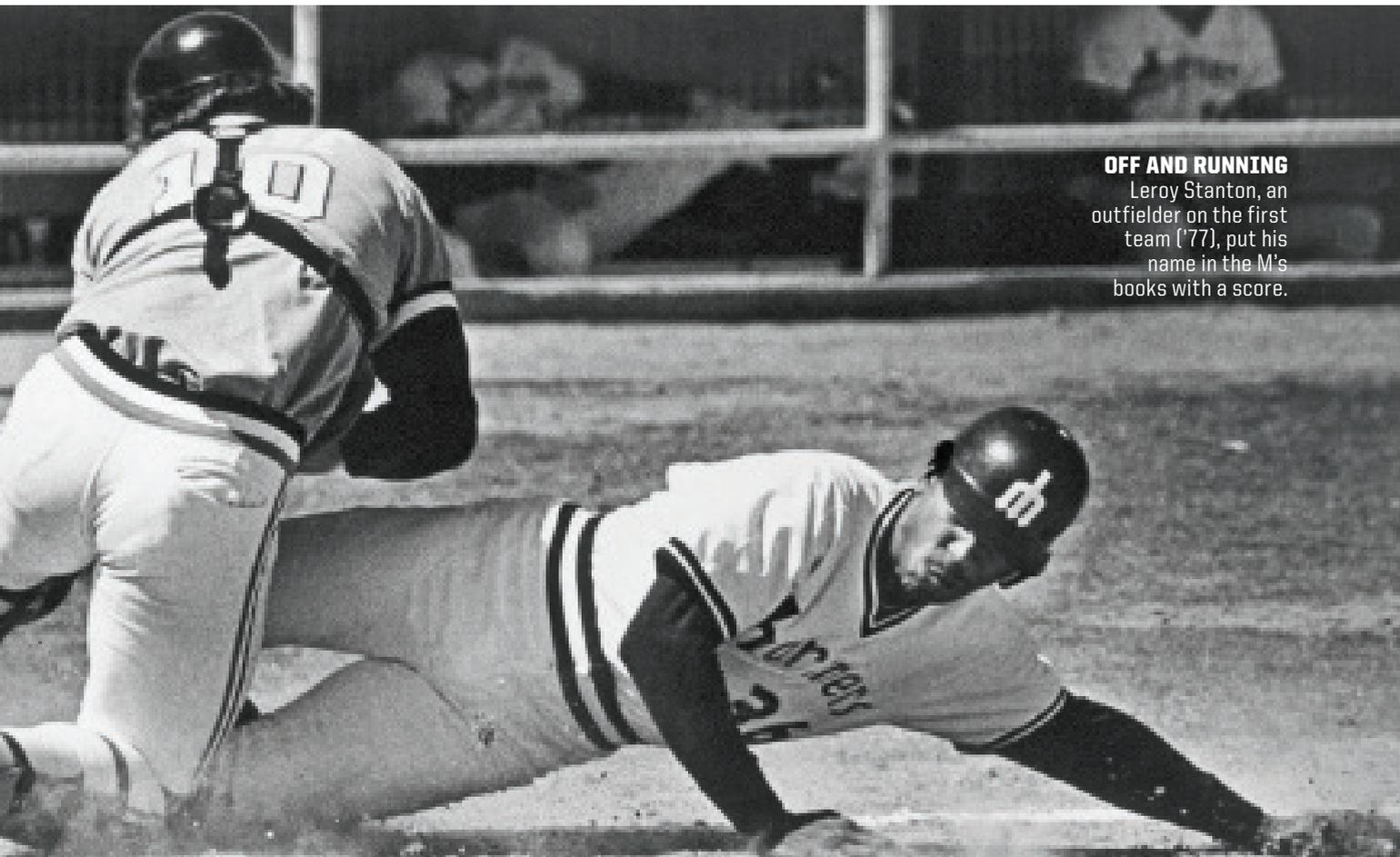
The truth is, though, being an M's fan those first dozen years wasn't easy, not when the most exciting part of watching a game at the Kingdome came probably in 1982 when the team fired off a cannon for each Seattle home run. But

this being the Mariners of that time, they were, naturally, out-homered 104–78 by opposing teams that season. After 10 years (and seven managers) the team was lovable in spots, the stadium was a good time for those who showed, but rumblings had begun that this experiment of baseball in the Northwest, for the second time, just wasn't going to work out.

You could say the franchise's trajectory changed forever in September of 1986. They finished that season 67–95, unremarkable as an afternoon rain shower in Seattle. But that record ensured that the Mariners would have the No. 1 draft pick the following summer, spent wisely on you know who: George Kenneth Griffey Jr., the best and most famous outfielder of his generation. In his first 13 seasons in Seattle Griffey became the face of baseball, and just happened to score the most famous run in Mariners' history (more on PAGETK).

By the time the real winning began in '95, the Mariners had stockpiled just enough goodwill (and draft picks—in '93 A-Rod was chosen No. 1) to convince the right people that Seattle should be their only home. The team rewarded the city, too, earning four trips to the playoffs from '95 to 2001, proving that baseball in the top-left corner of the country can, in fact, thrive.

—RYAN HATCH



OFF AND RUNNING

Leroy Stanton, an outfielder on the first team ('77), put his name in the M's books with a score.