



VICENTE PADILLA

MLB
BOSTON RED SOX
RELIEF PITCHER
6-0, 230 LB.

Three years ago, Texas Rangers starter Vicente Padilla hurled a fastball at Mark Teixeira's right buttock. "Get the f---g ball over the plate!" Teixeira yelled after getting hit, his nostrils flaring. It was the second time Padilla had plunked the Yankees' first baseman that game. No surprise, really—Padilla is an old-fashioned headhunter whose 14-year big-league career has been littered with brawl-inciting pitches.

The enmity between Teixeira and Padilla was reignited in July, when the two faced off in Boston (Padilla spent last season in the Red Sox bullpen). Teixeira told reporters that Padilla "throws at people," and Padilla responded with a tongue-lashing: "As competitive ballplayers, we get pretty fired up," he said. "I think maybe he picked the wrong profession. I think he'd be better off playing a women's sport." Padilla's remark was sexist, sure, but the insult was intended less for women than for those batters, like Teixeira, who can't handle his aggressive style. "He is always crying and complaining," Padilla added.

In Padilla's defence, he hit only three batters this year and insists it's not on purpose. Still, when he took a gunshot to the thigh in 2009, and early reports claimed he'd accidentally shot himself, his poor aim seemed like sweet justice to some. But that turned out to be wrong—it was Padilla's firing-range instructor and an accident. For Padilla, who returned in 2010, lack of control has never been a big concern. "I throw inside," he said. "It's not my problem if the ball hits someone." —**NAOKO ASANO**



MELISSA TANCREDI

SOCCER
TEAM CANADA
FORWARD
5-7, 161 LB.



Melissa Tancredi has a message for anyone who thinks she stomped on the face of American midfielder Carli Lloyd in the Olympic semifinal on purpose. First, the Canadian forward says she was looking at the ball and didn't see Lloyd lying there when her cleats landed on the American's head—it was an accident. Second, "If I were to do that maliciously," Tancredi says, "the person would be hurt." Good point.

Tancredi is not only one of the best female soccer players on the planet—she scored four goals in Canada's bronze medal run in London this summer—but at five-foot-seven and a muscular 161 lb., she's one of the toughest. She plays with "a little bite and edge," and it sometimes means smaller players end up lying on the pitch. "When I'm protecting myself, a lot of people just bounce off of me," says the veteran aptly known as "Tanc." So, she can't help it. Tancredi was born tough.

Off the field, Tancredi isn't one to hold back, either. After that controversial semifinal against the U.S., she told a referee to "put on your American jersey. That's who you played for today." It was the most devastating loss of her career and she makes no apologies for the comments, though if she were to do it over, Tancredi says she would try to walk off the field without talking to the ref. "It was all pure emotion." That game was Canada's most physical of the Olympics—the women in red and white came out fighting. "It was a perfect game for me," Tancredi says. "I loved it." —**KRISTINA RUTHERFORD**

