

# Tony Graffanino happy to be wearing Royal blue

August 2005

By Lee Warren

Contributing Writer

The Kansas City Royals have had three managers this season, but whenever one of them has penciled second baseman Tony Graffanino into the line up, he has produced. With injuries to Mike Sweeney, Ken Harvey, and Mark Teahen, Graffanino has seen playing time at first base, third base, his customary second base and even shortstop. He's fielded them all well and if he's able to sustain his current batting average through the end of the season, it would be his highest average in his 10-year major league career.

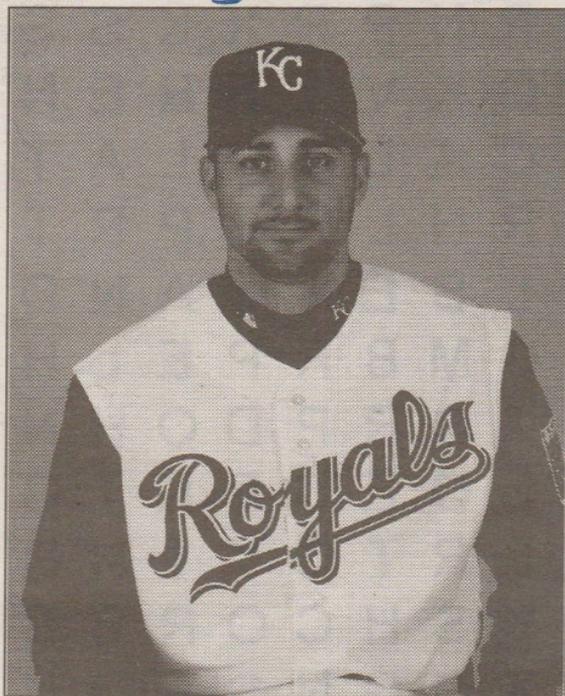
While Graffanino is enjoying a good season, the Kansas City Royals are not. They currently sit at the bottom of the American League Central and are already out of playoff contention. On the other hand, Graffanino's former team, the Chicago White Sox, is in first place and appears to be playoff bound. But Graffanino is still happy to be a Royal.

"I was alone over there as a believer," he said. "I had some friends over there, and they're good friends still, but none who were willing to make a Christian commitment. It was tough. I tried my hardest to witness to guys and I tried my hardest to build relationships..."

He shared that he has no regrets moving to the Royals because he connected with a fellow player, Mike Sweeney, who feels like a "long lost brother," as well as other Christian players such as Scott Sullivan and Jeremy Affeldt.

"When you're a Christian...you just have that immediate connection with people—that Christ-bond that you can't explain," Graffanino said.

Believers on the team challenge each other and are



won't watch TV when we're away from each other."

Even with a strong spiritual life and his great start on the field, not everything is going as well as Graffanino had hoped or expected this season. Before the season, he thought he was going to be the every day second baseman, but the Royals are in the middle of a youth movement and they gave the nod to young second baseman Ruben Gotay instead.

In addition to seeing his playing time reduced, Graffanino also had to fight through several injuries to start the season, including recuperation from a shoulder surgery during the off season. So in more ways than one, this has been a difficult season for him.

"It has been discouraging," Graffanino said.

Often he thinks his plan for his life coincides with God's plan for his life and then something happens to make him realize they are not the same.

"But I'm still in a great position," he said. "God's been so very good to me. He's carried me through everything that's happened in my life and regardless of whether I'm a starting player or a back up player, I've always gotten good playing time and had fun doing it."

accountable to each other. Just this season, Graffanino and Sweeney started a new ritual to stay accountable.

"Mike Sweeney and I started getting adjoining rooms on the road," Graffanino said. "We have an area between the two rooms where we'll hang out together, watching television, and spending time together fellowshiping. We made an accountability pact with each other that we

"Ultimately, I'm not sure what God has in store for my life," Graffanino went on to say, "but the thing I try to keep in my mind every single day is that I'm his representative here. And that I still have a ministry regardless of whether I'm the starting second baseman, or if I'm the utility guy, or in the middle of an injury, or a slump, or a hot streak. My focus at all times still needs to remain on Christ." †