

# Whitey Plans to Stand Pat With Cubs' Catching Corps

By JEROME HOLTZMAN

CHICAGO, Ill.—Patience, my lads, the Cubs are going to be all right behind the plate.

That was the message, loud and clear, from Manager Whitey Lockman, who advised the fans here that the Wrigleys "are not in the market for another catcher."

Lockman, in a lengthy interview on a question-and-answer radio talk show, was asked what the Cubs planned to do to shore up their catching department. Replied Whitey: "We feel we have one of the best catching staffs in baseball."

Lockman went on to say that the Cubs, though in the market for a pitcher, aren't interested in acquiring a catcher.

Lockman fully acknowledged that Randy Hundley, the onetime Cub ironman, didn't have an outstanding year statistically, but is confident Hundley will bounce back with a strong season in 1973.

Hundley has undergone operations on both knees in the last three years. Despite the predictions by some of the so-called experts that he would never play again, Hundley got into 114 games this past season. He batted .218, well below his

career average, and also had trouble throwing out would-be base stealers.

"Randy needed this last season just to prove he could play again," Lockman said. "He didn't have a typical Randy Hundley year, either hitting or throwing. But we're confident that next year he'll be as good as he ever was."

Behind Hundley are Ken Rudolph, who still might emerge as an outstanding player, and the veteran J. C. Martin.

## Not Many Hits

All together, the three of them produced a total of 115 hits, which isn't very many. Hundley had 78, and averaged .240. He missed the last month of the regular season because of an injury.

Rudolph has been Hundley's understudy for the last four years and chances are he will assume a larger part of the burden this coming season, depending on Hundley's progress. If it wasn't for the presence of Rudolph, the Cubs probably would be in the market for a catcher, but the thinking is that if necessary he can always step in and handle the job.

Lockman, during the question-answer show, was also asked about the status of first baseman Joe Pepitone. It was an interesting question because Pepi has become somewhat the forgotten Cub and is seldom mentioned these days.

"It's up to him how much he plays and where he plays," Lockman replied to the Pepitone query. "He had some personal problems last year, but I think by the time next season rolls around we feel he'll be ready to play."

Pepitone and Jim Hickman shared the first base position last year but won't necessarily be platooned in 1973.

"We're going to go to spring training with an open mind (on first base)," Lockman said. "They (Pepitone and Hickman) will have a chance to prove who can do the best job."

There has been some, though not much, talk that left fielder Billy Williams will be shifted to first base. Lockman mentioned this but said it probably wouldn't happen for another year or two, if it happens at all.

"This has been discussed," Lockman conceded, "but we feel



Randy Hundley . . . Proved He Can Play Again.

Billy is a good left fielder and since we don't have a problem at first base, there is no need to be thinking about this at this point."

Lockman was also asked if the Cubs are shopping for a power hitter for the No. 4 spot, inasmuch as Ron Santo slipped under 20 homers for the first time in the last 10 years.

Lockman conceded that there

have been times when the opposition has been able to pitch around Williams, who bats third in the order, but said Santo, Hickman and Pepitone do provide the Cubs with enough power.

The Cubs, however, are in the market for a front-line relief pitcher. They made a big pitch for Mike Marshall of Montreal but were turned down.

# Twins' Braun Boning Up on Base-Running Skills

By BOB FOWLER

TWIN CITIES, Minn.—During spring training in March, 1971, the Twins were playing an exhibition against Boston and a rookie left-handed batter named Steve Braun stepped in to hit against Gary Peters, the veteran Red Sox southpaw.

The first pitch was a fast ball at Braun's right ear and the rookie quickly hit the dirt to avoid an injury. After dusting himself off, he resumed his stance only to see a second fast ball sailing at his head.

Again, Braun managed to avoid being hit. Now the veterans started wondering about the youngster with limited experience with Class A teams. Would he bail out on the next pitch, probably a curve? Would he become an easy out for southpaws?

Well, Peters' next pitch was a curve and Braun lined it to right for a single. It was at that moment that Stephen Russell Braun III made the jump to the major leagues.

## Nixed Coin Flip

It was, however, not an easy jump. True, Braun hit .254 with five homers and 35 RBIs that first season, but he also had 13 errors for his infield duty.

Thus, in spring training this past season, he was a man without a job. Twins' officials wanted him returned to the minors for more seasoning, which surprised and chagrined Bill Rigney, then the manager.

Calvin Griffith didn't even offer a contract for the major league minimum salary to the man who had been named Minnesota's rookie of the year. The difference was \$500 and Griffith offered to flip a coin with Braun for it, but Steve refused because the money meant too much to him to be risked in a casual bet.

After Braun won his argument, he worked diligently on his fielding. He stayed late daily to take ground balls from Frank Quilici and accepted the veteran infielder's advice on fielding. By late March, he had improved and that fact, coupled with his .390 exhibition average, won him another job

with the Twins.

When the regular season started, he was platooned at third base with righthanded-hitting Eric Soderholm. Eventually, Braun's hitting and improved fielding earned him a starting job.

As of June 28, he was hitting .320 with 17 RBIs. However, he suffered a sprained ankle and couldn't play for two weeks.

When he returned, the Twins had a new manager, Quilici replacing Rigney, and Braun regained the third base job by impressing his former tutor as he had his former manager.

Rod Carew suffered bruised ribs in late July and Braun was shifted to second base where he performed well. He impressed later in the outfield, too.

## Position a Problem

And he continued to hit. When the season ended, Steve had a .289 average with two home runs and 50 RBIs.

Also, he made only 13 errors, despite playing regularly at a variety of positions.

Still, officials weren't impressed. They continued to refer to him as "a man without a position."

The major rap against Steve was his base running. Oh, he was quick enough, but his inexperience often caused some embarrassing and humorous situations.

For example, on June 27 against California, Harmon Killebrew singled and Braun doubled him to

third. Jim Nettles followed with an apparent sacrifice fly to left, but Killebrew stopped and returned to third.

Braun, running with his head down, was trapped between second and third and was out returning to second, while Killebrew was caught off third watching the play at second. Thus, the Twins ran

themselves into a triple play.

Steve Braun now is in Venezuela, working on his base running. He knows he'll have to prove himself again in spring training.

Judging from his past Florida campaigns, he'll succeed, too.

Perhaps, then, officials will flip over him, instead of wanting to flip coins with him.

Twin Tales: Once again the Twins will open their exhibition season against Detroit. The Tigers will play in Orlando March 3 and the Twins will travel to Lakeland the following day for the Tigers' home opener. Minnesota has scheduled 32 pre-season games, including six to end the exhibition slate in Houston.

# Brewers' Billy C Talking With A's

By LARRY WHITESIDE

the Brewers would get their money back.

When confronted about this very subject a few months ago, Lane professed an innocence of the entire affair and said no such deal had been made. Finley agreed, so that made it unanimous.

## Back in Harness

Now Finley has come along and made Conigliaro an offer he probably can't refuse. And so another one of baseball's jumping beans will soon be back in harness.

"It's a matter of money," said Conigliaro, who only last June said \$35,000 a year was not enough to keep him from the serious pursuits of business. "If I get the right offer, I'd be happy to return to a team like Oakland. They're the champs. They're winners and everybody wants to go to the World Series."

"I have a lot of respect for Finley. He goes out and gets the people he wants. I respect what he's doing to help baseball. The colorful uniforms, the mustaches, everything. I even like California."

But what about Milwaukee? Conigliaro was asked. Wouldn't it be worth one more shot?

"Never!" says Conigliaro. "I don't like the town. I don't like losing. I'm not a loser. Maybe a guy like George Scott can adjust. But then he's a veteran who has been around. I couldn't. I'd rather stay at home and work."

Work for Billy C at the moment means running a nine-hole golf course and country club complex at Nahant, Mass. He and his brother Tony also have motel interests.

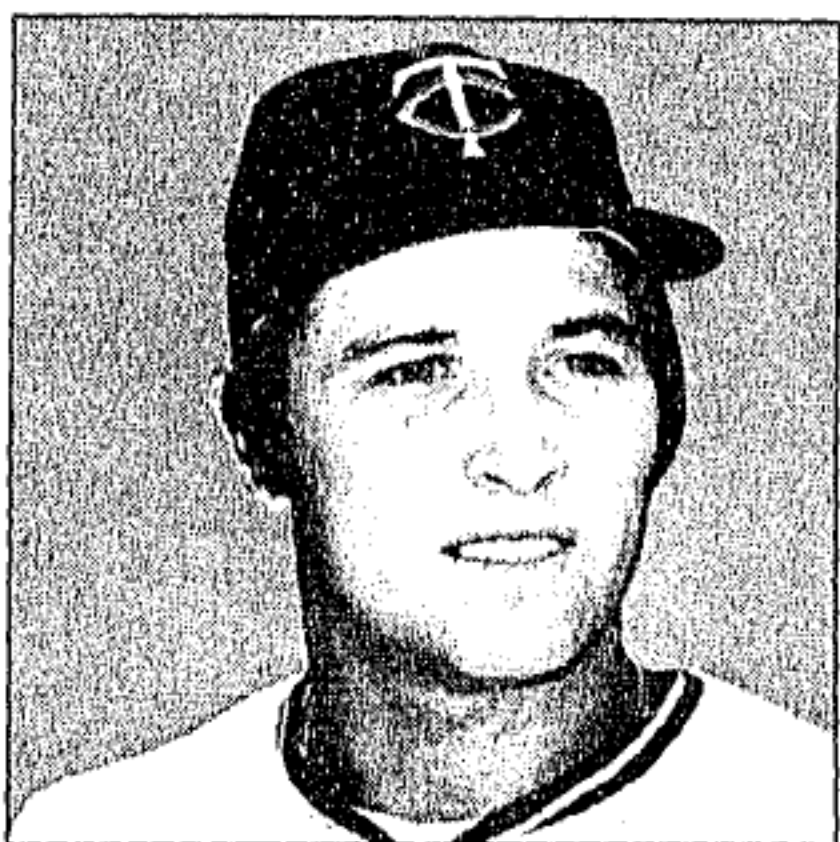
"Finley has our permission to talk to Billy," said Jim Wilson, the Brewers' new general manager. "If Lane and Finley did discuss this, it was before I became general manager. But there is nothing wrong with giving Finley permission now."

## Only Considerations

"Conigliaro is still our property and any club that chooses to sign him will have to compensate us. Brown was obtained on waivers. That's all. There were no other considerations that I know of. If Conigliaro signs with Oakland, there will have to be some compensation made, and we can't say at this time whether it will be cash or a player."

The oddity of the entire affair is that should Oakland sign Conigliaro, he would be reunited with Manager Dick Williams, who had him at Boston. The Conigliaro brothers and Williams were not always on the best of speaking terms, which is putting it mildly.

"That won't bother me," said Billy C. "I was upset when he (Williams) sent me to the minors and said so. But I've matured a little since then. And, besides, I didn't get along too badly with him outside of that one incident."



Steve Braun



# Twin Traveling Man Braun Acquires New Bag

By BOB FOWLER

TWIN CITIES—Remember the old Abbott and Costello bit about "Who's on first?" Well, the Twins have been going through a similar routine, but they don't think it's very funny.

You'll recall, when we last left President Calvin Griffith and Manager Frank Quilici, they were discussing moving Rod Carew to first base. But that has been resolved—for now, at least—and the eight-time All-Star second baseman and four-time American League batting champion stayed at second base.

Also Tony Oliva's knee condition improved, as he predicted, and he remained as the team's designated hitter.

Eric Soderholm enjoyed an excellent spring and was stationed at third base. And in the outfield there was Larry Hisle, Steve Brye and Bobby Darwin.

ALL OF WHICH left first base unsettled and Steve Braun without a position. But wait, yes, there he

was playing first during the late stages of the exhibition season.

"This is my fifth spring with the Twins and my fifth position," the 26-year-old Braun said. "Next year, they probably will make me a catcher, but that's okay so long as I get four swings a game."

And there is the rub. While club officials believe Braun is a man without a position, they know he can hit. And they'll try anything to get his bat into the lineup.

When Braun first reported as a second baseman to the Twins' training camp in 1971, Bill Rigney thought so much of him that he started playing him all over the field in an attempt to justify keeping him as a utilityman, despite his limited minor league experience.

HE HIT .254 and the next spring was shifted to third base. That season, 1972, he hit .289 and finished second in fielding to Baltimore's Brooks Robinson.

Yet, the next spring he was in the outfield, where he has played

for the past two years—hitting .283 and .280. Thus, in four major league seasons, he has compiled a .277 batting average without having a permanent position.

So, now it's first base. Now, club officials' plans are to platoon the 5-9, lefthanded-hitting Braun with 6-3, righthanded-hitting Craig Kuck.

"I have almost made up my mind that I never will get the opportunity to be an everyday player with this organization," Braun said. "I don't like that, but as long as I'm here, I guess I'll have to accept it."

"I FEEL GOOD at first base. It's a tough position to play, a lot tougher than people think. The most difficult thing is knowing where to go on every play because the first baseman is involved in every play."

"I look at first base as an opportunity to get into the lineup more often. I think being able to play at third, in the outfield and now at first will get me into the lineup against righthanded pitchers most of the season."

One problem Braun has encountered is that no one has been able to teach him the new position. Quilici and members of his coaching staff weren't first basemen as players.

"I've paid a lot of attention to what other first basemen do, tried to pick up things from them," Braun said.

When Braun first came to spring training, he was hopeful of being traded.

"IF I CAN'T play regularly for this team, there are some others I could help," he said then.

But now he is involved in Minne-

sota's plans for 1975 in many ways.

"They still tell me I don't have a position," Braun said. "They say I can't play third base and that I wasn't that good in left field."

"I've heard in arbitration two straight years that I'm only a part-time player."

"I don't think it is a good thing for me as a player to be moving from one position to another. I think if they let me alone and I played one spot every day, I would do a good enough job to change their minds about my defense."

"BUT THAT isn't going to happen and I enjoy the challenge of playing three positions."

For years, Braun could have carried calling cards that read: "Have bat, will travel." Now he could add: "Have gloves, too."

Twin Tales: There were two surprises as the Twins reduced their roster to the 25-man limit. Utilityman Jerry Terrell, valuable as a reserve the past two seasons, was returned to Tacoma (Pacific Coast). Thus, both Sergio Ferrer and Luis Gomez remained, although some observers wondered why the club needed two backup shortstops for Danny Thompson. . . . In addition, righthanded relief pitcher Tom Johnson went to Tacoma, although reliever Bill Campbell had a sore arm and last year in four appearances Johnson didn't allow a run.

Newcomers are righthanded pitcher Jim Hughes, reserve catcher Danny Walton (on the club two years ago), and outfielders Lyman Bostock and Dan Ford. By keeping Ford, who hit .273 at Tucson (Pacific Coast), the Twins got some benefit from the Jim Holt trade. They traded Holt to Oakland in mid-season, 1974, for Pat Bourque, then returned Bourque for Ford and pitcher Denny Myers. . . . Another ironical aspect about the cuts of Terrell and Johnson was that while the Twins are trying to build attendance, they unloaded two Minnesota products. And in Terrell, they shipped out a player who many fans felt was the club's most exciting performer. . . . Believe it or not, Larry Hisle wasn't on the All-Star computerized ballots. Club officials couldn't believe it and called Commissioner Bowie Kuhn's office to complain about the omission, but, of course, nothing was changed.



Steve Braun

## Bruins Turn to Monday To Supply Sunday Punch

By JEROME HOLTZMAN

CHICAGO—Rick Monday, who figures to be the Cubs' leading power hitter during the long season ahead, has played in more than 1,000 big league games and still remembers, quite vividly, a night in Philadelphia several years ago when Leo Durocher called him aside and asked: "Can you hit fourth?"

"I'll try," Monday replied. "But I've never done it before."

Monday responded by hitting three home runs, the only three-homer game of his career.

"That," recalled Monday, "was the extent of my life as a cleanup hitter. The next night, Leo had me hitting first, or second, or maybe it was sixth, or seventh. I don't remember. But I never hit fourth again."

This is mentioned now because as the Cubs launched their National League season, there was no question where Monday would be batting in the lineup.

"HE'S OUR NO. 4 hitter," Manager Jim Marshall said when the Cubs gathered at Scottsdale, Ariz. Then Marshall added, "I'm sure he can carry the load."

Monday, himself, wasn't quite as sure, but, as on that night in Philly, he told Marshall he'd give it a try and do the best he could.

His best, obviously, was more than good enough.

Monday was the only Cub player this spring to hit two homers in one game. Moreover, he did it twice, on March 25 against the Angels and again on April 2, when he connected in successive at-bats against Don Sutton and Mike Marshall of the National League champion Dodgers.

AT THE AGE of 29 and after nine full seasons in the majors, Monday could very well emerge as Chicago's next super-star. Certainly, he has the equipment. He can hit for an average, and for power, is outstanding defensively, has considerably better than average speed and a strong arm.

And, perhaps of even more importance, he's constantly hustling.

"I'll tell you something that happened last year that pleased me,"

Monday said. "We were playing Cincinnati and I hit a long fly ball. I didn't think anything of it, but later Sparky Anderson (the Cincinnati manager) told me that I was already at second when the ball was caught. He said he'd never seen it before. He even mentioned it to Johnny Bench."

Monday hit .294 and led the Cubs in homers last year with 20, as the leadoff man. This season, with the responsibility of batting fourth, it is likely that he'll increase his homer total to 30.

MONDAY GIVES much of the credit for his improvement at the plate to Lew Fonseca, the Cubs' batting instructor.

"It's hard to pinpoint any one thing and say Lew helped me do this, or do that," Monday explained. "He's helped me in so many ways. But the biggest thing he's done is made me aware of my hitting."

"A lot of times, you can get into a rut and you don't know what's wrong. But Fonseca always seems to know. That's the advantage of having him watching you all the time. He doesn't miss anything. Mostly, he stresses that sometimes I'm not swinging with my full 100 percent capability. I think I am, but when he gets finished talking to me, I know he's right. I've been listening to him for four years now and, let me tell you, he's never been wrong."

THOUGH MONDAY was set in the No. 4 spot as the Cubs opened their season, the Wrigleys still had several question marks and were not certain as to who would replace the disabled Andy Thornton as their regular first baseman.

Thornton suffered a fractured right wrist on April 1 when hit by a pitch thrown by Cleveland's Tom Buskey.

The Cub management didn't seem anxious to replace Thornton, even temporarily, with Peter Lackock, who was regarded as the club's No. 2 second baseman. The result was that the Wrigleys immediately resumed trade talks in the hopes of acquiring another lefthanded-hitting first baseman.

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