

D'Backs Strike First and Second

by Adam GAUTHIER

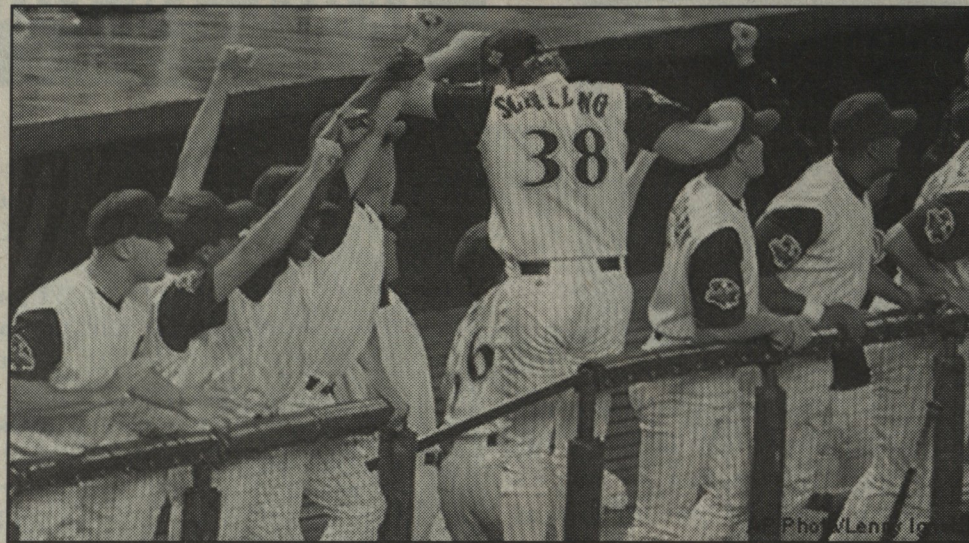
The Fall Classic got under way in Phoenix, Arizona this past weekend. The Arizona Diamondbacks played host to the New York Yankees in the first two games of the 2001 World Series.

The Yankees, the defending champs, enter the series for the fourth straight season looking to come away with their fourth championship in as many years; their twenty-seventh as an organization. The Diamondbacks, playing in only their fourth season as a sports franchise, are playing in the championship series for the first time and are the youngest expansion team to do so.

The players on the Arizona team, however, are not an inexperienced. They have a nice blend of youth and experience. Veterans such as Randy Johnson and Kurt Schilling, who have carried the pitching staff from the regular season to the playoffs, will be relied on heavily to help Arizona beat the experienced Yankees.

In Game One, the Diamondbacks sent Kurt Schilling to the mound while the Yankees countered with one of their many aces, Mike Mussina. The early innings were tight for both teams as the score was tied at one. In the third, however, the Diamondbacks got the lead for good with a two-run homer by left-fielder Luis Gonzalez which sailed deep into the right-field stands. The D'backs continued to pour it on in the fourth as they hit Mussina all over the park. Yankee errors by David Justice and Scott Brosius didn't help matters much as Arizona built up a 6-1 lead. The two errors are the most in a World Series game for the Yankees since 1981. Mussina was replaced in the fifth.

Kurt Schilling, on the other hand, was very impressive for the D'backs, scattering three hits over seven innings and striking out seven. The defense behind Schilling was outstanding. In the fourth inning, second-baseman Craig Counsell made a miraculous diving stab to his right just



behind the base and was able to throw out the runner Enrique Wilson by half a step at first-base. Arizona defeated New York with a final score of 9-1, which was the Yankees worst loss in a World Series since Game 1 in 1996 versus the Braves. The Yankees had won 16 out of their last 18 World Series games with losses coming in Game two in 1996 and Game three last year versus the New York Mets.

On Sunday the Yankees sent left-hander Andy Pettitte up against reigning Cy Young award winner and twenty game-winner Randy Johnson who is 2-0 with a 2.70 ERA against the Yankees in career playoff games. Pettitte's had won five straight World Series games going in to the game, with a career playoff record of 7-2.

Both pitchers got off to a quick start each collecting two strikeouts in the first inning. The D'backs got on the board in the bottom half of the second with an double by Danny Bautista to score Reggie Sanders from first after he had singled. Johnson continued to roll striking-out the side in the third. In the fifth, Johnson gave up his first hit of the game to Jorge Posada with nobody out. It was spoiled, however as Shane Spencer, Alfonso Soriano and Scott Brosius all failed to make contact, and Johnson's lead was kept intact.

In the bottom half of the seventh Pettitte hit Luis Gonzalez on the wrist to put a base runner on. Reggie

Sanders then hit into a fielders-choice as Scott Brosius could not turn the double play. This would come back to haunt the Yankees. Danny Bautista then hit the a which ricocheted off Pettitte. After conversing with the trainer Pettitte said he was fine. With runners on first and second Matt Williams hit a towering fly-ball into the left-field stands to give the D'backs a 4-0 lead. The struggling Williams then took a curtain call from the ecstatic hometown crowd. Pettitte was replaced in the eighth by Mike

Stanton.

After giving up back to back hits to begin the eighth, Johnson settled down by striking out Brosius and getting pinch-hitter Luis Sojo to ground into a double play. In the bottom of the inning, Mike Stanton, who was making his seventeenth career World Series relief appearance (the most ever by a reliever) easily retired the D'backs.

In the ninth, Johnson came back out to finish what he started. He easily retired the side as the Diamondbacks went on to beat the Yankees for the second consecutive night and earned a 2-0 series lead. Johnson's shutout was the first in the World Series since Kurt Schilling in Game five of the 1993 World Series versus Toronto.

The series now goes east to the Bronx for the next three games as the Yankees try to get back at Arizona. The Yankees will start former Cy Young award winner Roger Clemens while the D'backs will counter with Brian Anderson who is making his first appearance in a World Series.

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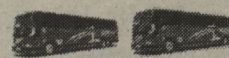
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