

**Gil Patterson on**

# **Going Pro**

**Advice for the Parents  
of Talented Athletes**

*Then & Now*

*Gil Patterson*



**SPORTS**

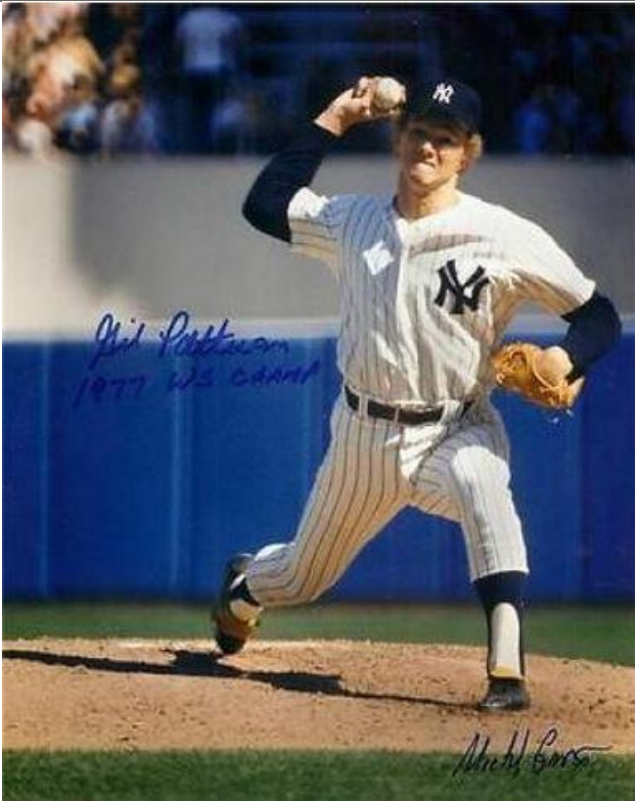
## **Part One**

This four-part interview with Coach Gil Patterson, Director of Pitching with the New York Yankees is an inspirational story about overcoming obstacles to your athletic career and going Pro.

By Diana Barrows - interview with Gil Patterson  
an e-book from ProFile Sports

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## A conversation with Gil Patterson and some sage advice

My friendship with Gil Patterson began about four years ago when he was still Pitching Coach for the Minor League Operations for the Oakland A's – these were the Money Ball years, and he was with his team in Tempe Arizona where the ProFile Sports concept was being developed. We visited over several meetings during those early days of development and he gave us priceless input and guidance on our Score-keeping and Bio Page product.

This four-part interview with Coach Gil Patterson, Director of Pitching with the New York Yankees is an inspirational story about overcoming obstacles to your athletic career and dealing with adversity in life.

It is written just as he spoke, straight forward, up-polished and passionate. He talks candidly about the process of teaching himself to pitch left-handed to return to professional baseball after a devastating shoulder injury early in his career. He shares specific advice for young pitchers about staying healthy, training and what to expect in the process of going Pro.



## Why Baseball?

**Diana:** So Gil, will please start from the beginning and tell us about your career in baseball?

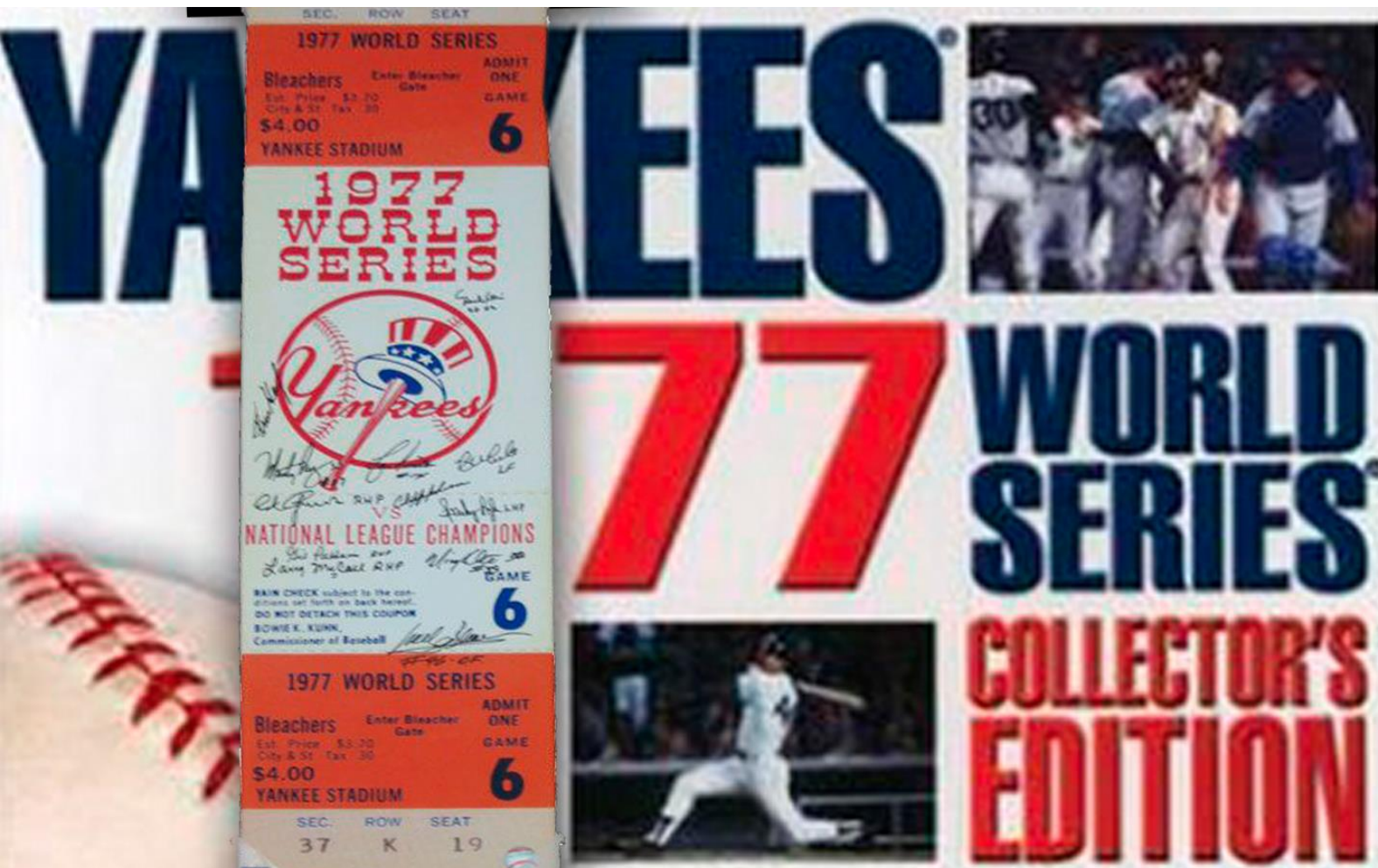
**Gil:** Okay, I am Gil Patterson, director of pitching for the New York Yankees and I've always actually dreamed of being a Yankee. I grew up in Miami Florida. I had five brothers and a sister... and my mom raised all of us [alone]. I was very lucky to have a mom like that. Anyway, ever since I was five, baseball was everything I always wanted to do.

Growing up, I used to have a 4.0 average... well that was when you totaled my four classes together. It was;  
 $1.0 + 1.0 + 1.0 + 1.0 = 4.0$

**Diana:** Ha ha ha

**Gil:** But I did receive a scholarship. I also got drafted five times. The first time was with the Cardinals right out of high school. But my mom said "NOPE! You're going to school!" So I went to a junior college. [Miami Dade College – incidentally it was the same school that Bucky Dent graduated from]...and it helped me mature. I probably would not have been ready to sign a professional contract as a high school senior.

After two years of going to college, back in those days, this is in 1973, 1974, and 1975 they had two drafts per year. I was drafted in the first round four times; by the Astros, the Padres, by the Dodgers and then eventually, my dream team, the Yankees.



## Coming up in the system

In those days, they had what they called the Secondary Phase. It would be like today; if someone was drafted and they didn't get signed... in January - there was like a special pool. And on the one hand, it's a nice place to be in, because you're in elite company. But it's not on the same stage as every other player in the country. But still, I was lucky enough to get through two years of college. As a matter of fact; Bobby Richardson (former Yankee) was the Head-Coach at South Carolina and if I didn't sign, I was going to go there. But I was glad that I did sign with the Yankees in June of 1975.

Then I pitched that summer in the New York-Penn League (which most players do) – whether it be out of high school or college and then usually you get sent to instructional league. So that year, pitching-wise, I pitched a lot! Over a-hundred innings in college, one hundred innings in Oneonta and then about 70 innings in Instructional League. So that was a lot of innings... maybe even back in those days. And we know how things have changed with innings and care for the arm. But I had over two hundred-and-seventy innings.

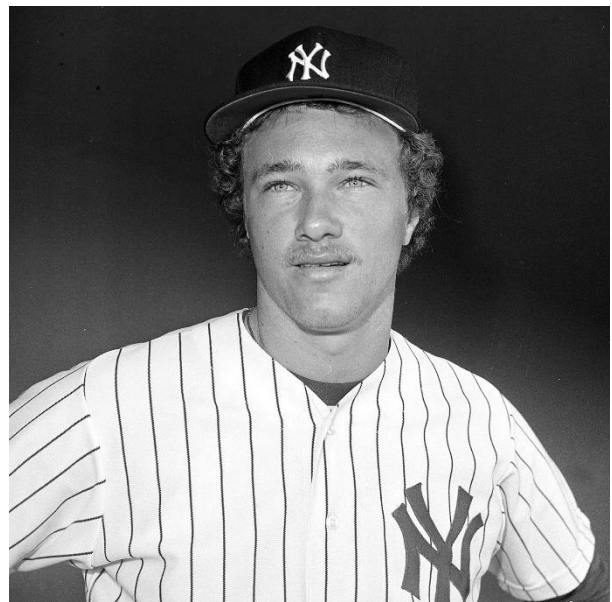
My first spring training in 1976... I signed in June of '75. I walked into the room and there is Thurman Munson, Chris Chambliss, Willie Randolph, Bucky Dent, Graig Nettles, Roy White, "Mickey" Rivers, Catfish Hunter and Reggie Jackson...

**Diana:** Dream come true time?

**Gil:** It sure was!

**Diana:** What did that feel like? Catfish Hunter?...

*Mickey Mantle was probably  
the one that I just sat there and  
stared at and I said [to myself]  
there is Mickey Mantle!*



## Playing with Elite Company

### Gaining an advantage in the system today

*The recruiting process has changed quite a bit, And this is where...Quite honestly if any young player ever hears [or reads] this, and wants to talk with me...give-em-my e-mail. And on a one-on-one basis I will do anything I can for them.*

*But the direction you are going with ProFile Diana, is maybe even better direction that even I can give them. It's tremendous! It helps them get their name out there, with video, (but make sure your video is of you doing something good) and the stats...today analytics is so important.*

*So many coaches want kids to come to their camps, and showcases. From what I hear that is important. In my day you could get seen by college recruiters and professional scouts just by playing in high school, but it is different today. These Showcases, sometimes give you an opportunity to be seen. Lots of Colleges and Pro Scouts go to them.*

*So, if I had a son, or maybe even a daughter that wanted to play college baseball, I would have ProFile help me with Bio Pages and those videos to try to get them noticed and to see if people would respond to it. But then I would send them to schools they really wanted to go to – and I know everyone wants a scholarship, but go where they think they can have a good relationship with the coach.*

.....  
*So, if baseball is your passion and sincerely believe you have what it takes, and would like to have a personal conversation with Coach Gil, simply contact us at ProFile Sports by email; support@profilesportsapp.com and tell us about yourself and your hopes for a career in baseball and as he offered, we will connect you with Coach Gil Patterson.  
A very generous offer indeed.*

You know? Little League kids who didn't play in High School, wished they had played in High School. High School kids who didn't play in College which they had played in college. And the college kid who played in college wishes that they had made it to the big leagues. So there is always a step...

And everyone, to a certain degree, should be awfully thankful for what they achieved. Whether it be a college player because there are thousands, if not tens-of-thousands that wanted to play in college. and like I said; it just kinda continues to grow.

**Gil:** ...Well, ya know... there was this ... ( I think he might be in the Hall of Fame), there was a reporter there for the New York Times back in the day; Phil Pepe...

...and so as I walked into the room there was also Yogi Berra, Whitey Ford, Billy Martin, Elson Howard and Mickey Mantle! ...And Mickey Mantle was probably the one I sat there and just stared at and just said [to myself] there is Mickey Mantle!

...and Phil said; "What's it like Gil?"  
And I said; Phil, can you imagine? In two or three years they're gonna say; "We were in Gill Patterson's first spring training!"

**Diana:** LOL Good come-back! Did you really feel that way?

**Gil:** Well, you know, you have to feel like that! You know?

**Diana:** Where you faking it or did you really feel like that?

**Gil:** Oh I meant it! Yeah. I promised Mr. Steinbrenner 300 wins.

**Diana:** "Wow."

**Gil:** And I'm only 299 short! I may still have a few innings maybe left...

**Diana:** But you have a World Series ring! So...

**Gil:** I do. But, I wouldn't mind being like "Ernie" Banks either. Let me have the twenty years... Let me have the twenty years! But I mean... don't get me wrong. I feel blessed. And you know in everybody's stages, a lot of times, (unless maybe you're in the Hall of Fame), you always feel like; maybe as a competitive athlete... that you wanted more.

## Confidence and Humility

Just like you said with confidence... It's extremely important to be humble. I think humility is a great quality. Humility isn't thinking less of yourself. I can still feel awfully good about myself, but it's also giving some credit to others. And I think that's an important key. It is not taking anything away from me to say; "This person is very good, and this person is very good. Boy is wish"... There's nothing wrong with that.

And you know what I think? A lot of times athletes fall into that; "It's all about them" you know? Sometimes where teams go... (the teams where everyone's giving) you know, it's like; "What can I do to help you?" Rather than "What can I get from you?" And who knows? Maybe along with God, my mom certainly had some direction in making me become the person I am.

Diana: Can you go a little deeper about that for us Gil?

Gil: Alright. Well, Growing up... my father ran away with another woman when I was twelve. I had one older brother, five younger brothers and a sister. And my mom raised us all by herself. So we had to pull together as lots of people in families do. that's not the worst thing that's ever happened to someone, and it's not the best. Everyone has to deal with adversity in your life.

I was lucky enough to have a mom that kept us all together.

I played with the Yankees that second year after telling Phil Pepe that "they would remember me" and I went 9 and 2 as a twenty-year-old in double A. Including a no-hitter. Then I got moved to triple-A and finished the season 7and 2 including two playoff wins.

As a twenty-year-old I was 18 and 4 with Bobby Cox managing me.

Diana: Wow! How fast were you pitching then?

Gil: About 106

Diana: Oh my God!

Gil: I'm teasing.

Diana: I almost believed you! LOL

Gil: You believed me? No. But you know - as you get older, the stories – they always grow.

Diana: Like fishing.

Gil: ... The stories always get a little bit bigger. ☺  
you threw a little bit harder... but you know, it was funny. Because sometimes I read articles. And I think Phil Pepe wrote one...that I threw 95. Because I tried to come-back as a left-hander. A left-handed pitcher after the surgeries.

*I think humility is a great quality.*

*Humility isn't thinking less of yourself. I can still feel awfully good about myself, but it's also giving some credit to others.*

## Career Ending Injury – or not?

I am not going to tell you that velocity isn't important. It is. Velocity is very important! Even in today's day-and-age. People throw harder now. But if you still can't throw the ball where you want to... If you don't throw the ball real hard and have some type of movement...well then you had better command it.

I'm not gonna say there aren't any major league pitchers that can't command...Guys still walk four and five-a-game in the big leagues. But commanding your fastball is really the key! As I work with our minor league pitchers, and you and Joe Sperle work with armature pitcher wanting to become college pitchers or pro pictures... that competitive spirit...(that relentless warrior) may be the biggest key. But after that, you better command the baseball!

Because if you don't... I don't care if you did throw 106. If you can't throw it over the plate, you're just gonna get oooos and ahhs...and you're gonna be spinning your wheels.

So I pitched that '76 season, about another 200 innings during the season. Then they sent me to winter ball [in the Dominican Republic] and Bobby Cox wasn't managing me then...and if I remember right, I won five or six games down there ...and lost a few. And I remember the day when my arm felt like it pulled right out of the socket!

Diana: Holy Cow!...So this was prior to the 77 season?

Gil: Yes.

Diana: Well the kids need to know about your seventy-seven World Series. I wanna talk a little bit about that

Gil: ...and that's just the part. It was during 77 when I pitched for them, it was... Well it's interesting... because so many times you tell people not to pitch with pain.

It was like a knife in my shoulder! And they kept saying no one can throw the ball like you can (when your arms not hurt) and that's why Mr. Steinbrenner said (when those things happened) he said that I had a job for as long as I wanted to with the Yankees. He was very very very good to me.

And ya know, there was a few times I left the Yankees and came back... That seventy-seven year I'm thinking (just like you said before Diana) I'm saying; "Boy! These people think I'm good now...wait till they see me when I don't have a knife going through my shoulder! And that's when really the shoulder injury started.

The rotatory-cuff tears. I was the third one that ever had the rotatory-cuff tear [procedure] done. That's when they start the scare [at the front of the shoulder] and it goes around to the other side of the shoulder. Now they do the scope and everything. So it's come a long way – and for the betterment of the game.

That's why sometimes people (even in my position) are doing everything you can to avoid injury. But guys are still getting hurt.

As a pitching coach, that's maybe the biggest objective. Keep your guys healthy!  
If you keep'em healthy they have a chance to move on... weather that be to college or to pro ball - or to the minor leagues and then to the big leagues.



## Learning to throw Leftie

But that seventy-seven year (as great as it was...we won the World Series) but then again you know you still feel like (in my case) I wanted to give and help so much! And I didn't get to give and help as much as I would have liked to.

There are two or three really good things that people have said about me... that I'm gonna remember. I have some clippings that I wanted to show my daughter (who is a cardiologists) my son now (who is seventeen and drives... so I'm up all night when he drives) and my granddaughter (who is one) ...There's going to be a few things [to show them] but hey, they don't even have video of me when I pitched. That's how long ago it was (ha ha ha) . I'm wondering why they have Babe Ruth stuff but they don't have any Gil Patterson stuff? (laugh)

Diana: I don't know! What's up with that?

**Gil:** I know! So Carl Yastrzemski said when I got beat by them 3-1. (I had struck out nine guys in the first five or six innings that I pitched) He said: "That is one of the best young pitchers I've ever seen".

**Diana:** I heard Gil, that you said "you should have seen me last year!"

**Gil:** I said that to someone. I don't remember, it could have been Carl. I don't remember. But what happened as well was Rick Sutcliffe [in an interview] They have an ESPN thing (that I still happen to have)...apparently he was asked if Stephen Strasburg was the real thing? When Stasburg struck out those fourteenth Pirates (I think) in his first game... and he says "You see a lot of prospects coming go...Have you ever seen anyone like Strasberg?" And he [Rick] says "You're right. I have seen a lot of them come and go, but I remember one guy – who if his arm was good - he says, I never would have had a chance, and that was Gil Patterson... so that was very nice as well. Ron Guidry once said "Everyone wish they were as good as Gil." In fact, Ron Guidry was the one that took my spot when I got hurt.

**Diana:** Irony! Now I want to get to left-handed come back. Which is absolutely amazing!

**Gil:** About the pitching part...When I had some of my surgeries, I had a daughter at that time and a wife, and we didn't quite have enough money to make ends meet - just going through Worker's Comp, and stuff like that. So you know, you try to do odd-jobs, park cars one night, cut grass...Whatever you can do while you can still workout.

Well there was a wall. I couldn't throw right handed, so I just started throwing left-handed. At the very beginning I threw the ball so hard, but the ball wouldn't even bounced back. Eventually I threw it hard enough that it bounced back and maybe even cracked it a couple of times. I remember one spring Whitey Ford, says to me - when he saw me throw from the outfield, he said; "What are you doing? Forget your right arm. Go pitch left-handed.

So I pitched in a spring training game left-handed and I did fine. But I continued to try to get the right arm ready to go... if I would have known that I was going to need eight surgeries. I would have forgotten the right arm and just done it left handed - easily. But I always thought I was going to do it. And by the time it was all over - it was too late.

## Making a career in coaching

**Diana:** And we met when you were Pitching Coach of the A's minor team [during Spring Training in Tempe). How many teams have you been with?

**Gil:** I started off pitching for the Yankees in '75. Then in the early eighties I started coaching with the Yankees that's when Mr. Steinbrenner said you will always have a job with us. I coached with the Yankees in the early eighties, went to Buckey Dent's baseball school. Which was really very good, because I got to work with babies. You know? 8, 9, 10, 12, 15, 17 and then it was working with pro athletes guys coming out of high school and college. In fact Al Leiter was one of the pitchers I worked with. We are still friends today. I saw his first pitch in Oneonta when I was his coach, and then when I was in Big League Camp, I saw his last pitch as a Yankee. It's things like that... Those are things that keep us going as coaches.

**Diana:** Wow that's great Gil! Now what we're going to do is to stop here and continue with the rest of this conversation in [three more } installments. [To cover coaching styles, some training tips, and advice for parents and student athletes about going to college vs straight to the pros.]

You can find the three next installments on our blog and our website [profilesportsapp.com](http://profilesportsapp.com) in the news section or you can just click on the blog going on that same page. If you are an athlete and you would like to get your own Bio Page to promote your athletic career, just go to [profilesportsapp.com](http://profilesportsapp.com) and register right there.

See you in the next Tips and Tricks from segment from ProFile Sports.

*We met when you were  
Pitching Coach of the  
Oakland A's minor team  
[during Spring Training in Tempe).*



There are few nice things that people have said about me - that I am going to remember.



**Gil Patterson has influence countless young athletes, and continues to work for the New York Yankees as Director of Pitching.**

*Interview with Diana Barrows of ProFile Sports*