

DANNY COLVIN / Name Game



Mickey Burns, left, was a recent guest on Demetrius Means' radio show.

Means throws coach a curve

Former McKee player turned radio host has some fun putting old mentor Mickey Burns on the hot seat

STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE

For once, maybe for the first time in his celebrated career as a player/coach/entertainer/host, **Mickey Burns** was lost for words. Momentarily, but still taken aback.

Burns doesn't need any introduction in these parts. As McKee basketball coach he took a team featuring a young **Demetrius Means** to the PSAL boys' basketball city final, the only Island school to do so. And Means took those lessons — on and off the court — and made them mainstays in his life during the 30 years since.

So, when Virginia radio talk-show host Demetrius teased an interview with his old coach by telling his listeners "We're going to ask the Coach why he sat me during the playoffs after starting the previous 20 games," Burns was nonplussed, to say the least.

"I was really caught off guard," admitted Burns, who hosts his own television show "Profiles" on Ch. 76 in which

"What was it like being a white man coaching five black kids?"

"It never made a difference who they were or where they were from," Burns countered. "People always wondered aloud, 'Why don't you let those guys run?' But our system taught discipline, something they would need in the tougher games, something they could use in later life."

Burns is impressed but not surprised by Means' professionalism.

"He works tirelessly and does a tight, professional interview. Demetrius is well-prepared and he knows his subject. He's going to make it; he just needs one break."

Means, who squeezed the interview in at Burns' Snug Harbor studio before attending — with brothers **Gregory, Warren, Duwan, and Andre** — the wedding of his sister **Cheryle** to **James Edward Taylor**, allowed to be nervous before the show began.

"This is a guy who has helped steer me toward this career. He's taught me how to win and lose and not to be afraid to take chances. I developed as a leader because of him (PS 18 teacher **Stephanie Spero** and McKee AP **Gwendolyn Simmons** were also foundations). It's amazing

DEAR JOHN

Well, at least we know people read this column.

John Sollazzo, who told us about his adventures in Game 6 of the 1956 World Series and provided us with a copy of the rain check, has struck out.

The 80-year-old Graniteville resident claimed he saw **Don Larsen** pitch his perfect game at Ebbets Field.

All of his buddies claimed "he was smoking funny cigarettes," or was "just plain crazy." They told him Larsen threw it in Game 5.

And, we heard it as well.

For the record we went to the *Total Baseball* encyclopedia to end this brouhaha once and for all.

In the 2-0 Game 5 at *Yankee Stadium*, centerfielder **Mickey Mantle** made a fine running catch to prevent a hit in the fifth inning, and Larsen routinely retired the remainder of the batters, including striking out **Dale Mitchell** for the only perfect game in World Series history.

What Sollazzo, who admitted to watching a "boring" game because no one was getting on base, did see was another shutout in Game 6 at *Ebbets*. The Dodgers needed a 10th inning to win 1-0 on **Jackie Robinson's** RBI left-field double to force Game 7.