

'96 YANKS HIT STRAT-O SPHERE

Topple '86 Mets in 6 in fantasy showdown

JOHN Wetteland was on the mound for the final out in the title-clinching Game 6, preserving Jimmy Key's win and receiving a congratulatory hug from catcher Joe Girardi.

That's what happened for the '96 Yankees against the Braves — and that's also how it turned out for the '96 Yanks in a Dream Matchup against the '86 Mets.

Reality wasn't an option, so The Post settled for the next best thing and turned to Strat-O-Matic Baseball, the Rolls Royce

**TOM
KEEGAN**



of all sports board games, in an attempt to settle the score between New York's last two baseball champs, separated by a decade and linked by Darryl Strawberry and Doc Gooden.

The people at Strat-O-Matic were kind enough to do a rush printing of the '96 Yankees' stat cards exclusively for The Post.

A week after 63 percent of those responding to a Post fan poll predicted the '86 Mets would prevail in a Battle of New York, Yankee beat writer Jim Salisbury managed the Bombers to victory, while this humble correspondent was the hard-luck loser with the



next three games, lost Game 5, and came back to win Game 6.

Just as in real life, their bullpen proved the difference.

Yanks' setup man Mariano Rivera was named MVP of the Dream Matchup. Rivera appeared in five games, tossed 8 1/3 shutout innings, allowed three hits, walked one and struck out 10 '86 Mets. Combined, Rivera and Wetteland, the closer, struck out 20 batters and walked one in 13 1/3 innings.

The highlight of the series came in Game 2, when '86 Strawberry reached on an error by '96 Strawberry, no doubt causing both hitter and fielder to dispute official scorer Red Foley's call.

Meanwhile, pitching coach Mel

same role as '96 Bombers beat '86

Stottlemire worked up a mean sweat sprinting from one dugout to the other between half-innings.

Here's a game-by-game look at the Dream Matchup played on Strat-O-Matic, a game that blends statistical probabilities based on real-life performances with the luck of rolled dice:

GAME 1: METS 5, YANKS 2 at Yankee Stadium

Ron Darling struck out nine Yankees without walking a bat

ter in seven innings and was backed by Roger McDowell and Jesse Orosco. Kevin Mitchell's two-run double off losing pitcher Andy Pettitte in the fourth was the biggest hit.

Wade Boggs represented the tying run when he came to the plate in the seventh with runners on the corners and one out. Boggs grounded Darling's final pitch back to the mound for an inning-ending double play.

GAME 2: YANKEES 5, METS 2 at Yankee Stadium

Abusing losing pitcher Dwight Gooden, Bernie Williams homered, tripled and drove in four runs. Six Yankee pitchers combined on a four-hitter, and Tino Martinez also homered off Gooden. Winning pitcher Jimmy Key got out of a bases-loaded jam in the third by getting Gary Carter to bounce into a double play.

GAME 3: YANKEES 4, METS 3 (10) at Shea Stadium

After striking out in his first three at bats, Strawberry hit the

first of his three home runs for the Mets in the series, this one off Wetteland in the bottom of the ninth to tie the score and force extra innings. Cecil Fielder singled home Jim Leyritz with the winning run in the 10th.

GAME 4: YANKEES 4, METS 2 at Shea Stadium

Brian Boehringer tossed three innings of shutout ball for the win in relief of Kenny Rogers. Wetteland struck out the side in order in the ninth to earn his second save. Darling couldn't match his Game 1 heroics, and like Gooden and Bob Ojeda had one strong start and one awful one in the series.

GAME 5: METS 6, YANKEES 2 at Shea Stadium

Homer in the third consecutive games, Strawberry saved the Mets the embarrassment of watching the Yankees celebrate at Shea when he belted a two-run home run in the sixth off Pettitte, who suffered his second loss of the series. Gooden did his part with seven strong innings. Orosco finished up by retiring the only six batters he faced.

New York Post: Charles Wenzelberg

GAME 6: YANKEES 7, METS 5 at Yankee Stadium

The Yankees scored at least one run in each of the first five innings and built a 7-1 lead when Tim Lincecum sandwiched a pair of home runs around one from Strawberry. But the Mets stormed back with four runs off Key in the sixth, three on a triple by Howard Johnson, who was pinch hitting for Rafael Santana.

Wetteland took the mound in the ninth to preserve a 7-5 lead and allowed a leadoff single to Lenny Dykstra, only Lenny's second hit in 23 at-bats.

If Wetteland was going to earn his third save he was going to have to do by defeating the very best the '86 Mets had to offer. Keith Hernandez, Carter and Strawberry were up. Filthy cap and all, Wetteland struck out the side to give the Yankees fantasy bragging rights to the city and perhaps even a trip to Bill Clinton's very own fantasy ranch, the White House.

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