

Bing's Swaps Boost Cards' Power Rating

Blasingame Deal Weakened Defense, But Gave Team Needed Punch at Platter

By JACK HERMAN



Bing Devine

Since Bing Devine moved into Frank Lane's swivel chair as Cardinal general manager two years ago, he has swept house briskly with a big broom. The December 15 swap in which the Redbirds picked up Daryl Spencer and Leon Wagner from San Francisco for swift Don Blasingame merely continued what Der Bingle has been doing right along.

The three-player trade was Devine's fourteenth since taking over as G. M. Emphasizing that he won't stand pat with so-so clubs is the fact that Blasingame was the sixth member of the '58 opening-game lineup to be dealt off. Not counting the pitcher, only Stan Musial and Ken Boyer are left.

Blasingame, of course, isn't to be faulted for the Birds' dismal seventh-place wind-up last season. The Corinth (Miss.) Comet enjoyed a creditable year, batting .289 and reaching base 247 times.

But the Cards are crying for power. Even Manager Solly Hemus admitted that the Redbirds may not be strong defensively or in speed in 1960, following the Blasingame transaction.

"Still," Hemus observed, "I think we've helped ourselves again. We have more power—fellows who can belt the ball out of the park for us."

Sound Offensive Club Now Since the Cards turned from a power-hitting to a pop-gun team, in '58, Devine has moved heaven and earth to beef up the Birds. Seventh in homer-hitting again last season, the Cardinals, he said, "have changed their pattern from a questionable offensive club to a sound one."

Even though 25-year-old Wagner fell off to .225 last season with brief duty, Hemus felt the Cards got a "plus" in the three-man deal.

"Wagner was an untouchable last year," Hemus pointed out. "We tried to get him instead of Bill White," but he had just banged 30 homers, 13 for the Giants in 74 games while batting .317.

The '58 regulars who are long-gone are Del Ennis, left field; Wally Moon, right field; Hobbie Landrith, catcher; Al Dark, shortstop; Bobby Gene Smith, center field, and now Blasingame.

As a result of Devine's most recent visit to the trade market, the Cardinals will reshuffle their batting order. Blasingame, of course, will lead off for Bill Rigney, but what about his St. Louis successor?

It will be none other than Joe Cunningham, Blasingame's roommate here and on the road during the season. Finishing second in league hitting to Milwaukee's Hank Aaron, Cunningham stroked .345 last summer.

Cunningham on Base 245 Times Cunningham drew a team-leading total of 89 walks. He reached base 245 times, only two fewer than the Blazer, who went up to the plate approximately 150 more times than his roomie.

Hemus plans to install Spencer at shortstop, his one-time position until the Cardinals decided to give Andre Rodgers the job, then Eddie Bressoud. "I think Spencer is better at short," said Mighty Mouse Hemus, "and (Alex) Grammas can play second and short equally as well." The Golden Greek, said the manager, probably can make the DP better at second than Spencer.

Redbird Chirps: The Cards' most recent deal, said Manager Solly Hemus, "gives us an altogether different club."

He wasn't just whistling Dixie. . . . With brand-new biffers like Bob Nieman (21 homers and 60 RBIs), Spencer (12 and 62), Carl Sawatski (9 and 43) and Wagner (five and 22), the Redbirds appear, as Bing Devine says, "that they're going to be tougher in a tough league." . . . In short, they've picked up athletes who drove in a total of 187 runs last season, as compared to only 34 for the trio (Blasingame, Bobby Gene Smith and Gene Green) they traded. . . . The first Cardinals to sign for '60 were young Pitchers Bob Gibson, Bob Duliba and Marshall Bridges, all of whom are key '60 figures.

400 Sports Notables Attend Testimonial for Bob Burnes

ST. LOUIS, Mo.—Some 400 sports notables turned out on the night of December 13 at the Starlight Roof of Hotel Chase for a testimonial dinner in honor of Bob Burnes, sports editor of the St. Louis Globe-Democrat and a contributor to THE SPORTING NEWS.

With Buddy Blattner and Joe Garagiola roving from table-to-table with microphones, most of the guests were introduced and paid their personal tribute to the guest of honor.

Football Coaches Ray Eliot of Illinois U. and Dan Devine of Missouri, as well as representatives from practically every sport, were on hand.

President Maurice Podoloff of the National Basketball Association made a special trip to St. Louis to attend, along with President Ben Kerner and Coach Ed Macauley of the Hawks.

Representing the Cardinals were: Vice-President Dick Meyer, General Manager Bing Devine, Stan Musial, George Silvey, Eddie Stanky and Manager Solly Hemus.

Each of Bob's four daughters, as well as his wife, received a gold bracelet while his mother was presented a pin.

Burnes' boss, Publisher Richard H. Amberg of the Globe-Democrat, warmly praised his sports editor and as the windup, Bob, visibly moved, explained that during his 25 years as a sports writer, "I've met thousands of athletes and made many friends. None of them ever let me down."

Grimm Wheels Out Ellsworth for Kiddie Unit

Cholly to Give Pitcher, 19, Chance as a Starter With Fuzzy-Cheeked Hill Staff

By EDGAR MUNZEL

CHICAGO, Ill.



Charlie Grimm

The Cubs already had the youngest starting staff in the National League last season. But it will move even nearer the cradle next season, if Manager Charlie Grimm's plans prove successful.

Jolly Cholly is going to extend his kiddie corps by giving 19-year-old Dick Ellsworth a full-blown shot at a regular starting job. Dick is a lefty who was signed out of high school in Fresno, Calif., in 1958.

If he makes it, the Cubs probably will present a pink-cheeked starting staff that will include the following: Bob Anderson 24, Moe Drabowsky 24, Glen Hobbie 23, Johnny Buzhardt 23, Dick Drott 23 and Ellsworth 19.

Manager Grimm's plans for Ellsworth were revealed when the purchase of Steve Ridzik prompted him to outline his pitching program for 1960. Ridzik, a 30-year-old veteran with considerable major league experience, was bought from Fort Worth.

Ridzik, a righthander, was 15-8 at Fort Worth and had the fifth-ranking earned-run average in the American Association last season with a mark of 2.74.

"We'll use him in relief because we've got to build up that bull pen again with Bill Henry gone to Cincinnati," said Grimm. "Steve's had a lot of experience at it. In fact, he was almost strictly a reliever all the seven years he was in the majors."

"With Don Elston out there as my No. 1 man and Ridzik and possibly Art Ceccarelli to help him out, I'll have three in the bull pen who really know how to pitch."

"Ceccarelli was primarily a starter last season. He may be again in spots. But I'm going to give Ellsworth the first shot at the starting job and, if he makes good, I'll keep Ceccarelli in the bull pen as my top southpaw reliever."

"I'll let Ellsworth pitch himself on or off the ball club. He'll continue to start until he proves whether he's ready or needs more seasoning in the minors."

"Ray Hayworth and all our other scouts believe that the kid definitely has a good chance to make it this year."

Blazer to Touch Off Fires as Giants' Leadoff Basher

Smiling Rigney Hails Swap for Blasingame as Answer to Club's Biggest Problem

By JACK McDONALD
SAN FRANCISCO, Calif.



Bill Rigney

wishes the season were starting tomorrow.

Blasingame was the lights and decorations, including a big star at the top, that completed a splendid Christmas tree for Rig. The Giants haven't had a leadoff man worthy of the name since Eddie Stanky last played for them in 1951.

"Now you'll see the Giants do some things they haven't been able to do since we came to San Francisco," Rigney said.

Well, here it is, the new Giant batting order: Blasingame leading off, Jimmy Davenport hitting second, Willie Mays third, Willie McCovey cleanup, Orlando Cepeda fifth, Willie Kirkland or Felipe Alou, alternating in right field, sixth, Hobbie Landrith seventh, Eddie Bressoud eighth, and the pitcher.

Classy Keystone Combo First off, Second Sacker Blasingame ties the Giant infield together. Rigney predicts Blasingame and Shortstop Bressoud will prove two peas in a pod as a double-play combination. "They're made to order for each other in build and temperament, and after a few weeks of working together in spring training they'll be a smooth combination," Rig says.

As for offense, Blasingame gives the Giants almost perfect balance at the plate—four lefthanded hitters and four

even though that would be only his third season in Organized Ball.

"He's big (6-3, 180), has plenty of stuff and can get the ball over the plate. I think he'll make it. If he does, we'll really have some fun."

Fresno Dick broke in spectacularly with the Cubs. After he was signed following graduation from high school, he was flown to Chicago and that same night faced the White Sox in the annual charity game and blanked them, 1 to 0.

He was farmed out to Fort Worth, then in the Class AA Texas League, and had a rough time adjusting himself. He was 1-7 for the remainder of 1958. But last season the big fellow gained confidence.

Dick Sought by Rival Clubs Ellsworth won ten and lost 14, but he was far more effective than his won-lost record would indicate. In 197 innings he allowed only 139 hits, which is an impressive reflection on the stuff he has. Furthermore, he fanned 152 and walked only 108.

"If there ever was any doubt about his tremendous future, it was dispelled during the winter meetings when we began sounding out the other ball clubs for deals," said Holland. "They always wanted Ellsworth."

"In fact, they mentioned him right along with Anderson and Hobbie, which further underlined his possibilities, since Anderson and Hobbie already have made the grade in the majors. But Ellsworth isn't for sale any more than Anderson and Hobbie are."

If the Cubs are able to replenish their bull pen to anywhere near what it was last season when Elston and Henry headed the rescue corps, then the kiddie corps of starters will get the backing they need for gradual development.

Ridzik's relief credentials certainly are bona fide. He was in the big leagues for seven years, 1952 to 1958, and served with the Phillies, Reds, Giants and Indians. His lifetime record in the majors is 23-23.

Ridzik began his professional career with Greensboro, N. C., of the Philly farm system when he was only 16. He came up with the Phillies in 1952 and won himself a job primarily because of a no-hitter he pitched against the Cardinals in a spring exhibition game.

Steve was 4-2 that season. He had his best records in 1956 when he was 9-6 with the Phillies and in 1956 when he was 6-2 with the Giants. He toiled in 42 games in 1953 and in 41 in 1956.

'Batter Up!'



Don Blasingame

Grid, Soccer Clubs to Dicker for Rental of Polo Grounds

SAN FRANCISCO, Calif.—Owner Horace Stoneham of the Giants had tentative plans to leave for the East, December 22, to negotiate with the New York Titans of the newly-formed American Football League for the rental of the Polo Grounds for seven games in 1960. At the same time, he will talk with a soccer group which has requested 22 dates there.

The Giants' 50-year lease on the Polo Grounds does not expire until the spring of 1962, and ever since the club moved to San Francisco it has been paying a rental, said to be well in excess of \$100,000 a year, to the Coogan Estate, owner of the New York park.

It is possible that while in New York the Giants' owner will discuss 1960 contract terms with Willie Mays.

right. The lefties are Blasingame, Kirkland, McCovey and Landrith.

"I don't care if Blasingame doesn't hit the fences," Rigney says. "He slammed 178 hits last season and he doesn't swing at many bad pitches. Look at his walks—69." By comparison, Davenport, whom he replaces as leadoff man, got only 25, although Jimmy is a fine two-out hitter and also hits with runners on base.

This is one big reason Rigney is making a No. 2 hitter out of him. He thinks Davenport will make a fine hit-and-run man. "If Blasingame gets on, it will make Jimmy hit the ball to right, behind the runner, and it's my thinking he'll be a better hitter for it."

Rigney has never been happy with Davenport as a leadoff man, or with having to use Mays as his No. 2 hitter. Too many times Willie had to come up with nobody on, or if Davenport did get on, Rig was reluctant to have a power-hitter like Mays bunt.

Davenport Good Bunter Davenport bunts well, which makes him an asset hitting second. "One way or another, we'll get Blasingame or Davenport on, and that will give our power guys a shot at it, with Mays, McCovey and Cepeda following them in that order."

Rigney calls Blasingame a fine playmaker. His scrappy actions on the field, rather than gab, make him a "take-charge" guy in the infield. He sprays his pretty well to all fields. "He's a guy who comes to play every day," Rig adds. "He never tires and begs out of the lineup."

"I'll settle for his singles and walks. He scored 90 runs for St. Louis last season. He'll score 110 for us, maybe more. I first saw him in the minors when I managed Minneapolis. He was with Omaha. I liked him at first sight. Believe me, the Cards hated to let him go. When we traded Alvin Dark to them for Red Schoendienst, the only reason they parted with Red was because they wanted to play Blasingame at second base."

As Rigney sees it, the Cards traded Blasingame only because they got tired of not scoring enough runs. "Wagner and Spencer have more power, and that short right field fence in St. Louis won't go to waste. A few years ago, we couldn't have let Spencer and Wagner go. But now that we have power in abundance, we can afford to sacrifice it in one spot to add speed and defense."

The Giants recently gained a talented pair of American League pitchers, Billy O'Dell and Billy Loes, in an inter-league trade with Baltimore. Thus, the Blasingame deal makes the Giants almost certain winter-book favorites for the 1960 pennant. But if they fail to win, Don is still the final ingredient

Skipper Quickly Names Don to Fill Troublesome No. 1 Position in Batting Order

that should make them the most exciting club in the league.

Blasingame will add much to the over-all speed of the club, which already has some race horses in its lineup—Alou, Mays, Davenport and Kirkland. Blasingame has to make the Giants just about the fastest club in the league. He can get down to first base in under four seconds.

Owner Horace Stoneham calls the deal for Blasingame the most significant the Giants have made in years. "We were close to making it several times in Florida in our talks with the Cardinals, but the deal somehow always moved away from us."

"Landed Player We Wanted" Then a call from St. Louis accepted the trade. It came like a bolt from the blue. "We got the player we wanted, and considering their needs, I think the Cardinals will also profit by the trade," said Horace.

From his home in Corinth, Miss., just a 30-minute drive from Shiloh, one of the bloodiest battlegrounds of the Civil War, Blasingame told the writer he was happy over the trade. Unlike some Giants who moved here from New York with the franchise, he won't have to learn to like San Francisco. He already does.

And if Blasingame finds the quail hunting good, he'll make this area his permanent home. Hunting is his big off-season oyster. He has his own kennel of hounds.

"St. Louis was fine," he says. "The fans were wonderful and I made many friends. But San Francisco is the most exciting city I was ever in. With or without the wind, I like the cool climate. And coming to a pennant contender makes the trade all the more exciting. You play better with a winner. I think my top season was in 1957 when the Cards were in the thick of the race all the way."

Blasingame isn't at all embarrassed over hitting only one homer all last season. "And that one," he fessed up, "was a screener I lobbed over that short left field barrier in the Los Angeles Coliseum off Sandy Koufax."

Spencer Eager to Return to Short "I'm no power hitter. As a leadoff man, my job is to get on, and I'm afraid it will have to be mostly with singles and walks. They'll have to depend on Mays, McCovey and Cepeda to blast me home."

Spencer took the news of his trade philosophically. "I'm disappointed at leaving the Giants after ten years," he said. "Getting traded is a new experience for me, but I look forward with pleasure to playing shortstop again."

Spencer said he might drive more hits through the fast infield at Busch Stadium than in Seals Stadium, where the slow terrain favored the defense. "And I'm hoping to hit my share off that short right field fence. I've always wanted to become a .300 hitter, but to be one you've got to get a lot of 'leg hits.' I know my limitations when it comes to speed."

Spencer said he enjoyed his two seasons here and was grateful to San Francisco fans for their support. "And I'm looking forward to playing in Candlestick Park, but now it will have to be against the Giants."

Monzant First Giant to Sign; Spent a Year on Retired List

SAN FRANCISCO, Calif. — To Ramon Monzant goes the distinction of being the first Giant pitcher to sign his 1960 contract. The tall, spare Venezuelan righthander is back in the fold after a year spent on the voluntarily retired list.

Monzant had been given up for lost by the Giant organization. Reports from his native Maracaibo were that he was going to confine his pitching to winter ball there. But the Giants took a chance and sent him a 1960 contract, which Ramon signed without hesitancy.

He attached an interesting note to the pact. "I will report in time for spring training," it read. Not since he has been in the Giants' employ has he reported on time for spring training. His promise to be among the early birds at Phoenix indicates he has developed a new outlook that may make him a winner in 1960. He won eight games for the Giants in 1958, and Manager Bill Rigney lists him as one of his ten major league pitching arms.