

BASEBALL UNDER GLASS

Clothes did not make the man in six-time champion GM Krause

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In his public appearances, Jerry Krause was old-school rumples, usually wearing a suit but obviously doing so under a bit of duress.

Clothes obviously did not make the man. My striking all-time image of Krause came in 1989, two years before the Chicago Bulls dynasty he general-managed won its first title. Somehow, before a real standoffish stance toward media took hold, I was granted an interview at his suburban Skokie home. When I arrived, Krause was attired in gym shorts and a T-shirt while he reviewed VHS tapes of players he scouted.



Jerry Krause ensured he'd attend and speak out about Bill Veeck, whom he considered a "second father," at the special Chicago Baseball Museum-sponsored event on the Veeck Family in Sept. 2012 in Chicago. Photo courtesy Dr. David J. Fletcher, CBM.

I can hear the snickers from Krause detractors envisioning the heavy-set Krause so attired. If Michael Jordan himself, who gave Krause the nickname "Crumbs," read this account, he'd nod knowingly. But the bottom line was no matter how he was dressed, no matter how secretive or clipped he'd be in public utterances, he put together the only championship teams in the Bulls' 51-year history.

Jordan could not have won those titles by himself. He needed complementary talent starting with Scottie Pippen, whose acquisition amid the 1987 NBA draft Krause skillfully maneuvered.

And Krause was the last of his breed in doubling up as a basketball and baseball scout. Starting as an office boy at Wrigley Field, Krause combed the bushes for several teams, including the White Sox under Bill Veeck, Jerry Reinsdorf and Roland Hemond. His prize acquisition was a talky shortstop from the Padres system named Ozzie Guillen, who would become an all-time Sox figure two decades later as World Series-winning manager.

"Jerry was one of the hardest-working guys I have ever been around, and he was one of the best talent evaluators ever," said Bulls and Sox chairman Reinsdorf in a statement. "Jerry played an integral role in our run of six championships in eight years. He truly

was the architect of all our great teams in the '90s. I would not have been elected to the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame if it were not for Jerry. We will miss him tremendously, and we send our thoughts and prayers to his wife Thelma and the Krause family.”

The Krause style, secretive with a touch of paranoia and thus drawing the nickname “Sleuth” was being recalled in many quarters this week after he died at 77 on March 22. An inquiring scribe would get more out of the CIA director than Krause when asking him about his itinerary that week and which players he was eyeing.

No leaks in Collins firing

When Doug Collins was cashiered as Bulls coach after leading the team to the NBA Eastern Conference Finals in 1989, I guested on WTTW-TV’s “Chicago Tonight” show hosted by the late John Callaway. Future Chicago Baseball Museum supporter Tom Shaer also was on the panel. After the show, Callaway challenged us: Why didn’t the Chicago sports media have advance word of the Collins firing in the same manner as the Washington, D.C. press corps gets the jump on White House/Cabinet personnel changes? I told news-hound Callaway that the only three people who knew of the firing were Reinsdorf, Krause and Collins. And there would be absolute, airtight secrecy with Krause. No leaks here.



Jerry Krause logically was an object of interviews at the CBM-sponsored event on the Veeck Family in Sept. 2012. Photo courtesy Dr. David J. Fletcher, CBM.

He opened up, though, if you mentally time-tripped few years – away from the skull-duggery of present-day work -- to players he once stalked and coaches with whom he hobnobbed. There were few better storytellers to find in a long day’s march, to paraphrase the late Krause contemporary Jerome Holtzman.

If there was one thing the supremely gifted Jordan and the short and squat Krause could have done over was a reconciliation of personalities. Both wanted to win badly and would deal with the devil to do so. Opposites did attract in the championship journey, but not in interpersonal relationships. Jordan’s continual sniping at Krause got out of hand. As the 1991 NBA trade deadline passed, I remarked to Jordan at his locker in the cramped basement locker room of old Chicago Stadium that the Bulls made only one small deal.

“It figures,” His Airness proclaimed cynically.

That was the biggest example of Krause not netting the respect he most likely craved from childhood.

He was the ultimate overachiever who had to deal with the prejudice endemic in post-war America. At first living in the mostly Jewish Albany Park neighborhood, Krause moved a few miles further away to the Far Northwest Side. Father Paul Krause wanted to switch the family closer to his shoe store in the almost-all Gentile neighborhood. Jerry Krause ended up as practically the only Jewish student in Taft High School. Irv Kupcinec's brother Joe Kupcinec had coaching and teaching gigs at Taft to shield against the worst of anti-Semitism. But the younger Krause had no such protections. He had to take the catcalls and epithets of 1955 straight.

His ethnicity and background obviously remained a touchy subject. When senior baseball scout Krause visited U.S. Cellular Field at the beginning of this decade, he was not in the mood to talk about Albany Park days when the subject was broached. If you had been a traveling Bulls beat writer during his GM days, he may have wandered into that area. But "Sleuth" had a caste system of access to him, obviously a matter of trust.

Krause was the classic "What Makes Sammy Run" persona. He desired to break into sports, via media or otherwise. The late columnist Bill Gleason recalled how a young Krause was a copyboy at the old Chicago's American afternoon newspaper. After his team employment break-in as a Cubs go-fer, Krause worked for the Packers-Zephyrs, the Bulls' 1961-63 NBA predecessor that moved to Baltimore as the Bullets, and now are the Washington Wizards.

First Bulls homecoming went awry

He knew further disappointment. After all his travels in the two sports, he enjoyed a supposedly triumphant homecoming when named Bulls director of player personnel in 1976. But the job did not last long as Krause was enmeshed in an aborted hiring of DePaul's Ray Meyer as Bulls coach. Krause was forced out by Arthur Wirtz, who then had too much power running both the Blackhawks and Bulls.

Late in 1978, Veeck brought Krause back to Chicago again as a Sox scout. He enjoyed a long run in that role, culminating in getting Guillen over to the Sox in the LaMarr Hoyt deal late in 1984.

When Reinsdorf acquired the Bulls in 1985, Krause assumed his old job running basketball operations – and this time stayed for nearly two decades. He had drafted Earl "The Pearl" Monroe, Wes Unseld and Jerry Sloan for the Bullets. Sloan, of course, became an all-time Bull.

Jordan was already in the fold when Krause came back. But the Sleuth certainly filled the roster around him superbly in two different championship runs with Pippen, Horace Grant, John Paxson, Bill Cartwright, Dennis Rodman, Toni Kukoc and others.

His best-ever move, however, was hiring Phil Jackson as coach in 1989, elevating him to replace Collins. I was never a great Jackson fan. After a seemingly personable first



Michael Jordan sniped repeatedly at Jerry Krause, but in the end could not argue with the GM's success in stocking the roster.

season at the Bulls helm, I thought Jackson became full of himself, a condescending maestro of Jordan and Co. But he proved to be the right coach at the right time to keep focus among sublime talents and raging egos.

Eventually, Krause – a Jackson fan since his college days at North Dakota in the mid-1960s – and the coach had a falling out. That was unneeded. Given a clean break from Jordan and Jackson, Krause and Reinsdorf wrongly calculated they'd do a complete rebuild. The Bulls have not been back to the NBA Finals since.

Krause absolutely loved baseball and thought of Veeck as a second father to him. In Sept. 2012, the Chicago Baseball Museum was honored to have Krause, at his own expense, fly from Phoenix to Chicago to attend the William L Veeck, Sr. and Bill Veeck symposium held at the Chicago History Museum.

Krause told CBM President Dr. David J. Fletcher: “I think of Bill every day and I miss him so much. He did so much for Chicago and for baseball...”

He also could regale with great stories about baseball. While most will always associate Krause with basketball, he had a major impact on Chicago baseball. Along with being the person who engineered, along with Roland Hemond, the Guillen trade, Krause even scouted and brought into the organization former Sox GM Kenny Williams. After his Bulls career, Krause temporarily took over as the Sox's international scouting director in 2010. He worked through 2011 until current director Marco Paddy was hired.

In the end, Krause did not need the front office politics as he moved from middle age. He went back to his beloved basics – scouting in baseball. He finished well.

He was the antithesis of Theo Epstein, no male-model looks and intellectual air. But Krause still has three titles on Epstein. That's as good an epitaph as anything.



Ozzie Guillen first came to the White Sox in part through Jerry Krause's recommendation. Photo credit [Keith Allison](#).