

Seven Local Boys Former Islanders

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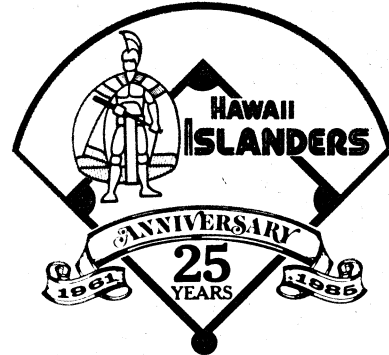
First in a Series

Fred Kuhaulua's elbow is hurting again, stalling his 1985 comeback plans and leaving the 32-year-old left-hander with doubts that he'll ever pitch again.

Just two weeks ago, Kuhaulua threw for Hawaii Islanders General Manager Pete Bock during a special workout requested by the Pittsburgh Pirates. His stuff was good enough to encourage speculation that the lefty might be pitching again this summer for the Islanders.

However, plans for a comeback have fallen apart.

"When I got home that day, the elbow just swelled up," Kuhaulua said. "It hurt for days."



The way I look at it, I might as well hang it up because it really doesn't look promising."

KUHAULUA HASN'T pitched in two years and has been drawing worker's compensation from the San Diego Padres because of the elbow injury. The Pirates, however, own the rights to signing the pitcher and will do so only if he's 100 percent healthy.

Kuhaulua's left elbow has been operated on five times but four of them have been arthroscopic surgeries. "I can lift things but I can't throw over a long period," he said.

When the Islanders return to Hawaii April 19 for their 25th Pacific Coast League season, pitching coach Chuck Hartenstein will check out Kuhaulua's progress and report back to the Pirates.

If he is able to pitch for Hawaii this year, it will be Kuhaulua's fifth season as an Islander.

He appeared in 101 games for Hawaii from 1979-82, winning 33 of 63 decisions.

No other "local boy" has worn an Islander uniform longer.

Kuhaulua, a Waianae High grad, has 11 years of pro experience which includes brief stints with the California Angels and the Padres.

Besides Kuhaulua, six other players born and raised in Hawaii have performed for the Islanders. They are catcher Kala Kaaihue, first baseman-outfielder John Matias, outfielders Aran Ahu and Andy Miyamoto, and pitchers Bill Nishita (1962) and Chris Mancao (1961).

Kala Kaaihue (1975-77)

In Kaaihue's three years with the Islanders, the team won its only two PCL championships and a division crown.

The Punahou grad was signed as an emergency replacement in June of '75. As a player, he appeared in only 27 games. He accepted his role as a "non-prospect" but never gave up hope. It was his attitude that earned him the respect of his peers.

"He had a wonderful attitude and I love players with good attitudes," said Manager Roy Hartsfield, who guided the Islanders to their PCL titles in '75 and '76. "He did everything I asked of him. Kala filled a need for us and was never excess baggage."

Kaaihue played four seasons in the lower minors with farm clubs of the Pirates and St. Louis Cardinals before joining the Islanders. "It was like the big leagues to me," Kaaihue said of his three years with the Islanders.

He didn't make big money but there are no regrets and lots of fond memories.

Two of them bring a quick smile.

"When I hit my only home run (1977), I sprinted around the bases. . . I should've taken my time," Kaaihue said, "because that was the highlight of my career."

"I also remember (organist) Rolly Wray," he added. "She'd play something to introduce the players and my song was 'I Am



Seven "local boys" have performed for the Hawaii Islanders in their 24-year history and they got together recently at Honolulu Stadium Park. The players are (left to right) Aran Ahu, Kala Kaaihue, Fred Kuhaulua, Chris Mancao, Andy Miyamoto and Bill Nishita. Kneeling is John Matias.—Star-Bulletin Photo by Dennis Oda.

Hawaii'. It always made me feel special when she played it."

At 35, Kaaihue is content to let his 11-year-old son do the playing. He resides on the Windward side and works for the city as a bus driver.

Aran Ahu (1974)

A strong wind was blowing in from left field as Ahu came to bat in a spring training game at the Padres' Yuma, Ariz., complex in 1975. The ball he hit ended up at the base of the left-field fence, some 375-400 feet from home plate.

Speed and power. The potential was there but ended up being lost in the talent pool that is professional baseball. "They just weren't looking at me," said Ahu, who was playing in the Padres' farm system as an Islander-owned player.

In 1974, Ahu appeared in six games for Hawaii and batted .250. He spent four years in the lower minors before calling it quits.

Ahu gave up a football career at the University of Hawaii to sign with the Islanders. Ahu, an outstanding running back for

Hilo High, has never regretted the decision. "I would do it again if I had the chance," the former outfielder said.

Ahu is employed by Mid-Pacific Air and coaches junior varsity baseball at Punahou as an assistant to ex-UH infielder Eric Tokunaga.

Playing baseball is still his first love but there's not much competition locally. "I miss the Hawaii League," Ahu said. "I play softball but it's not like hardball."

John Matias (1972-73, 1980)

Old Honolulu Stadium was tailor-made for the left-handed swinging Matias, who once hit four consecutive homers in a state tournament game at that park. A former all-star at Farrington, who played in the same high school league as ex-major leaguer Mike Lum, Matias was a journeyman Triple-A player by the time he became an Islander in 1972.

"It was great playing at home and at that park," recalls Matias, who batted .268 with 20 homers and 81 RBI in his first season with Hawaii.

Things turned sour the following season.

"The Islanders owned a lot of players and we were making between \$15,000 and \$25,000, which was good money for Triple-A," Matias said. "I had a good year in '72 but they wouldn't give me a raise."

Matias was batting .265 through 57 games in 1973 when the Islanders dealt him to Tacoma.

He went on to play in Mexico, where he had some big-number years.

In 1980, the Islanders brought Matias out of retirement to replace injured DH Craig Kusick. At age 36, he batted .186 in 12 games.

Today, baseball remains very much a part of his life. Matias is the head coach at Pearl City High and still plays occasionally in senior leagues here. His son, John Jr., plays for the University of Hawaii and a nephew, Joe DeSa, is with the Chicago White Sox.

Matias is employed by Weitzel Construction and resides in Pearl City.

Andy Miyamoto (1965)

Standing near the St. Louis Alumni clubhouse on Izenberg Street, Miyamoto puffs on a cigar and quietly checks out the park that has replaced Honolulu Stadium. He feels uneasy about being in the city and admits he hasn't been in the Moiliili area for a long time.

Miyamoto lives in Waipahu and works a late-night shift at the Hickam AFB motor pool. Baseball provided him with an income for 12 years but he doesn't appear to miss the game.

Following an outstanding 11-year career in Japan, Miyamoto signed to play with the Islanders in 1965. "They cut my salary so bad in Japan after my 11th year that I decided to come back home," the Maui-born Miyamoto said.

Although used primarily as an outfielder, Miyamoto could also catch and play first base. In 35 games, he batted .161 for the Islanders with two homers and six RBI.

In Japan, he played nine seasons for the Tokyo Giants and

Turn to Page C-5, Col. 2

Islanders' Local Connection

Continued from C-1

two years with the Kokutetsu swallows. One year, he tied for the league lead in homers and RBI before going on to earn MVP honors in the Japanese World Series.

Bill Nishita (1962)

At 54, Nishita still has the body of an athlete. In his prime, there wasn't a better pitcher in Hawaii.

After leading St. Louis High to championships in 1947 and '48, the right-hander went on to pitch in the Brooklyn Dodgers' organization. In 1956, he was assigned to the Dodgers' Montreal farm club where he played with Dick Williams, now manager of the San Diego Padres, John Roseboro and Chico Fernandez.

Nishita played for two other Dodger farm clubs that year. At St. Paul, his teammates included Stan Williams and Bob Lillis, who is presently managing the Houston Astros. At Dallas-Fort Worth, he played with Larry Sherry, Jim Gentile and two other major league managers—Jim Frey (Chicago Cubs) and Sparky Anderson (Detroit Tigers).

"It's amazing how much talent there was down the line in those days," says Nishita, who went on to play in Japan.

The Islanders signed Nishita for their second PCL season. "My name (as a pitcher) was still pretty good and they paid pretty good," Nishita said. "But I can still remember times when they couldn't make the payroll."

Nishita, an accomplished ukulele player who likes to party, had an equally outgoing roommate in Carlos Bernier during his brief Islander stint.

In seven games, Nishita had an 0-1 record and 10.69 ERA. "I could still throw pretty good but I really never got over a pulled hamstring," he said.

Today, dealing with pulled hamstrings is Nishita's business. He owns Kenko Massage Clinic.

Chris Mancao (1961)

Mancao, a popular figure around local baseball circles for over five decades, turned 70 in February but looks and acts half his age. He was pitching before Matias, Kaaihue, Ahu and Kuhaulua were even born and was still around playing toss with them at Lanakila Field when they played together in the Puerto Rican Winter League.

He was the first "local boy" signed by the Islanders. "I was 45 then and over the hill," he says smiling. "Still it was a great experience for me."

In seven games, Mancao posted a 0-0 record and 7.20 ERA for Hawaii.

Mancao, who learned how to throw "junk" from the late Ted Shaw, was born in Ewa and "grew up playing in the Hawaii League."

He toured with the semi-pro

Harlem Globetrotters' baseball team in 1948. "Not many people knew there was a Globetrotters baseball team," he said. "Everyone was black except for me and Dick Kitamura."

Today, Mancao works part-time job at City Mill on Nimitz Highway and is a charter member of the Makua Aliis softball league.

Tomorrow: The Architect.

Islanders Player Directory



Bielecki



Tellmann



Wiggins



Frobel

Twilight Zone: 1981-1984

1984

CLUB PRESIDENT—David Elmore (principal stockholder). **GENERAL MANAGER**—Pete Bock. **FIELD MANAGER**—Tommy Sandt. **COACH**—Chuck Hartenstein. **PARENT CLUB**—Pittsburgh Pirates.

REGULARS—First Base: John Malkin (50 games), Benny Distefano (36), Mitchell Page (23), Hedi Vargas (17), Stan Cilburn (16). **Second Base**: Nelson Norman (49), Ron Wotus (44), Bobby Miscik (27). **Third Base**: Miscik (102), Denio Gonzalez (37). **Shortstop**: Kelly Paris (117). **Outfielders**: Trench Davis (141), Joe Orsulak (98), Gonzalez (74), Mike Howard (43), Distefano (32), Vargas (29). **Catcher**: Steve Herz (96), Cilburn (45).

OTHER POSITION PLAYERS—Lorenzo Bundy, Rick Renteria, Joe Charbonneau, Vance McHenry, Tommy Sandt.

PITCHERS—Mike Bielecki, Alfonso Pulido, Bob Walk, Paul Semall, Andy Rincon, Ray Krawczyk, Jim Winn, Dave Tomlin, Jeff Zaske, Steve Senteney, Dale Mohoric, Tim Wheeler, Chris Green.

NO-HIT GAME—Andy Rincon beat Tacoma, 3-0, on June 12.

RECORD: 87-53 (42-29, second in South first half; 45-24, first in South second half). **POST-SEASON**: Swept Las Vegas, 3-0, in best-of-5 series for South title; swept by Edmonton, 2-0, in rain-shortened best-of-3 PCL championship series. **ATTENDANCE**: 144,623.

PCL STATISTICAL LEADERS—Stolen Bases: Davis 53. **Earned Run Average**: Walk 2.26; Hawaii 3.16. **Winning Percentage (Pitching)**: Bielecki .864 (19-3); Hawaii .621. **Complete Games**: Pulido 16; Hawaii 43. **Shutouts**: Pulido 4; Hawaii 14. **Games Won**: Bielecki 19; Hawaii 87. **Player in Every Game**: Davis.

1983

CLUB PRESIDENT—David Elmore (principal stockholder). **GENERAL MANAGER**—Pete Bock. **FIELD MANAGER**—Tom Trebelhorn. **COACH**—Chuck Hartenstein. **PARENT CLUB**—Pittsburgh Pirates.

REGULARS—First Base: Lawrence Rush (55), Reggie Walton (49), Hedi Vargas (38). **Second Base**: Ron Wotus (86), Denio Gonzalez (42). **Third Base**: Bobby Miscik (142). **Shortstop**: Gonzalez (80), Mario Mendoza (37), Wotus (30). **Outfielders**: Joe Orsulak (139), Doug Frobel (97), Trench Davis (76), Bobby Mitchell (61), Walton (49). **Catcher**—Steve Herz (83), Bruce Robinson (54).

OTHER POSITION PLAYERS—Dave Augustine, Ken Ford, Alfredo Torres.

PITCHERS—Jose DeLeon, Bob Owchinko, Don Fowler, Ray Krawczyk, Larry Lamonde, Randy Niemann, Paul Semall, Jim Winn, Steve Senteney, Don Stanhouse, Jim Umbarger, Tom Hausman, Butch Edge, Dave Frost, Chris Green, Jeff Zaske, Johnny Taylor.

RECORD: 72-71 (32-40, fourth in South first half; 40-31, second in South second half). **ATTENDANCE**: 145,866.

PCL STATISTICAL LEADERS—**Earned Run Average**: DeLeon 3.04; Hawaii 4.28. **Shutouts**: Hawaii 9.

1982

CLUB PRESIDENT—David Elmore (principal stockholder). **GENERAL MANAGER**—Pete Bock. **FIELD MANAGER**—Doug Rader. **COACH**—Chuck Hartenstein. **PARENT CLUB**—San Diego Padres.

REGULARS—First Base: Joe Lansford (111), Rick Lancellotti (31). **Second Base**: Steve Smith (97), Jim Pankovits (38). **Third Base**: Pankovits (76), Jerry Johnson (32), Jerry DeSimone (22). **Shortstop**: DeSimone (92), Jerry Manuel (25), Mario Ramirez (20). **Outfielders**: Tony Gwynn (92), Jeff Pyburn (77), Dan Gausepohl (62), James Steels (50), Jerry Davis (41). **Catcher**: Ron Tingley (114), Doug Gwosdz (14).

OTHER POSITION PLAYERS—Alan Wiggins, Aaron Cain, Brian Greer, Joe Lefebvre, Dan Purpura, Dave Richards.

PITCHERS—Andy Hawkins, Dave Dravecky, Tom Tellmann, George Stablein, Mark Thurmond, Steve Fireovid, Tim Hamm, Fred Kuhaulua, Ron Meredith, Mark Miggins, Mike Couchee, Jim Coffman.

RECORD: 73-71 (36-35, second in South first half; 37-36, third in South second half). **ATTENDANCE**: 136,876.

PCL STATISTICAL LEADERS—**Fewest Strikeouts (Batting)**: Gwynn 18 (366 at-bats). **Complete Games**: Hamm 12; Hawaii 42. **Shutouts**: Hawkins 6 (club record); Hawaii 11. **Games Lost**: Hamm 14.

1981

CLUB PRESIDENT—Clarence Philpotts. **PRINCIPAL STOCKHOLDER**—Lee Doerr. **GENERAL MANAGER**—Dave Pierson. **FIELD MANAGER**—Doug Rader. **COACH**—Chuck Hartenstein. **PARENT CLUB**—San Diego Padres.

REGULARS—First Base: Gary Ashby (66), Craig Stimac (27), Rick Lancellotti (26), Craig Kusick (22). **Second Base**: Steve Smith (55), Jose Moreno (50). **Third Base**: John Alvarez (77), Stimac (37). **Shortstop**: Mario Ramirez (118). **Outfielders**: Alan Wiggins (131), Jim Beswick (128), Lancellotti (93). **Catcher**: Rick Sweet (85), Tony Castillo (76).

OTHER POSITION PLAYERS—Curtis Reed (dh), Jerry DeSimone, Tim Flannery, Doug Gwosdz, Dave Stegman.

PITCHERS—Steve Fireovid, Eric Show, George Stablein, Tom Tellmann, Mike Armstrong, Floyd Chiffer, Tim Hamm, Fred Kuhaulua, Alan Olmstead, Gary Pickert, Kim Seaman.

NO-HIT GAME—Stablein beat Tacoma, 6-1, on June 13.

RECORD: 72-65 (35-31, first in North first half; 37-34, third in North second half). **POST-SEASON**: Lost to Tacoma, 2-1, in best-of-3 North playoffs. **ATTENDANCE**: 157,918.

PCL STATISTICAL LEADERS—**Stolen Bases**: Wiggins 73. **Shutouts**—Tellmann 5.