

# Frisch Hits High 'C' on Gee as Mound Hope for Pirates

Frankie, Fresh From Hospital, Filled With Optimism Over Outlook; Benswanger Back From Visit to California; Pirates Take Off for Muncie Camp March 14

By CHARLES J. DOYLE

PITTSBURGH, Pa.

Frankie Frisch isn't sure he could qualify as a front-line Leatherneck, and the infield situation on his favorite club has not reached the stage where he will try a comeback, but the Ol' Flash was a rarin' to go somewhere when he left Mercy Hospital this week in the wake of a minor operation. Frank lost upwards of 20 pounds of excess baggage in the wintry blasts of Alaska, and was the picture of health when he returned, but he required some surgical attention and when he departed for New Rochelle early this week, he was loaded with optimism.

The Pirate pilot is not saying much about penants, but, after scanning the rosters of other clubs in the loop and comparing them with his own list of athletes, he naturally feels that the Bucs should be right up there in the thick of the flag fight. There is a chance, however, that the Flash may lose a couple of important men to Uncle Sam before the starting gong sounds, and if he does, he will be right in the same boat as the Cardinals, the Giants, the



Johnny Gee

## Cop to Patrol First for Nats

Butka Looms as Initial Sack Guardian; Case Gets Top Senatorial Salary

By SHIRLEY POVICH  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

A Canonsburg, Pa. policeman may arrest the attention of Manager Ossie Bluege of the Nats when the infielders and outfielders of the Washington squad report for spring training on March 20 at the University of Maryland campus. The cop is Ed Butka, a big first baseman, who works at being a policeman in the off-season.

Among Butka's shining assets is a handsome 4-F card stamping him physically unfit for military duty, but there are other items which will interest Bluege when the big fellow reports. There is a high possibility that a battle for the first-base job will develop between Butka and veteran Joe Kuhel. Butka was bought by the Nats last summer from Springfield of the Eastern League. He led that circuit in hitting for most of the season and finished up with an estimable .298 average for the year. He is built on the perfect specifications of a first baseman, tall, rugged and slick with his feet. He hits and throws righthanded.

Defensively, Butka is no Kuhel, however, but there was the little item of Kuhel's .213 average with the White Sox last year and Bluege is in a mood to accept more batting strength at the sacrifice of defensive talent. It was Kuhel's worst year at bat in the big leagues, incidentally, and probably excusable inasmuch as he suffered throughout the season from a hernia condition that has since been remedied.

Robbed Case of Stolen Base With Hit Bluege was impressed with Butka the first time he saw him, but one member of the Washington team, George Case, felt no instant affection for the big rookie from Springfield. Butka made his first appearance with the Nats as a pinch-hitter in the final days of the race when Case was trying to overhaul Wally Moses for the base-stealing championship. Case had failed to get on base, however, until his last time at bat, when he singled, and now he was eager to steal.

Case was under way and had a big lead on the first pitch when all of a sudden Butka swung. It was a lengthy two-bagger that hit the center field wall on the fly, a nice hit for a rookie breaking in, but it robbed Case of a precious stolen base.

One of Clark Griffith's major holdout worries vanished this week, incidentally, when the signed contract of Case arrived in the mails. Curiously enough, Butka's signed contract for 1944 was in the same mail. Case had been making holdout gestures, but he signed at what Griffith called "a nice raise in pay," marking the sixth consecutive year in which the flashy Case has received a salary increase.

Case last season led the league in base stealing for the fifth consecutive year with his 61 thefts, and also topped the league in runs scored. His .294 batting average was tops on the Washington team and stamped him as the fourth leading outfielder in the league. He now rates as the highest-paid player on the Washington club, replacing Dutch Leonard in that role.

## Gerald Walker Says Game Began Slipping Before War

The game declined in quality of play before World War II, Gerald (Gee) Walker, Cincy outfielder, said at his Orlando, Fla. home, between swishes of a paint brush on the side of his home on one of the numerous lakes of the section.

"They are not getting the caliber of kids in the majors they used to get," said Gee. "Youngsters have turned to softball and football and some of the new players coming into the majors don't know what a hit-and-run play is. They don't know how to pull a squeeze play."

Gee should know what it means not to know how to execute a run-and-hit or squeeze play; he's been in on 'em, more or less successfully, for 13 summers in the Big Time.

## Neurology

Thomas E. Mills, long a prominent figure in Notre Dame athletics and a former sports commentator with the National Broadcasting Company, died of a heart attack in a shower room in the Rockne Memorial field house at Notre Dame, Ind., February 25. He was a director of the Rockne Memorial, and affiliated with the faculty as a speech instructor.

Sixty years old, Mills was born in Beloit, Wis., April 3, 1883, and graduated from Beloit College in 1905. He served as coach at Rockford, Ill., and Omaha, Neb., Central High schools and at Creighton University before returning to Beloit in 1920, where he was director of athletics and head coach in football and basketball. He served as assistant coach under the late Knute Rockne at Notre Dame from 1926 to 1930; was head football coach at Georgetown University in Washington, D. C., from 1930 to 1932; head football coach and head of the speech department at Arkansas State University for two years and resigned to join the National Broadcasting Company, later returning to Notre Dame.

Two sons, both in the Army, and a daughter survive. His wife died in 1932.

William A. Bergen, the younger of two catcher brothers who led the National League in fielding for two seasons, passed away in Worcester, Mass., December 19, after a long illness, friends have learned. His older brother, Martin, was with Pittsburgh in 1893, and the Boston Braves from 1897 to 1899, dying in 1900.

Born in North Brookfield, Mass., June 13, 1873, William was considered one of the best fielding catchers in the game and few base runners took liberties with his arm. After playing two seasons with Fort Wayne, he went to the Cincinnati Reds in 1901 and was bought by Brooklyn in 1905 to remain until the spring of 1912, when he was released to Baltimore. Subsequently, he was with Newark, Scranton and Greensboro, retiring from Scranton in 1917. He led National League catchers in fielding in 1908 and 1911. His wife of 41 years survives.

J. A. (Jack) Corrigan, former minor league player and manager, fell dead on the steps at the front of his home in Stanley, N. D., February 22. Postmaster at the North Dakota town since 1934, he was 66 years old. Surviving are the widow, one daughter, three brothers and a sister.

After playing with various clubs in the Northern League in the early part of the century, Jack managed teams at Green Bay, Wis., Lethbridge, Alta., and Rochester, Minn., and also was active in semi-pro ball at Kalispell, Mont., and in Northwest North Dakota.

William Young Knowlton, 45, former pitcher with the Philadelphia Athletics and many minor league clubs, died February 25, as he stepped from a trolley car near his home in Philadelphia. Death was due to a heart attack.

Knowlton broke in with the A's in 1920 and finished the season with Petersburg in the Virginia League. After pitching semi-pro ball for a year, he returned to Organized Ball with Jersey City and Crisfield, Md., in 1922. Subsequently he pitched for Wilkes-Barre, Toronto, Williamsport and Decatur, Ill.

Paul T. Sunday, son of the late evangelist, William A. Sunday, who starred as an outfielder in the National League in the '30s, was killed with three others, February 24, when a Navy patrol bomber crashed against a mountainside in low clouds and snow storms near Palmdale, Calif. He was a test pilot for Lockheed Aircraft Corporation at Burbank, Calif. Thirty-six years old, Paul was born many years after his father retired from the game. The elder Sunday died November 6, 1935.

## Cincy's Riddle: Why Is Riddle Never Picked?

Despite Brilliant Feats, Red Ace Always Is Passed Up in Awarding Honors

By TOM SWOPE

CINCINNATI, O.



Elmer Riddle

It's common knowledge that the Cincinnati Reds have a Riddle who has been one of the chief pitching riddles of the National League to his opponents in two of the three seasons he has toiled on the mound for Manager Bill McKechnie. But there's a bigger riddle about Elmer Riddle than the riddle he has represented to enemy batsmen.

This riddle is: "Why isn't Riddle picked for any distinctive honor?"

McKechnie began using Elmer as a starting hurler in 1941 and by All-Star game time that year he had a record of nine victories and no defeats and had beaten all opposing teams, except Pittsburgh. Against the Pirates he had pitched only four and one-third innings in a relief role without allowing any runs or hits.

But was Elmer picked for the National League's All-Star pitching staff that year? He was not. Nor did he come close to winning the most valuable player award at the end of the season, even though he was the league's leading pitcher with 19 victories against four defeats and an earned-run average of 2.24 for each nine innings.

Elmer's sophomore year as a starting hurler wasn't so hot, not because

## Riddle 15th Cincy Hurler With More Than 20 Wins

By winning 21 games and losing only 11 in 1943, Elmer Riddle became the fifteenth hurler in modern Cincinnati history to reach the charmed circle of 20-game victors.

The 15 accomplished the feat on 25 occasions—Paul Derringer four times, Noodles Hahn, Eppa Rixey and Pete Donohue each three times and Bucky Walters twice.

his pitching was inferior, but because luck didn't run his way often enough to bring him into the spotlight. He held his foes to an average of less than one hit an inning and pitchers who do that do not exactly grow in clusters like cherries.

But Elmer came back with a bang in 1943 in his junior year as one of the McKechnie troupe of starters and the riddle about Riddle grew more complex when the pickers again passed him up.

Not Even in All-Star Lineup When the All-Star game was played last July, Elmer again was denied a place on his league's pitching staff, even though he then possessed a season's record of 11 victories and four defeats.

Of his last 11 decisions previous to the 1943 All-Star frolic at Philadelphia, Elmer won ten and lost only one. His 11 victories included at least one decision over each of the seven opposing teams.

But Elmer's name didn't appear on the National's All-Star game roster. In picking their All-Star game pitchers, the league's managers went hook, line and sinker for Morton Cooper, who then had won 11 and lost five, as compared to Riddle's 11 and four record. Why they slighted Elmer is a mystery, ignoring him while selecting some pitchers with much poorer records for the season.

By the time the season ended and the members of the league's most valuable player committee began casting their votes for the year's award, Riddle, Cooper and Rip Sewell each owned 21 victories, top total for the year in the major leagues, with Elmer's 21 having a lot to do with making a second-place team of his Cincinnati club.

But Elmer didn't poll many points in the 1943 most valuable player balloting, the writers passing him up in somewhat the same manner as did the managers in naming their all-star staff. They didn't give him quite as cold a shoulder as did the managers. But it was chilly enough.

Before that, however, the Riddle riddle became more of a riddle when Elmer was ignored in another selection. That was when the National League's team was picked for the Pacific tour which was to have taken place after the World's Series, but was called off

Adventures of LONGINES THE WORLD'S MOST HONORED WATCH

The watch that kept two winters in the snow

It was in 1910 that a New York banker got this Longines watch as a birthday gift. He was naturally proud of it because it was one of the first Longines "moisture-proof" watches to be made. Then he lost it and two winters were to pass before he would see it again.

One day his son was mowing the lawn and breathing the sweet smell of newly cut grass when something shiny on the ground caught his eye. It was the long lost watch, none the worse for its long sleep of two winters in the snow.

His son wears it proudly today, a very perfect timepiece that has run for thirty-one of its thirty-three years of life.

The personal experiences of hundreds of thousands are the substance of the reputation of Longines watches for keeping good time for a long, long time. It is a reputation that has been abiding for 77 years.

Longines-Wittnauer Watch Co., Inc., New York, Montreal, Geneva; also makers of the Wittnauer Watch a companion product of unusual merit.

Longines THE WORLD'S MOST HONORED WATCH



by the War Department because the transportation could not be spared.

Riddle volunteered to go. Make no mistake about that. As soon as the blanks were made available to members of the Cincinnati team, he signed up for the tour and had every reason to believe he would be picked because then, as at the finish of the season, he was one of the circuit's most successful hurlers in games won and lost and also one of its most effective ones.

But Elmer wasn't selected for the Pacific Journey, while some less successful pitchers were named. That slight was a real blow to Elmer's pride. It hurt him deeply. And it was a slight that his mates also resented.

Enough time has elapsed since the 1943 season to heal the wounds to Elmer's pride caused by the shabby way he was overlooked in three respects. But he has not forgotten. Nor have his mates. And you can bet that the mild-mannered and soft-spoken Elmer will go into action this season determined to pitch so effectively that the pickers no longer dare to ignore him. And his mates, realizing what a truly fine pitcher he is, and what an asset he is to their team, will be in there bearing down with everything they have when he's on the mound, trying to help Elmer win the acclaim to which they believe him entitled.