

ANATOMY OF A DOUBLEHEADER

Around the same time, hitting coach Marcus Thames will lead a hitters' meeting, "an open forum for players," Boone says, which lasts up to 15 minutes and allows them to discuss their approaches before each matchup. Starting pitchers who aren't scheduled to take the hill on doubleheader days throw their typical light bullpens in the morning followed by a quick workout afterward. Then they head to the dugout as the first game begins.

"I'll just kind of sit and watch the games, and try to be a good teammate," veteran starter J.A. Happ says. "That's all I can do."

Arguably the greatest advocate for the doubleheader was Ernie Banks. "It's a beautiful day for a ballgame. Let's play two today!" the Cubs Hall of Famer used to say. Banks lived up to the expression: He played in 318 doubleheaders throughout his 19-year career, including two seasons in which the Cubs scheduled 30 traditional doubleheaders. In today's game, that jovial saying reminds you of its antiquity.

Once a regular part of every team's schedule, the doubleheader began to lose prominence in the late 1950s. Because of baseball's expansion, relocation and economics, the twin bill became marginalized throughout both leagues. "Baseball had steady attendance from the mid-1950s until the mid-1970s, but then began a gradual climb," noted Chris Jaffe, writing for *The Hardball Times* website. "If teams can get more and more (fans) coming out for regular games, there's little need for doubleheaders."

By the late 20th century, owners didn't see the incentive in hosting two games on the same day — not with rising attendance and the escalated salaries of their premier players. Today, with very few exceptions (there have been only two traditional doubleheaders scheduled since 2004), twin bills are a contingency plan, a last resort played

primarily in the event of postponements. The financial objectives for hosting day-night doubleheaders are obvious, but they add many other wrinkles to the natural order of a gameday.

Maybe the biggest wrinkle came on July 8, 2000, when the Yankees and Mets played in the first "split-ballpark" doubleheader since 1903. The matchup, a preview of that year's World Series, began in the afternoon at Shea Stadium, then moved to Yankee Stadium for the nightcap. In between games, the teams bussed across the Triborough Bridge with a police escort to maximize efficiency.

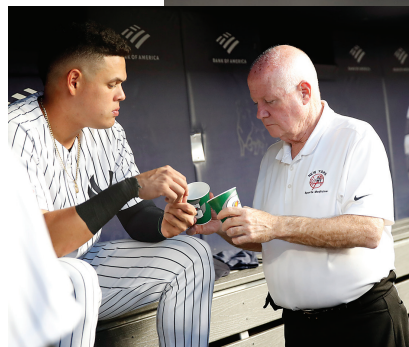
The split-park doubleheader between the two teams happened twice more, the last time coming in 2008, just a few days before Gardner made his Yankees debut. Still, in his experience, speaking for the vast majority of his teammates, traditional doubleheaders (at one stadium) are better than day-night splits, mostly because they get players out of the park earlier.

"It takes me back to being a little kid and playing tournaments and stuff on the

weekends, sometimes playing two or three games in a day," Gardner says. "I don't want to say they're not still fun — if I didn't still enjoy going out there and playing the game, I wouldn't still be here — but I guess the older you get, it gets a little harder to prepare for the games and to recover after games."

Opinions in the clubhouse vary on whether doubleheaders should be scheduled more often, primarily as a way to create more off-days. "I think there's some value in that," says Boone, considering the grueling stretch his team encountered in August. Catcher Austin Romine counters with a valid point: "That's getting into dangerous territory because then you're going to have to make up games, and then there's going to be *more* doubleheaders."

For players such as Romine, who will only play one game in a twin bill due to the demands of his position, doubleheaders have a tendency to mess with routine. Slated to catch the night game against the Orioles, Romine aims to follow his standard procedure the best he can — eating, taking



HYDRATION IS KEY WHEN PLAYING DOUBLEHEADERS, SOMETHING HEAD ATHLETIC TRAINER STEVE DONOHUE [INSET, AT R] MONITORS THROUGHOUT BOTH GAMES. IN THE MIDST OF AN AUGUST STRETCH OF 19 GAMES IN 17 DAYS, BOONE [ABOVE] WAS HAPPY WITH HOW HIS TEAM RESPONDED. "WE'VE WEATHERED THE STORM VERY WELL, I THINK, AND GUYS HAVE DONE A GREAT JOB," HE SAID.