

Twins get Blyleven

Indians obtain Wardle, 2 minor-leaguers

By Howard Sinker
Staff Writer

The quest for Bert Blyleven finally ended Thursday with the Twins, whose season has so far been marred by failure, claiming the veteran pitcher on waivers from Cleveland.

In a related transaction, the Indians claimed rookie reliever Curt Wardle on waivers and received the contracts of two minor-leaguers — outfielder Jim Weaver and shortstop Jay Bell. Weaver was playing at Class AAA Toledo; Bell, the Twins' No. 1 selection in the 1984 amateur draft, was at Class A Visalia.

■ The Twins players were happy when they heard the news. Page 5D.

Blyleven, who pitched for the Twins from 1970 to 1976, will start Saturday night for the Twins against California, the team that was his first choice if a trade occurred. The Twins are sixth in the American League West and 10 games behind the Angels.

"I'm very excited about Minnesota," Blyleven said by telephone from Cleveland. "I was hoping something could be worked out with California during the winter but, if I had a

second choice, it would have been Minnesota. I think everybody would love to play at home and southern California is my home. You can't always have that. I had six years in Minnesota and really enjoyed the area . . .

"I'd been under the impression that I would be here (in Cleveland) for the rest of the year and they'd work something out during the winter. I knew a trade was inevitable but I didn't think it would happen this soon."

Twins president Howard Fox had attempted to get Blyleven before the June 15 trading deadline, but Cleve-

land had turned down a package that reportedly included second baseman Tim Teufel, catcher Dave Engle and minor-league pitcher Alan Sontag.

"Howard's been working real hard on this," Twins manager Ray Miller said. "These things are hard to get done. Blyleven offers two qualities. He's a great pitcher and he'll certainly help with the young pitchers, just his telling people how to pitch from all of his experience. I know he must be happy to be joining a club that can put some runs on the board . . . We'd been talking about him since the first day I got here."

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Blyleven

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Six teams made waiver claims on Blyleven, but according to baseball rules, the Twins had a crack at making a deal by having the worst record of those teams. If Fox had failed, Blyleven would have stayed with the Indians because the Minnesota claim would have blocked him from going elsewhere.

"I'm tickled to death," Fox said. "I had a feeling that maybe we could work something out to everybody's advantage. I thought we were close last time even though some people seemed to think we weren't. I think it's probably a good deal for both sides because Cleveland wanted to go with younger players and we gave them some mighty good younger players."

Wardle wasn't so enthusiastic. "There's not much reaction," he said. "I'm going to Cleveland. It's something that happens in baseball."

Blyleven, 34, is in the fifth season of a contract that runs through 1986 and is worth \$3.9 million at \$650,000 per season, including deferred payments totaling \$1.5 million. He was 9-11 with a 3.26 ERA in 23 starts for Cleveland, including a stretch of 10 consecutive complete games that ended in his last start, and leads the American League in complete games (15) and strikeouts (129). His four shutouts are tied with Jack Morris of Detroit for the league's best and 179½ innings pitched ranks him second to Dennis (Oil Can) Boyd of Boston.

Career totals include a 204-178 record, 3.01 ERA and 2,798 strikeouts in 3,802½ innings. His 50 shutouts are fifth best among active pitchers and tied for 17th on the all-time list. Winning 14 games by 1-0 scores is an active best and tied for third in major-league history.

In 1984, Blyleven was 19-7 with a 2.87 ERA and was third behind Willie Hernandez of Detroit and Dan Quisenberry of Kansas City in Cy Young Award voting even though the Indians finished 12 games under .500. He spent about 2½ weeks on the disabled list after breaking a bone in his right foot in May while chasing fly balls during batting practice. A stiff right shoulder limited him to seven starts after the 1983 All-Star Game and his 1982 season was ended after four games because surgery was needed to repair muscle tears in his right elbow.

"I understand that he's absolutely healthy now and doesn't have any problems whatsoever," Fox said.

"I feel I could pitch another five or six years," Blyleven said. "This is my 16th year and I don't think I've thrown as well in any other year as I am right now. I feel like I'm a better pitcher because of all the innings I've pitched. I've always been watching and learning from other pitchers and I think that I've continued to learn every time I've gone out there. You have to do that whether you have one year in there or 20 years."

Twins management is interested in signing Blyleven to another contract. "We certainly traded for him with the idea of keeping him," Fox said; yesterday, Blyleven spoke about how "it would be nice to finish" his pitching career in Minnesota.

If a new contract between the Major League Players Association and management retains its existing language, Blyleven will have the right to demand a trade after this season because his multi-year contract was assumed by a new team. If the Indians had kept Blyleven, he would have earned veto power over trades this fall with more than 10 years in the majors, including five with his current team.

Bert Blyleven's career statistics

Year/team	W-L	ERA	G	IP	H	BB	SO
1970/Minnesota	10-9	3.18	27	164	143	47	135
1971/Minnesota	16-15	2.82	38	278	267	59	224
1972/Minnesota	17-17	2.73	39	287	247	69	228
1973/Minnesota	20-17	2.52	40	325	296	67	258
1974/Minnesota	17-17	2.66	37	281	244	77	249
1975/Minnesota	15-10	3.00	35	276	219	84	233
1976/Minn./Texas	13-16	2.87	36	298	283	81	219
1977/Texas	14-12	2.72	30	235	181	69	182
1978/Pittsburgh	14-10	3.02	34	244	217	66	182
1979/Pittsburgh	12-5	3.61	37	237	238	92	172
1980/Pittsburgh	8-13	3.82	34	217	219	59	168
1981/Cleveland	11-7	2.89	20	159	145	40	107
1982/Cleveland	2-2	4.87	4	20	16	11	19
1983/Cleveland	7-10	3.91	24	156	160	44	123
1984/Cleveland	19-7	2.87	33	245	204	74	170
1985/Cleveland	9-11	3.26	23	179	163	49	129
Totals	204-178	3.01	491	3602	3242	988	2798

Miller said he wasn't sure whether Blyleven would replace someone in the four-man starting rotation or become one of five starters. In recent seasons, Blyleven has been used in a five-man rotation and indicated that he would like such a pattern to continue.

"I can pitch once every fifth day and be consistent for them," Blyleven said. "Hopefully I can blend in with their other pitchers."

The right-hander started his career with Minnesota in 1970 and pitched for the Twins until 1976 when he was traded to Texas after a series of salary disputes with former owner Calvin Griffith, whose current title — advisory board chairman — is primarily ceremonial. Blyleven was sent to Pittsburgh in 1978 and from there to Cleveland three years later.

"Calvin is no longer there and Howard Fox and I always got along well," Blyleven said. "Times change. Calvin did what he thought best and I did what I thought was right. (The first trade) was probably one of the hardest times in my career because it was the first time my name had been thrown around in a possible trade and I was with guys who'd spent their whole careers in Minnesota. But baseball was changing at the time and I realized it would be tough to continue playing in one place for my whole career."

Cleveland general manager Joe Klein said Cleveland intends to use Wardle in short relief. In 35 games with the Twins, Wardle was 1-3 with one save and a 5.51 ERA over 49 innings. The lefty had 47 strikeouts but allowed nine home runs.

"I'm not so sure we had him in the right role," Miller said. "He might be better suited to start or be a long (reliever) because he threw better when I rested him. I was using him in more of a veteran left-hander's role, setting up (Ron) Davis, and that might have been a bit much to ask of someone who hasn't pitched much." Weaver will report to Class AAA Maine of the International League. He was batting .236 with Toledo after starting the season with the Detroit Tigers; Bell is going to Class AA Waterbury of the Eastern League after batting .281 and making 52 errors for Visalia.

The Twins, meanwhile, are getting a player with more major-league experience than any three of their other pitchers combined. "You don't lose a player of Bert Blyleven's caliber without it hurting," Klein said. "We knew that every five days we had Bert going out there throwing a complete game and we knew we'd be in it."

Said pitcher Mike Smithson "He'll be like a father here. If we don't sit and listen to what he has to say, we'll all be stupid."