

Pressure on Bell in '73— Shift to Tribe Hot Corner

By RUSSELL SCHNEIDER

CLEVELAND, O.—The trading of Graig Nettles by the Indians came as a shock to **Buddy Bell**.

"As soon as it was announced that Nettles was going to the Yankees, I realized it meant I'd be playing third base next season," said **Bell**, the handsome young man who won a legion of followers as a rookie in 1972.

In fact, it was the presence of **Bell**, who became a better-than-average outfielder last season, that was a key factor in the decision to swap Nettles (along with catcher Jerry Moses) to the Yankees for four players during the winter meetings in Hawaii.

The Tribe received highly-regarded outfield prospects Charlie Spikes and Rusty Torres, infielder Jerry Kenney and catcher-first baseman John Ellis.

IF IT HADN'T been for **Bell**, the Indians probably couldn't have made the deal. That's because **Bell**, a righthanded 21-year-old hitter, originally was a third baseman.

Buddy was switched to the outfield last spring when his hot bat won a job with the varsity, instead of going back to the minors for seasoning, which the brass thought he needed.

So now, when Manager Ken Aspromonte tinkers with possible lineups, **Bell**'s name is penciled in as the third baseman.

To which **Bell** admits a slight tinge of apprehension.

"It's not that I'm unsure of myself," he is quick to point out. "I think it'll be easier for me to read-

just to third base than it was to adjust to playing the outfield.

"BUT SURE, I feel some pressure. I think it's only natural. After all, Nettles is a great third baseman and it'll be difficult to fill his shoes. I just hope the fans are as patient with me next season as they were with me last season."

On the other hand **Bell** is looking forward to the move back to third base.

"First," he rationalized, "there was pressure on me last spring, knowing that I had to make the club with my bat and with my ability to do the job in the outfield."

"So the pressure now isn't anything new, and maybe it's not even as great as it was. I think if I work hard and stick with it, I can do the job as well as Graig did. Maybe even better, who knows?"

"If you're halfway decent, you play better under pressure, anyway."

"Another thing," he continued, "is that even if Nettles hadn't been traded, I'd still have to fight for a job. I don't think I did too badly last year, but I didn't exactly burn up the league, either."

WHICH IS PARTLY true. **Bell** finished with a .255 average in 132 games. It included nine homers and 35 RBIs. However, after the All-Star Game break, **Bell** was one of the most consistent contributors.

Buddy went through the first half hitting .235 with two homers, but followed with a .281 average and seven homers, which indicates

his growing maturity as a major leaguer.

There's a third reason **Bell** is looking forward to returning to the infield. He thinks it will improve his offensive contributions.

"I don't know if everybody is affected the same way as I am, but I know that when I have too much time to think about my hitting, I don't seem to do as well."

"And when I played in the outfield, I had too much time to think," **Bell** explained. "At third base, I won't be able to do that. You have to be alert all the time, thinking about what's happening—not what already happened."

"I THINK THE biggest adjustment I'll have to make is a mental one," he continued. "Physically, I know I can do it. But mentally, well, I've got to get myself psyched up more than when I played in the outfield."

Naturally, Aspromonte is sure **Bell** can do the job—and he should know better than anyone. In 1971, when Aspromonte managed Wichita and **Bell** was his third baseman, **Buddy** hit .289 and was the American Association's rookie of the year.

The son of former National League outfielder Gus Bell, **Buddy** was drafted by the Indians as a third baseman in 1969. Because of Nettles, **Bell** was tried in the minors at second base, but had some problems mastering that position. Hence, his move to the outfield.

Bell is "home" again at third base.

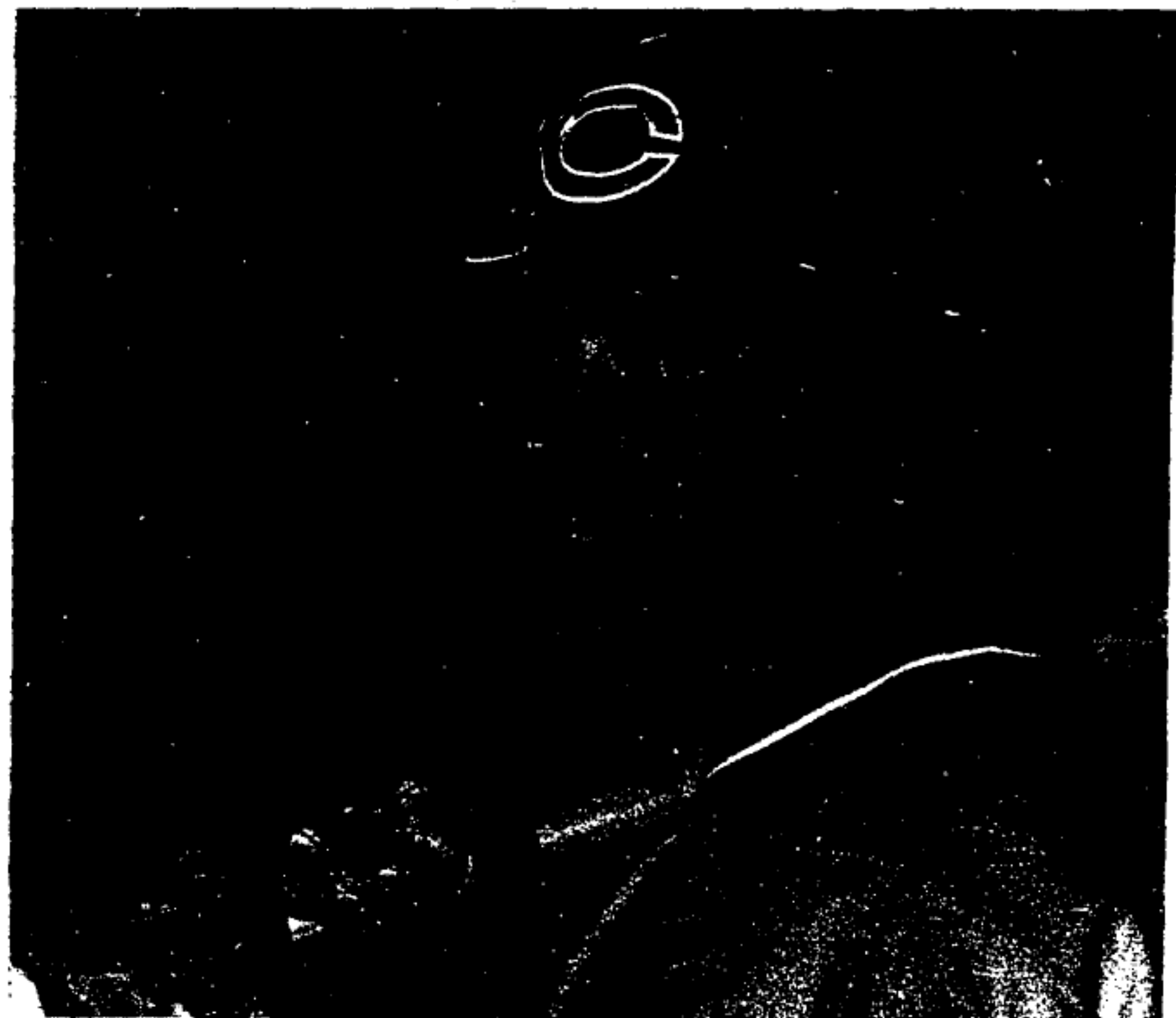
And if Spikes and Torres live up

to their advance notices, **Bell** will turn out to be the key man because, without him, the Nettles trade never would have been consummated.

Tribe Tidbits: **Bell** originally intended to sharpen his third basing skills at Aragua in the Venezuela Winter League, but changed his mind when Lara, which technically "owned" his contract in that league, refused to release the young Tribesman. **Bell** plans to report for spring training a couple of weeks ahead of the February 24 check-in date. **Bell** makes no secret of his contentment with the Indians. "I know Nettles was glad to be traded, but to me, Cleveland

is the best place to play," he said. "Look at the guys we've got and the future we ought to have."

Indian Chiefs Gabe Paul and Aspromonte took off on a Latin-American scouting mission shortly after Christmas. Paul visited Tribesmen playing in Puerto Rico, and Aspromonte did the same in Venezuela. . . . The Indians picked up minor league infielder Angel Hermoso from the Expos in exchange for Portland (Pacific Coast) first baseman Mike Caruthers. Hermoso, assigned to San Antonio (Texas), hit .211 at Peninsula (International) in 1972. Caruthers had a .256 average at Portland.



Buddy Bell . . . Switching to Third?

Cavarretta to Tutor Mets' Milquetoast Hitters

By JACK LANG

NEW YORK, N. Y.—Remember that old Pennsylvania Dutch saying. . . . "Ve grow too soon old und too late schmart." It certainly applies to the Mets.

A dozen years after their birth and through countless games of frustration not only for their pitchers but their millions of fans, the Mets finally have hired someone to teach them how to hit.

They're starting right down at the bottom in the minor leagues, but at least it's a start.

Would you believe that in the first 11 years of their existence the Mets produced only one .300 hitter out of their farm system? That's right, just one.

CLEON JONES, who hit .340 in The Year of the Miracle (1969) and .319 in 1971, is the only man signed by the Mets and developed in their organization who hit .300 in the majors.

In fact, the .300 hitter with the Mets is as rare as the dodo bird.

The first .300 hitter the Mets ever had was Richie Ashburn, who batted .306 in his final year in the majors. After a splendid career with Philadelphia and Chicago, Richie joined the expansion Mets of 1962 and quit after one season.

In 1964, ex-Pirate farmhand Joe Christopher batted .300 for the Mets and Ron Hunt, purchased out of the Braves' organization, hit .303.

The next Met .300 hitter was Tommy Davis, who came over from the Dodgers and batted .302 in 1967—his only year in New York.

ART SHAMSKY, acquired from Cincinnati, joined Jones as a .300 hitter in 1969 and when Cleon batted .319 again in 1971, he was the last of that rare breed for the Mets.

It was probably no coincidence that after the Mets finished dead last in batting in the National League in 1972, with a .225 average,

that General Manager Bob Scheffing decided to do something about it.

He went out and hired former Cub teammate Phil Cavarretta to instruct Met farmhands in the art of hitting next season.

Cavarretta, National League batting champion and Most Valuable Player in 1945, knows a thing or two about hitting. After all, he batted .293 in his long career with the Cubs and White Sox.

'I'm Glad Padres Are Staying'—Colbert

By PHIL COLLIER

SAN DIEGO, Calif.—Major league baseball for San Diego has been assured for at least one more season. Whether it will last beyond that depends on a calculated gamble club officials took in the fall of 1968 when they went into the National League expansion draft to gamble on youth.

"I'm glad we're staying here because I said a year ago that I thought 1973 would be the year we turn the corner," slugger Nate Colbert remarked recently after the Padres spurned Washington offers and decided to remain here for their fifth season.

"When we started out in 1969, we had a lot of young players people weren't familiar with and I was one of them. Now the fans are starting to identify with us," added the 26-year-old first baseman who has a four-season major league total of 127 homers after clouting 38 in 1972.

PADRE MAJORITY Owner C. Arnholt Smith apparently felt the same way recently when he decided to keep the team here in the face of a Washington Stadium proposition that, according to club

Cavvy is the first batting instructor the Mets ever have had. It is expected that he will be in spring training to work with the major leaguers and then will move over and devote the rest of the year to trying to improve the skills of the minor leaguers.

MET PLAYERS have for years decried the absence of a batting coach.

"They have pitching coaches on every team, but how many have

batting coaches to help the hitters when they're in a slump?" Ed Kranepool has asked on many occasions.

The same Kranepool in 1963 rejected the advice of Duke Snider with the remark, "You ain't doing so hot yourself."

But Met players have complained about the absence of a full-time batting instructor. Pittsburgh has had George Sisler and Harry Walker in previous years. Joe L.

Brown, the general manager, fancies himself as somewhat of a hitting coach these days.

St. Louis has had Dick Sisler and Joe Medwick and just recently hired Walker. In Los Angeles, Dixie Walker is the batting coach.

Low Fonseca currently tutors hitters of both the Reds and Cubs. Wally Moses for several years was a Yankee batting instructor and before him it was Bill Dickey.

BUT THE METS never have bothered to hire a hitting specialist. Ralph Kiner worked briefly with some players in the Florida Instructional League, but that was the extent of it.

Casey Stengel, Wes Westrum, Gil Hodges and Yogi Berra never bothered to assign one coach to serve in that special capacity. Most of them chose to handle the duties themselves.

And it will be the same again this year in the second season of Berra's reign.

But at least now down on a minor league level, Cavarretta will be trying to improve the situation.

Met Musings: Publicity director Harold Weissman is vacationing at his new condominium in West Palm Beach. . . . All quiet on the Shea Stadium front with General Manager Bob Scheffing also taking a couple of weeks off at his Arizona manse. . . . The Mets were satisfied with the way Teddy Martinez took to switch-hitting in the Florida Instructional League and intend for him to continue working on it in spring training. . . . Bud Harrelson said he has heard from his partner, Jerry Grote, that he is completely recovered from his September elbow operation and expects to be throwing as well as ever next spring.

prominent players available in the expansion draft, San Diego opted for unknowns such as Colbert, Clay Kirby, Steve Arlin, Clarence Gaston, Jerry Morales, Mike Corkins and Fred Kendall.

The few older players the Padres selected were later dealt away in a continuing youth movement that has given the club title to the likes of Leron Lee, Enzo Hernandez and Derrel Thomas.

AFTER COMPILING identical .379 winning percentages the last two seasons, management now is on the hot seat that San Diego fans have occupied since the club set up shop here.

There are those who contend that the Padres would have been wise in their infancy to have acquired several older name players to give the team stability and provide more box-office appeal.

It seems common knowledge that, at the recent winter meeting in Hawaii, the Padres turned down opportunities to acquire two of the

(Continued on Page 52, Column 4)

Frosh Metzger No. 1 Padre Reliever

By PHIL COLLIER

SAN DIEGO—In the minds of the Padres, the National League's surprise player for April would have to be Clarence (Butch) Metzger.

The 23-year-old rookie right-hander allowed only one run, unearned at that, in his first 10 relief appearances, notching three victories without a defeat and gaining one save.

"Butch has the credentials to pitch that well," Manager John McNamara said of the 6-1, 185-pounder. He allowed six walks, two of them intentional, and only 11 hits in his first 17 innings.

IT IS UNUSUAL for a young pitcher to become the leader in a major league bullpen, and McNamara admitted his use of Metzger in that capacity is not original.

"I saw what Cincinnati did last year with Rawly Eastwick," McNamara said, "and I felt all winter that Metzger might do the same kind of job for us."

Metzger spent five seasons as a starter in San Francisco's minor league system before the Giants threw him into the deal that sent veteran second baseman Tito Fuentes to the Padres for younger second baseman Derrel Thomas the winter before last.

Metzger, who had compiled a 12-10 record with Phoenix in 1974, went to San Diego's Hawaii (Pacific Coast) farm club in 1975 and was a reliever the first two months of the season, winning four of five decisions and posting five saves. Then he went into the starting rotation and finished the year with a 15-7 record.

"I CAME TO spring training this year knowing I rated a good look," said the former Sacramento prep star.

"I think I've adjusted to relief pitching pretty well. I thought I could do a job, but I never expected to get off to this kind of start. I know I'll have some problems, sooner or later."

Perhaps, but there were no hints of impending doom in the rookie's first 10 relief stints.

The Giants signed Metzger out of a Sacramento high school for \$27,000 in 1970. As recently as two years ago, he was faring better in the minors than John Montefusco, his roommate on the Phoenix (Pacific Coast) farm club.

"I was pitching pretty well then," Metzger recalled, "and John was struggling. All of a sudden he went right past me in the Giants' organization and I resented it because I knew he wanted success more than I did at the time."

MONTEFUSCO won the National League Rookie of the Year award in 1975 and now drives a \$19,000 sports car. Metzger is making the majors' minimum salary and hopes the day will come when he can start for the Padres and not relieve.

Those who have watched Metzger this season are impressed by his poise and control.

He saved a victory at Cincinnati by striking out Tony Perez on a change-up.

Several days later, he helped the

Padres beat St. Louis by fanning pinch-hitter Ron Fairly on a slow curve with men on base in a close game.

"The Giants didn't think he had a major league fast ball, but he must be very deceptive," 38-year-old Willie McCovey reasoned after watching Metzger throw his fast ball past a number of proven hitters.

METZGER STILL was at the Class A level entering his third season in the San Francisco organization. He said their minor league pitching coach, Frank Funk, accused him of being stubborn.

"I guess he was right," Metzger admitted. "I was able to throw the ball by hitters in high school and I thought I could do it in the minors. I pitched a game at Decatur in 1972, gave up five hits, didn't walk anybody and struck out 14 but I lost, 4-2. I gave up four bases-empty home runs and got chewed out after the game because I wasn't learning how to pitch."

Now the rookie has a 5-0 major league record, counting a victory with the Giants at the end of the 1974 season and one with the Padres last September.

Padre Pickups: Veteran left fielder John Grubb suffered an ankle injury April 25 that was expected to sideline him about three weeks, but his replacement, rookie Jerry Turner, proved more than adequate. Turner drove in the winning run in two of his first four games as a starter. . . . Veteran third baseman Doug Rader batted .415 in his first 12 games and fielded brilliantly, while 36-year-old center fielder Willie Davis drove in nine runs in his first 18 games.

Lefthander Randy Jones won his first four starts before an 8-5 loss to the Cubs. "I couldn't get the ball down," said the sinkerball specialist. . . . The Cardinals' Ron Fairly was talking about Jones. "I wouldn't want him pitching for my side if we got into a beanball contest," Fairly said. "Randy couldn't get the ball high enough to hit anyone in the head—he would hit everybody on the knee or on the ankle." . . . In a four-hit, 5-1 victory over the Cards, Jones' fast ball was clocked at 73 miles an hour by a radar gun operated by former St. Louis coach George Kissell. That's about 10 miles an hour below the major league average.



Butch Metzger

Bell Forgets Past, Clangs for Tribe

By RUSSELL SCHNEIDER

CLEVELAND—For Buddy Bell, it was like starting all over again, which is the big reason he was so happy.

"I feel better than I have in a long time," the Indians' third baseman said in spring training and repeated often after the season got started. "I feel like, finally, everything is right again and that we are going to have one heck of a year."

Bell also said, "I'm not glad about some of the things that have happened to me, but now I'm not sorry about them anymore because I think they all contributed to making me a better person, and a better player."

IN HIS 24 years, Bell has had his share of adversity—though, to be sure, the blond-haired youth also has enjoyed many of the better things in life, including the adulation of thousands of fans since his arrival on the big league scene in 1972.

But there also were the boos of thousands of fans the first half of last season, when Bell was struggling and often replaced by a pinch-hitter. "I almost went crazy a couple of times," he admitted now. "I probably would have gone crazy if it had not been for my teammates."

The problems of a year ago led to a request of Manager Frank Robinson by Bell "to trade me or I'll have to quit baseball."

That incident went unreported until it appeared in Robinson's recently-published book, "Frank, The First Year." In it Robinson disclosed that Bell, upset about the way he was being used, met with the manager in Boston on June 23.

"I TOLD FRANK I had to be traded because the way things were going, or I'd have to quit," confirmed Bell. "I told him I was very unhappy and that caused my family to be unhappy. And my family is more important to me than even baseball."

According to Bell, Robinson told him, "If you feel that way, you'd

better talk to Phil (Seghi)." Buddy did. "Phil told me flatly he wouldn't trade me. But he also said some other things that made me feel better, that raised my confidence."

"Looking back at it now," recalled Bell, "I did it because I just wasn't used to the things that were happening to me. Maybe I had been pampered too much before, I don't know."

"I did a lot of growing up last year. A month later, Frank and I talked again. By then, everything was all right."

"I TOLD HIM I felt like a part of the ball club again, which I hadn't before. That's what bothered me so much. He understood. He handled it well, the only way he could."

"If the same things were to happen to me, I'd meet with Frank again—but not with the trade-or-I'll-quit attitude. In that respect, I'm glad it happened. At least I'm not sorry."

"It's the same way I feel about

my knee," continued Bell. He suffered torn ligaments and cartilages in his right leg during the winter of 1973-74 while playing basketball.

Buddy tried to avoid an operation, but the knee collapsed several times during the 1974 season, causing him to be disabled twice for more than six weeks—and also during which he hit .262 with seven homers and 46 RBIs.

FINALLY, in October, 1974, Bell submitted to surgery. Last spring training, he was asked daily by virtually everyone close to the club for progress reports. It was maddening. "I never could get it out of my mind," he confirmed.

Then came the season, a "horrible" start for Bell, the boos and his meeting with Robinson, before he turned it all around, finishing with his major league high average of .271, 10 homers and 59 RBIs.

To finish that well, Bell hit .309 the second half.

"All things considered, it was the most gratifying year of my life," he said. "I could've told myself, 'Oh, the hell with it,' when things were going so bad, but I didn't."

"Now I'm not even sorry anymore that I hurt my knee. It taught me something. I'm a great believer that everything happens for the best. Maybe somebody was telling me I was getting too cocky."

"WHATEVER, I'm a better person for what I've experienced. A better player, too," Bell said.

There was ample evidence to support the latter contention. After the Indians' first 12 games (in which they split even), Bell was hitting .395 (17-for-43).

"Physically and mentally I feel better than I ever have in my life," he said. "It's why I'm so anxious about this season."

Another great feeling Buddy has is that the Indians can win it all in 1976. "Sure we can," he insisted. "This is a different kind of a team. We've got enough of everything, especially the attitude, the belief that we can win."

"It used to be that other teams liked to play us because we were always making mistakes, doing something to lose. They knew they didn't have to do anything special to beat us."

"But that's not the way it is anymore, and I'm not the only guy who feels that way."

Tribe Tidbits: Bell was involved in a brawl with the A's Bert Campaneris on April 25 which nearly touched off a free-for-all between the two teams. The sequence of events began in the fourth inning when Campaneris thought Bell slid too high and too hard in breaking up what might have been a double-play attempt. In the fifth, Joe Rudi slid into Tribe catcher Alan Ashby, jarring the ball loose, leading to the A's taking an 8-0 lead (and ultimate 9-0 victory). Next in the fifth, Campaneris was hit by a pitch from Jim Kern. In the sixth inning, Bell sliding into second again, was hit in the face by Campaneris' throw. The Indians charged that Campaneris threw the ball down at Bell, which, of course, was denied. The two players tangled and both teams surged onto the field. Before peace was restored, Bell's face was cut and scratched in several places, the result, he said, of his being kicked by Campaneris.

Tribe first baseman Boog Powell suffered a sprained ankle in the melee and subsequently was placed on the disabled list until at least May 10. His foot was put in a cast to facilitate healing. Naturally, bad blood between the two clubs resulted. . . . When Powell was disabled, Robinson was activated. . . . John Lowenstein suffered a mild concussion in Minneapolis on April 26 when he bumped his head on a nightstand in the Leamington Hotel after he had dropped his watch and was bending over in the dark to pick it up.

Denice and Dennis Eckersley became the proud parents of a daughter, Mendee, on April 29 following the pitcher's second victory and second straight two-hitter, this one over the Twins, 9-0.



Buddy Bell

BOX SCORE SHEETS

Used by Newspapers and
Teams Throughout the World

\$3.00 per Pad of 100
Send Cash With Order
NBC-P.O. Box 1420 - Wichita, Ks. 67201

OFFICIAL LINE-UP CARDS

2 Pk. Carbon - Easy, Quicker
\$4.00 per 100 (includes post.)

Send Cash With Order
NBC-P.O. Box 1420 - Wichita, Ks. 67201

**JOIN THE NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION OF SCORERS**

Write for Membership Info
National Baseball Congress
P.O. Box 1420 - Wichita, Ks. 67201

OFFICIAL BASEBALL RULES

From NBC only 50¢
\$3.00 dozen (includes postage)

Cash With Order
NBC-P.O. Box 1420 - Wichita, Ks. 67201

UMPIRES - JOIN N.A.U.!

National Assoc. of Umpires
America's Largest and Finest
Organization of Non-Pro Umpires

Write for Membership Info
NBC-P.O. Box 1420 - Wichita, Ks. 67201

Buddy Bell Indians' Man of the Year

By RUSSELL SCHNEIDER

CLEVELAND—Buddy Bell has been elected the Indians' Man of the Year for 1973 and the choice couldn't have been more popular.

The blond, 22-year-old third baseman was the Tribe's most consistent performer with a .268 batting average that included 14 homers and 59 RBIs.

Bell led the Indians in games (156), at-bats (631), runs (85), hits (169), and triples (seven).

"Buddy typifies everything that goes into the Man of the Year award," said General Manager Phil Seghi. "Nobody works harder and nobody deserves the recognition more than he does. I'm thrilled for him."

"SOMETHING LIKE this is the greatest joy a manager can experience—to see a boy mature into a fine player," said Manager Ken Aspromonte, who progressed through the minors with Bell.

"Buddy always has done everything that was asked of him, and more. He's right at the top among the most coachable boys I've ever had the pleasure of being associated with, and he will get even better," predicted Aspromonte.

"This is the biggest thrill of my life," said Buddy's father, Gus, who was a star big leaguer himself for 15 seasons.

"Until now, the greatest thrill I ever had was being picked on the 1953 National League All-Star team. But this means more to me because I know how much it means to Buddy."

"IT'S UNBELIEVABLE, although I shouldn't be surprised. He always was such a good kid. All we ever had to do was give him a bat and a ball and there'd never be any problem with him. Buddy always loved to play baseball."

"I'm half-surprised—surprised that you picked me but not surprised that you picked Buddy," said Bob Gill. "I don't know about me, but Buddy sure deserved the award you're giving him."

Gill, the Indians' traveling secretary, was elected the Good Guy for 1973 and will be honored, along with Bell, at the 28th annual Ribs and Roasts dinner, show in the Sheraton-Cleveland Hotel in late January.

The best tribute to Bell, who was the Tribe's only representative on the 1973 American League All-Star team, came from his pretty wife, Gloria.

"I KNOW, probably better than

anybody, how hard Buddy has worked to become the player he is," she said. "He'll work until he drops for something he loves—and he loves baseball."

"Sometimes it's hard for a woman to understand, but I do now, and I consider myself lucky to have him the way he is. He's not a big talker, but he is a big thinker and a big doer. I'm so happy for him."

"You should have seen the way Buddy came home after he learned he'd won the award. I think he was walking three feet off the ground. He was so happy he couldn't eat supper—and when he can't eat, that's really something!"

The honoree didn't try to disguise his feelings.

"THIS IS THE biggest thing that ever happened to me," said Bell. "I thought I had a chance to win, but I didn't let myself think about it too much because I didn't want to be disappointed."

"I think this will make me play

better next season because I enjoy pressure, and there will be pressure on me to justify the confidence everyone is showing in me."

As for his competitors, Bell said, "I thought Gaylord Perry had a good shot at the award, and so did John Ellis, Chris Chambliss and Walt Williams."

Ellis and Chambliss were nominated, but Bell's election by the Cleveland chapter of the Baseball Writers Association of America was unanimous.

"I'M SO HAPPY I'm still floating on air," added Bell. "The only thing that would make me unhappy now would be for the Indians to trade me."

It should be the least of his worries.

Tribe Tidbits: "Good Guy" Gill has been associated with the Indians since 1922. He moved into the front office in 1937 and served as secretary to the club president and general manager. In 1946, Gill was promoted to traveling secretary.

He became business manager of the Tribe's Spartanburg (Tri-State) affiliate in 1947 and 1948, moving on to the same duties at Dayton (Central) in 1949 and 1950. After returning to his secretarial duties, Gill again became the Indians' traveling secretary in 1972. . . . Other Good Guys nominees were pitching coach Warren Spahn, who resigned at the end of the season; trainer Jim Warfield and Walter Williams.

Hank Kozloski of the Horvitz newspapers (headquartered in Lorain, O.) was elected chairman of the Cleveland chapter of the BBWAA, succeeding Russell Schneider of the Plain Dealer. Dick Svoboda, of United Press International, was re-elected secretary-treasurer. . . . Of possible winter deals, Phil Seghi says, "There's nothing hot but I've left my calling cards with a lot of clubs and something might develop." . . . The Indians will open spring training camp in Tucson, Ariz., either February



Buddy Bell

25 or 26. . . . They'll begin the 1974 season in New York, against the Yankees in Shea Stadium, on Saturday, April 6, and stage the home opener on Tuesday, April 9, against Milwaukee.

Tigers Must Deal, But Then Again Must They?

By JIM HAWKINS

DETROIT—Fergie Jenkins admits he would love to be a Tiger. So the Cubs trade him to Texas.

Tiger General Manager Jim Campbell confesses he has his eyes on Ellie Rodriguez. So the Brewers ship the catcher to California.

Everybody knows the Tigers are in dire need of a new second baseman. So the Phillies add Dave Cash to their collection, giving them a full quartet at that position.

Meanwhile, all is quiet at the corner of Michigan and Trumbull.

RALPH HOUK is fishing in Florida. . . . Campbell is on vacation. . . . and the rest of the front office staff is attending to such significant details as whether the writers will have chicken or swiss steak at their annual luncheon.

But you have to wonder if, maybe, it isn't merely the lull before the storm.

The Tigers wouldn't dare passively sit out another winter trading fair. . . . would they?

Naw, just wait until Campbell and Houk and the rest of the exchange artists get to Houston. Then watch the flesh fly!

Uh-huh. Sure.

FRANKLY, it's difficult to envision the Tigers sitting still this winter—even though they definitely do seem to have a habit of doing exactly that.

Every year, it seems, it's the same story. They go to the winter meetings with all sorts of good intentions. They're in the market for "this" or "that" and day after day Campbell confidentially admits, "we're talking to everyone."

Then, when it's all over—when all the deals have been consummated—the Tigers climb on an airplane and head home, with nothing more substantial than a few souvenirs and a slight case of varicose veins to show for their trip.

LAST WINTER'S junket to Honolulu was typical. They went west looking for a first baseman, a sec-

ond baseman, an outfielder, and possibly some more pitching. They settled for Dick Sharon and Rich Reese.

The year before that, Campbell pursued a couple pitchers—Sam McDowell and Ken Holtzman, by name—and wound up with Chris Zachary, instead.

Joe Niekro. . . Dalton Jones. . . Tom Haller. . . Jerry Robertson. . . those are the sort of players the Tigers usually pick up at baseball's annual convention while the players who win championships go elsewhere.

IN FAIRNESS to Campbell, it must be pointed out he has made his share of swaps that were both stunning and successful.

What G. M. wouldn't love to claim credit for the infamous Denny McLain deal that brought

the Tigers half an infield, plus a 20-game winner for a prodigal pitcher who won only 14 games the rest of his big league career?

Campbell bought Woodie Fryman from the Phillies and Duke Sims from the Dodgers and they brought the Tigers half-a-pennant in 1972.

AND THERE'S no way Willie Horton would have hit .316 this season if Campbell hadn't parted with a pile of cash to bring Frank Howard to Detroit the year before.

Just because those deals weren't made during the winter meetings doesn't detract from their impact.

But all that is history. The Tigers must make some deals—and they've got to make them now. If Campbell waits until next summer to see what's available, it may be too late.

Burroughs Wins Bid for Closer Fences

By MERLE HERYFORD

ARLINGTON—It took Jeff Burroughs and a 30-homer season, but the Texas Rangers have conceded the Arlington Stadium fences must come in.

Having won a year-long battle with his employers, Burroughs now has set his sights on the American League home run crown, which he missed by only two in '73.

In 1973, his first full season in the majors, the 22-year-old California slugger wound up with 30. Jeff says he "lost at least a dozen to that strong right field wind and the long power alley."

"Jeff has proved his point," conceded Owner Bob Short as he announced that "we'll definitely shorten the fences from eight to 10 feet from center field to the foul lines on both sides."

"THE BIG complaint for two years has been right field, but we'll keep the park symmetrical by coming straight across from center to the lines, eliminating the present bulges in right and left center."

"It should help Burroughs—and probably a lot of opposing sluggers—but we decided on the change finally because we were convinced we needed to do some-

thing to make our park more comparable to other parks. It's unrealistic to have to hit one way at home and another on the road."

It'll still be a pitchers' park, with the dimensions approximately 320 on the lines, 370 in the alleys and 400 in center, but a little more inviting to sluggers like Burroughs.

Jeff, understandably, was elated at the news.

"IT WAS BAD enough to lose as many homers as I did," he said, "but it wouldn't have been quite as bad if a few balls had bounced off the fences for doubles. However, it seemed every time I thought I'd hit one out and didn't, somebody would back against the fence and grab it. All I needed was another four or five feet."

Although he's aware pitchers may work him differently in view of the new dimensions, Burroughs thinks any change can only be helpful.

"They pitched me outside all year," he noted, "figuring I couldn't reach the fences in right consistently. Now maybe they'll mix 'em up a little, give me a few inside pitches. I know I can reach the left field stands if I can get a few balls to pull."

Burroughs proved that last summer when he hit a grand slam at Arlington. It was the first of three grand slams in nine days for Jeff. He followed up with slams at Oakland and Chicago.

LATE IN THE season, he blasted a drive just below the scoreboard in left, a wallop estimated in excess of 475 feet.

"Knowing the pitchers better should help me as much as them," Burroughs thinks, "but the biggest help has to be psychological. I admit those home fences had me psyched. They did that to a lot of guys. This should provide a big mental lift."

Ranger Ramblings: Former Red Sox star Jim Piersall has been named promotions director, succeeding Oscar Molomot, who had held the post for three years with the Senators-Rangers. Molomot will return to Minneapolis, where he will continue to be associated with Bob Short's organization. . . . Larry Gura, 26-year-old lefthander, has been acquired by the Rangers, completing the deal in which Mike Paul went to the Cubs August 31. . . . Gura was 2-4 with the Cubs last season.



LEADFOOT!

Outfit your entire team with ankle weights during practice. Build leg muscles and stamina in early training and watch your standing change by the close of the season.

Elmer's ankle weights are top quality leather, filled with fine lead shot to provide rugged comfort and durability. They fit any laced shoe and are held in place with a shoe hook. Totalling five pounds a pair, they'll speed up your slowest base runner. Try putting the lead on to help get the lead out.

Elmer's
WEIGHTS, INC.

P.O. BOX 5426
LUBBOCK, TEXAS 79417

Free catalog on complete line available.