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SPORTS

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Gilbert Ready to Step Up in Scouts' Honor

Foundation he founded to benefit baseball's bird dogs will stage its awards banquet Saturday, with Koufax and Bonds among the recipients.

By ROSS NEWHAN
Special to The Times

It already has been an emotional fall for Dennis Gilbert.

The Los Angeles activist and lifetime baseball man contributed to the Chicago White Sox's World Series victory as special assistant to the chairman, but lost out in bidding for the Dodgers' then-vacant general manager position.

Now, Gilbert has another big moment coming up on Saturday when the Professional Baseball Scouts Foundation, of which he was the principal founder in 2002, stages its third "In the Spirit of the Game" awards banquet and memorabilia auction at the Beverly Hilton Hotel.

The banquet, which raises money for ill or financially troubled scouts who are often left unprotected by the clubs for which they have worked, already has become one of the biggest of its kind in the country, generating more than \$600,000 in the first two years.

The third edition features a marquee list of baseball luminaries. Among the award recipients will be Sandy Koufax, Barry Bonds, Tom Lasorda, Buzzie Bavasi and his baseball family, former big league manager Preston Gomez, longtime scouts Frank Malzone and Dick Wiencek and the late Gene Mauch.

Larry King will serve as master of ceremonies, with Willie Mays, Reggie Jackson and Bret Saberhagen among the presenters and special guests.

For Gilbert, a former minor league outfielder, longtime player agent and Beverly Hills insurance man who financed the building of an inner city diamond at Southwest Community College and has been a major contributor to baseball's RBI (Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities) program, the scouts banquet has become another year-round project.

"Between this and RBI," he said, "we've been able to help a lot of people and touch a lot of lives. It's been rewarding."

Gilbert was rewarded in another way in October when the White Sox, for whom he does some advance scouting and contract negotiating as the assistant to Chairman Jerry Reinsdorf, won the World Series. Gilbert rode in the victory parade next to good friend Reinsdorf.

"It was an amazing experience for me, and especially to be around Jerry for that period," Gilbert said. "The whole organization wanted to win for him. I've never been around a more well-liked person."

The high of that experience was punctured some when Gilbert interviewed with Dodger owner Frank McCourt for the general manager role and lost out to Ned Colletti.

"They gave me an opportunity to interview and I'm grateful for that," Gilbert said. "They decided to go in another direction, but I'll still have my season tickets."

Banquet information: Debbie Marks, (310) 858-1935.