

HOOKING THE RUBBER

Chris O'Leary



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A baseball player in a white uniform is sliding into a base during a game. The player is wearing a white jersey with "Los Angeles" visible on the back. The background shows a large crowd of spectators in a stadium.

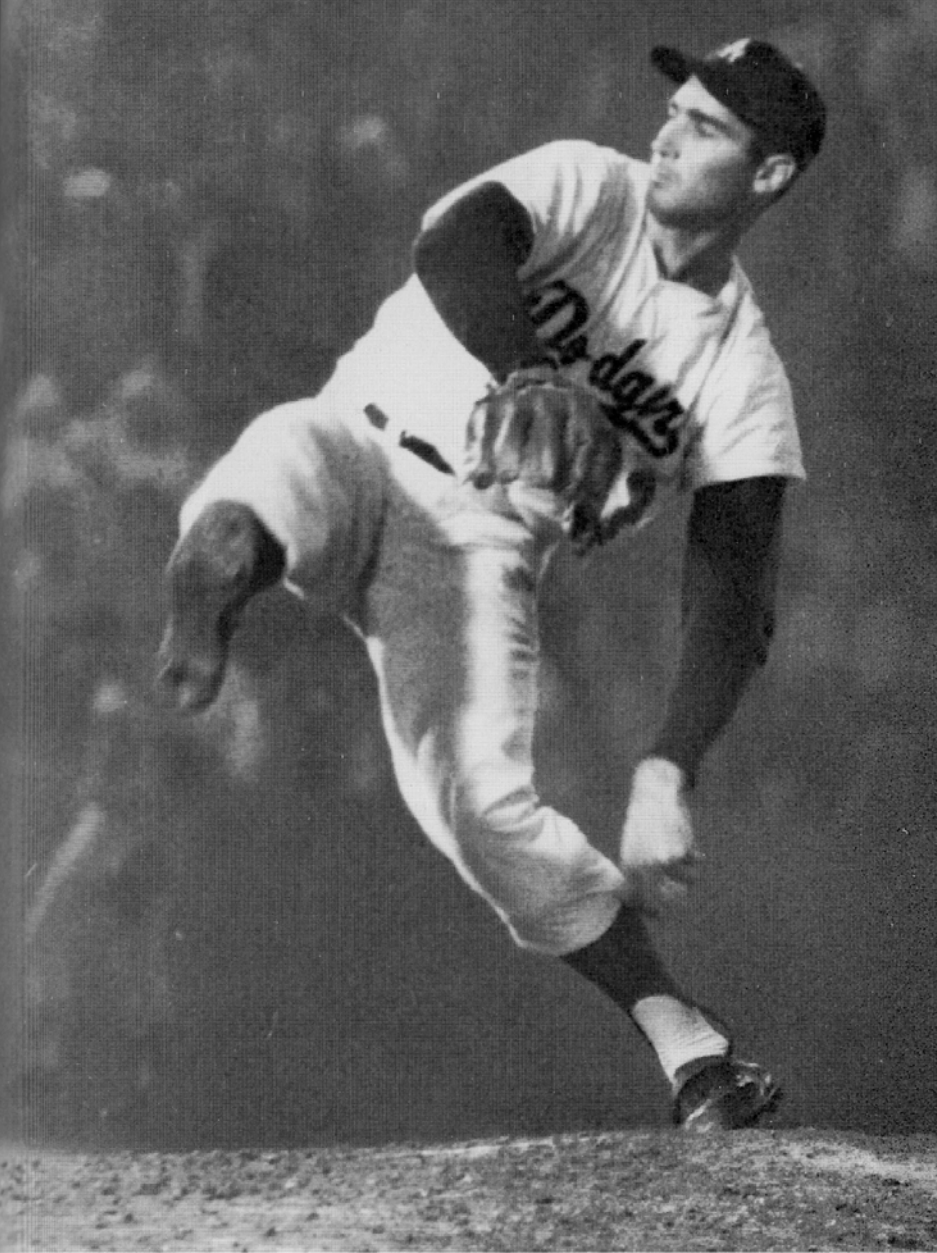
**TRIGGER
WARNING!!!**

Still Photos



Hanson Principle

MarkH



Sandy Koufax's back leg was his anchor. Every other part of him was flying. The sweet, self-replicating motion lulled and mesmerized—the perfect synchronization of muscle and thought. In 1961, Koufax broke Christy Mathewson's National League strikeout record. In 1962, he was unhittable.

(AP/Wide World Photos)

















Koufax suggested Capuano start “hooking the rubber,” meaning that instead of standing with one foot in front of the rubber, a pitcher puts the back of his cleat or half of a foot on the rubber.

“It allows you to get more drive towards home plate,” said Capuano



You can adjust to fit your needs. If you want to hit high balls better, if you're having trouble with them, you can raise your hands so that you will be a little quicker getting on top of the ball. But the hands are very much a matter of feel. Give five farm boys five axes and you'll probably get five different hand positions. As long as the position allows you to hit naturally anything within the strike zone, you're all right.

Your weight should be balanced, distributed evenly on both feet and slightly forward on the balls of the feet, with the knees bent and flexible. If you insist on resting back on your heels, find another occupation. The feet are good and planted, the lead foot open so as not to restrict your pivot but slightly closer to the plate than the back foot. **I helped brace myself a little by digging a slightly-angled mound for my back foot.**

My front foot was on a line with and twelve inches away from the front part of the plate. Rogers Hornsby and Stan Musial stayed deep in the box. Ernie Banks places his rear foot flush against the back line. Players





The back leg is the controlling authority, in Koufax's view, "the single most important thing in pitching."

Koufax wedged his back foot into the pitching rubber, inclining his ankle toward home. The angle was crucial. It created its own momentum, insisting that his body move forward in space. It was the source of the energy he was about to release.

It remains a subject of esoteric debate in biomechanical circles whether a pitch begins with a push or a controlled fall off the pitching rubber.

Koufax pushed.

Flat feet can't push.

Most pitchers go into their windup with their back foot flat against the rubber, a passive approach. So ingrained is this orthodoxy, it took Hershiser three months practicing nothing else to get it right.

Koufax finally told him to take the middle spike out of his shoe so he could wedge his foot into the rubber.

- Sandy Koufax: A Lefty's Legacy
By Jane Leavy



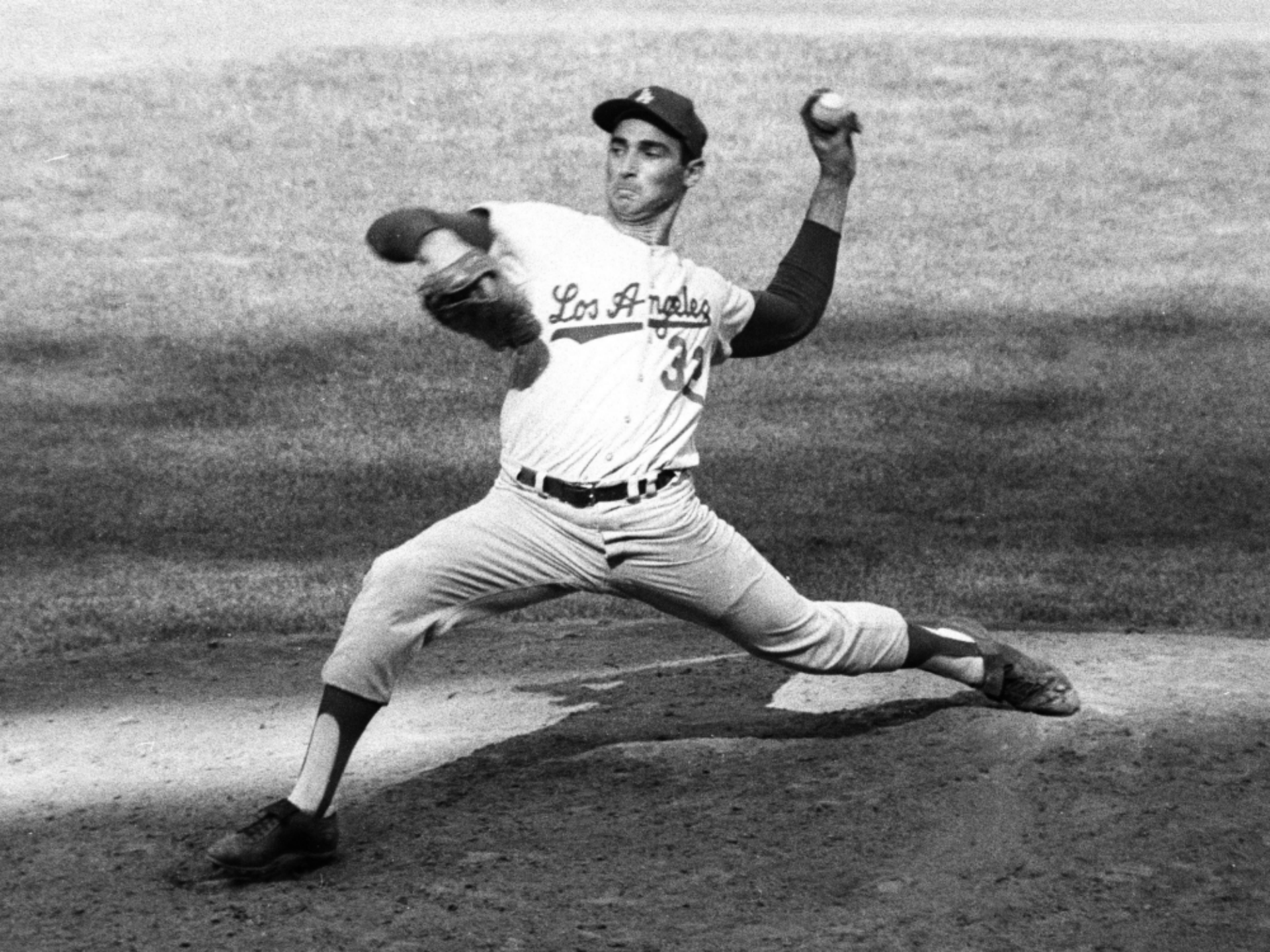


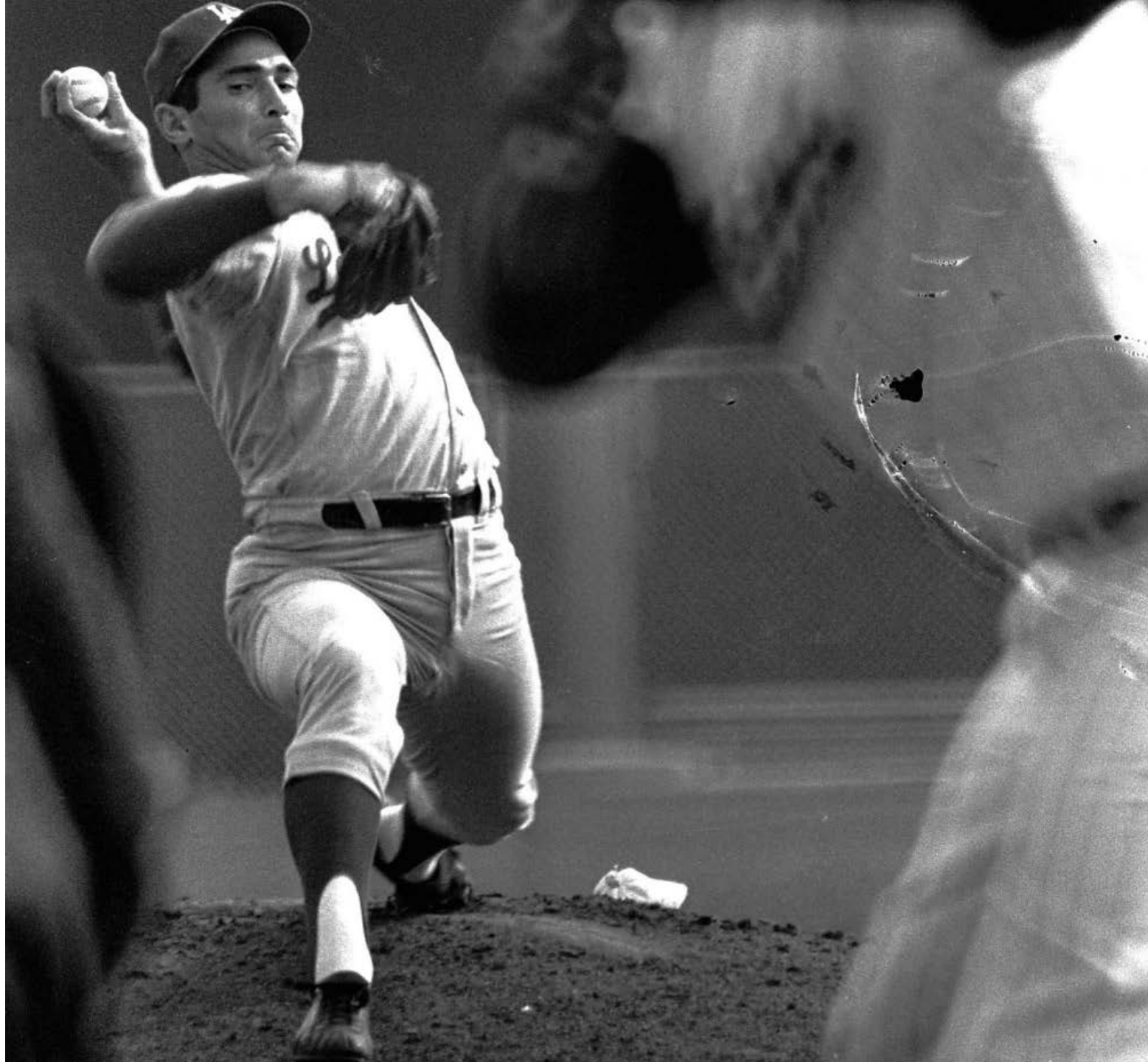




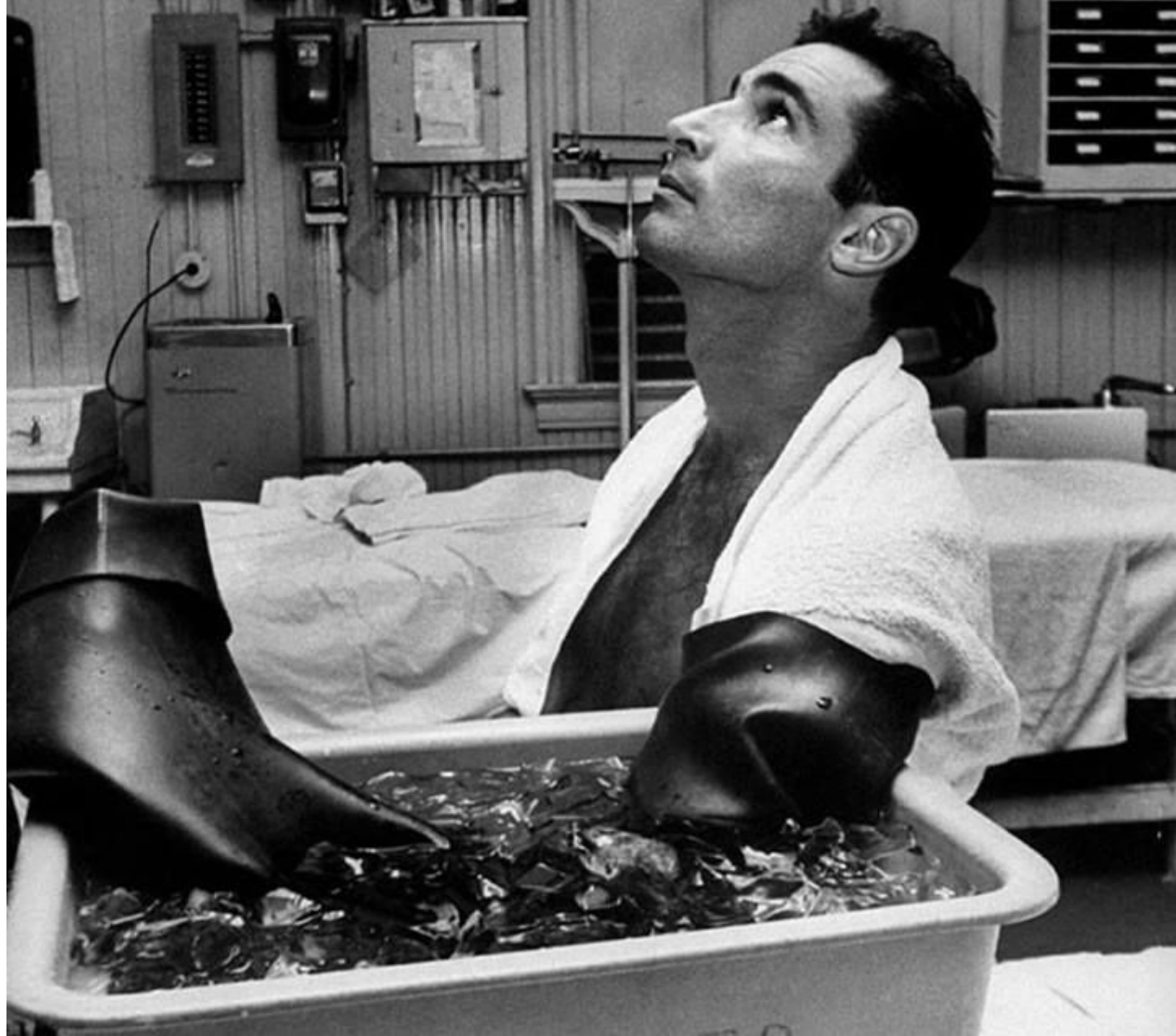
BALANCE?











A lot of my mechanics are still from the Dodgers. A lot of that is Koufax, Drysdale, about hooking the rubber, and just staying on that rubber. I don't pitch off the rubber or on the side of the rubber. I'm on top of the rubber. Half of it. **Half of my foot is on top of the rubber, hooking it.** And the way we used our hips, that's how I learned in the Dodgers organization.

- Pedro Martinez



BACK FOOT STABILITY







Verlander 2009-CF-High

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