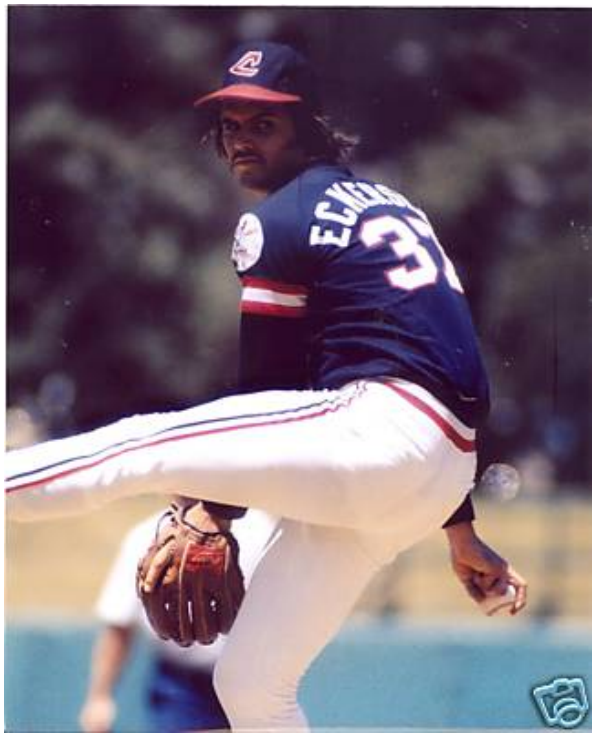

This is one installment in a team effort by The Cleveland Fan, highlighting the top local sports figures by jersey number. Please weigh in with your thoughts, in the Boards. As David Letterman would say, "For entertainment purposes only; please, no wagering."

Municipal Stadium sure holds some great childhood memories for me.

But 1994 saw the dawning of an exciting era in Cleveland sports history. Would the new Indians ballpark be as special as everyone hoped? It would be judged on the national stage, and that meant a lot to me in those days. The first new 'retro' styled park, Oriole Park at Camden Yards, had opened a couple seasons earlier to rave reviews. I was hoping that Jacobs Field would give the city a much-needed source of respect and admiration.

When we arrived at the new ballpark for a game vs. the Oakland A's, my mother presented my brother and me with a gift: we were going to broadcast an inning of the game from a broadcaster's booth behind the plate. How cool was that? When the time approached, we took our places at the table with the mics. There was a sound guy behind us, ready to tape our call of the game. There were some papers with names and stats on the table, but we were too excited to treat our experience as though we were rehearsing for a real gig.

We couldn't believe that this place was actually in Cleveland, Ohio. Everything about the park was clean and colorful. All of the seats seemed close to the field. In the booth to our left, 10 feet away through the Plexiglas, was former Tribe catcher Ray Fosse, by now a genial A's announcer.

Everyone who followed Baseball knew Fosse's story: he came up in 1970 as a rookie All-Star Tribe catcher who hit for power and average, and was barreled into by Pete Rose in a play at the plate in the All-Star game in Cincinnati that same year. His career was essentially ruined as a result of that collision.

We wondered: what must be going through Fosse's mind right now? When he played for the Indians, they were a franchise that was broke and had no hope of competing. A dim, damp, vacant, dreary stadium was their home. Now, they were poised to bully their way to the playoffs with an all-star-type lineup while playing to sellout crowds in a sparkling new gem of a ballpark.

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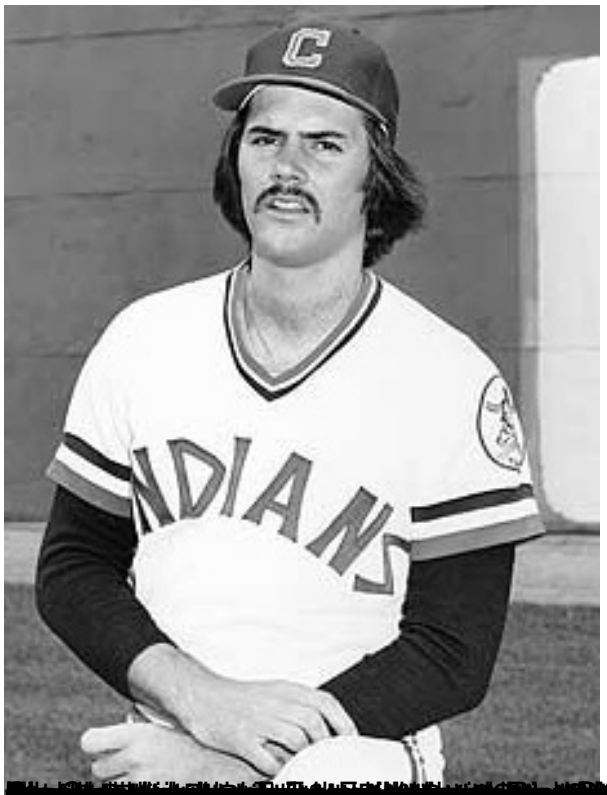

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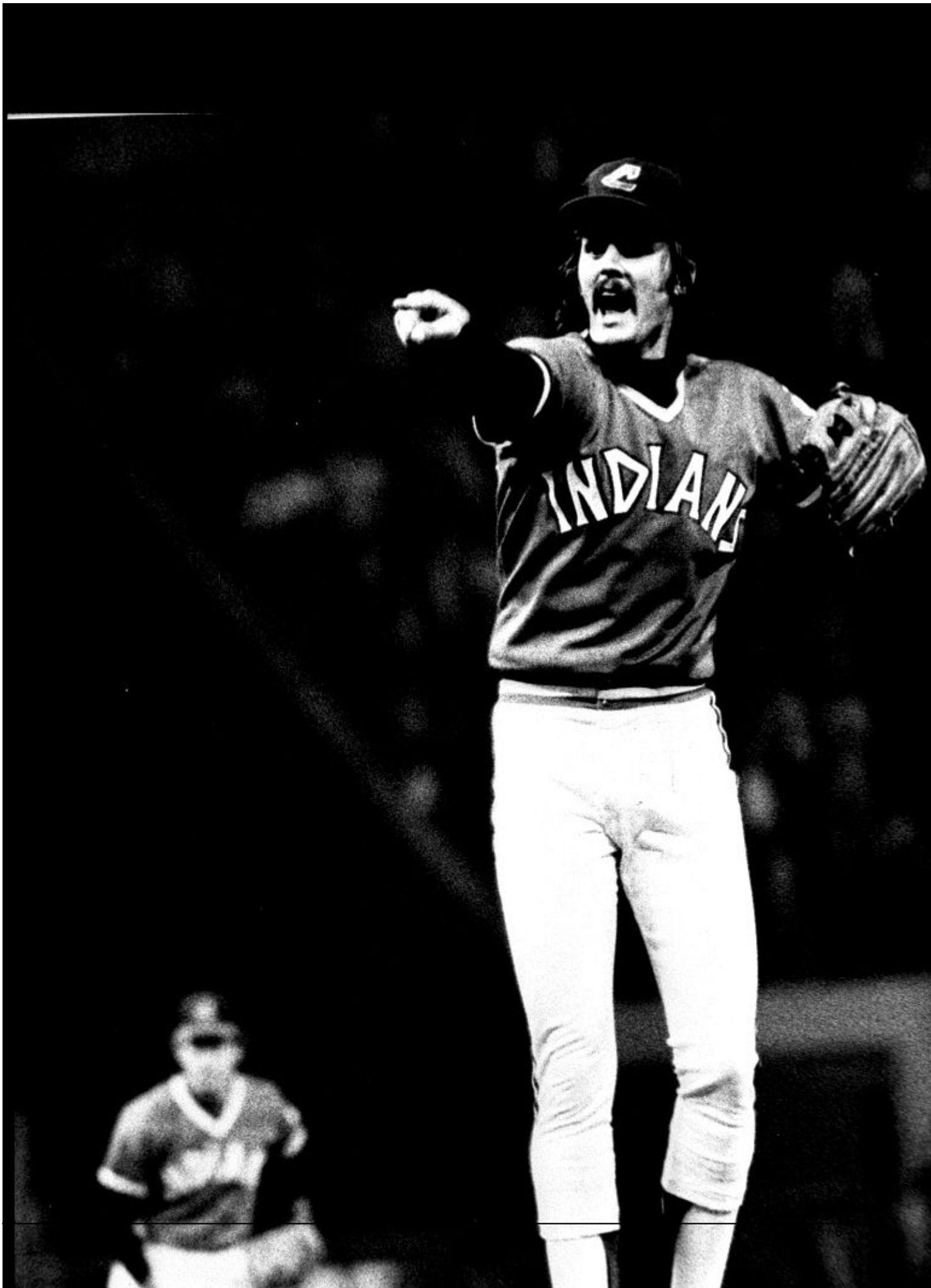
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