

“There’s no editing process with me,” he says. “Whatever I spew at that moment is exactly what I wanted to say. And they had a simple criteria for me: ‘What was it like to go through the experience, the World Series, the season?’ So I just portrayed my vision of what the whole thing looked like to me.”

ARTIST

Wilson, who grew up in Massachusetts and New Hampshire as the son of an Air Force man, might have ended up an architect or graphic artist had he not so doggedly pursued a career in baseball. He fondly remembers spending hours at a time as a child in the outdoors, admiring and drawing inspiration from the variety of images offered up by nature.

“I still have my drawings from when I was 3 or 4 years old, and one of my first ones was just drawing huge circles,” he says. “I’d take about 30 sheets of paper and



FEAR THE ARM

BY JON ROISMAN

Between Brian Wilson’s dark black beard and his newfound media spotlight, it can be easy to overlook the fact that the personality belongs to one of the best closers in baseball.

Wilson racked up 127 saves from 2008 to 2010. That’s more than Mariano Rivera. Or Jonathan Papelbon. Or any closer, for that matter. Wilson had a 2.97 ERA over that span, and he struck out three times as many hitters as he walked. He’s also got a World Series ring, the reward for a near-perfect postseason.

All that spells “dominant closer,” beard or not.

Those who have watched Wilson the closest appreciate the way he goes about his business on the mound.

“Whatever pitch he thinks he can get you out with he’s going to throw it,” reliever Jeremy Affeldt says. “It can be the first day he finds that pitch and he’ll come out and throw it with the bases loaded [in a] 3-2 [count].

“He’s such a confident guy, he never panics.”

You wouldn’t think that a pitcher would feel the need to add anything after the type of season Wilson enjoyed in 2010, but he still began this year with a new pitch: a sinking, two-seam fastball.

“There are guys that try to come up with a pitch and they just can’t do it—the way their arm slot is, the way the mechanics are, they just can’t throw that pitch,” Affeldt says. “Wilson has got that kind of stuff where, if he wants to throw that pitch, he can.”

Giants pitching coach Dave Righetti says Wilson’s ability to pitch in any situation has built up his confidence to throw anything without fear.

“In the World Series he broke out a curveball to [Josh] Hamilton,” Righetti says. “He hadn’t thrown one all year, and he decided to flip one in there. That in itself should tell you he’s not afraid.”

Wilson had the raw stuff when he arrived in the Majors, but each year he’s been a closer, he has refined his repertoire, and the results have been apparent. Over his first three full seasons as a closer, his ERA, WHIP and walks have declined, while his strikeouts have increased.

That’s why Righetti says it would be wrong to only see Wilson for his personality, as some sort of novelty act. “Never discount the ability, because it takes a helluva lot of ability to do what he does.”

