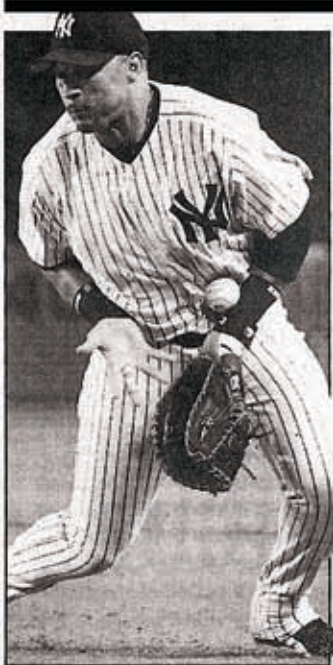


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Sheff credits medical team Surgeon, rehab specialist key to comeback

With his surgically repaired left wrist feeling great, **Gary Sheffield** was asked why he chose **Dr. Charles Melone** to operate and **Gary Flink** as the rehab specialist. "I always do my research," Sheffield told The Post's **George King**. "I knew Dr. Melone operated on **Patrick Ewing's** thumb (1997) and Gary worked with him afterward. I did the same thing with my shoulder. I knew that **Dr. [Frank] Jobe** operated on **Orel Hershiser's** shoulder and I had him do mine."

Flink, whose company Excel Orthopedic Rehabilitation has three

locations in New Jersey facilities (Fort Lee, Oakland and Hackensack), says Sheffield was a model patient. "He was so focused about getting back," said Flink, who worked with Sheffield five days a week for two months. **Richard Jefferson, Willis Reed** and members of the Devils have worked with Flink.

Sheffield has been using **Craig Wilson's** first-baseman's mitt during his crash course. "I don't have time to break in a glove right now," Sheffield told our **Michael Morrissey**. "I have to use one that's already broken in."

The selfless Wilson was glad to lend

a hand, er, glove. "I've got my game one here, and I just tried to get one that was somewhat ready in the event a lace breaks or something in a game," Wilson said. "He was out there and he didn't particularly enjoy the one he had. I tossed him my backup and said, 'If you want to use it, go ahead.'"

Sheffield and Devils goalie **Martin Brodeur** joined more than 60 other guests who mingled with Nets players, executives and cheerleaders at a recent Nets Ticket Influencer Program event at the palatial home of season-ticket holder **John Klein** in Alpine, N.J.