

Reese Trying a New Tack: Positive Thinking Power

By BOB FOWLER

TWIN CITIES, Minn.—Although Calvin Griffith has failed to make a significant trade, it appears the Twins will have a "new man" this season. His name is Rich Reese.

Oh, he's the same first baseman the team had in 1970—the good-fielding lefthanded hitter.

But he has changed his mental approach to his profession and, if spring training means anything, it has helped him improve.

Incentive was involved in the transformation. Reese saw the ballot for the All-Star Game and noticed he wasn't among the nominees at first base.

Thus, he hopes to have such a sensational season that he will be voted to the squad through a write-in campaign . . . sort of the American League's answer to Rico Carty.

But he had decided to change his ways before seeing the ballot.

You see, in 1969, his first year as a full-time player, Reese hit a whopping .322 with 16 home runs and 69 RBIs. He was at bat only 419 times, too.

Last season, his average slipped to .261 and, although he had 501 at-bats, he hit only 10 homers and had 56 RBIs.

Reese analyzed his position and concluded he was his own biggest problem.

In the spring of 1970, he arrived in the Twins' camp determined to establish himself as a .300 hitter. He was as intense as any player could be. Frankly, he was too intense.

He started the season slowly and the more he failed, the harder he tried.

Complaints, Complaints

"I let everything upset me," he said one day at Orlando after an exhibition game. "I complained about strikes, about errors, well, about everything."

"This season, I've decided to give 100 percent all of the time I'm on the field and not worry about anything else."

"If I try my best and it's not good enough, that's just the way it is. I can't change it."

Being more relaxed has helped this spring, at least, and he was one of the team's top hitters in the exhibition games.

"But that was only spring training," he said, realistically. "When the regular season starts, you can't take it (the spring average) with you."

The 28-year-old Reese received some other incentives this winter, too.

First, he was one of four players to receive a pay cut. He accepted that, however, and was one of the first players to sign.

Then there were the newspaper stories.

To him, it probably seemed that each day during the off-season he read about management's plans to move Harmon Killebrew to first base permanently or of possible trades involving himself for a pitcher.

Hopes to Avoid Platooning

He also is hoping to play well enough that Manager Bill Rigney won't platoon him, using him against righthanders only.

"I hit lefthanders all right two years ago when I hit .322," he said.

He was right. He hit .324 against righthanders that season and .316 against southpaws.

Last season, he hit lefthanders better than righthanders, compiling a .266 mark against lefties and .259 against supposedly easier righthanders.

Now, some may argue that .266 isn't a spectacular figure.

But it was .001 better than Tony Oliva batted against lefthanders.

It's funny, no one talks about platooning Tony.

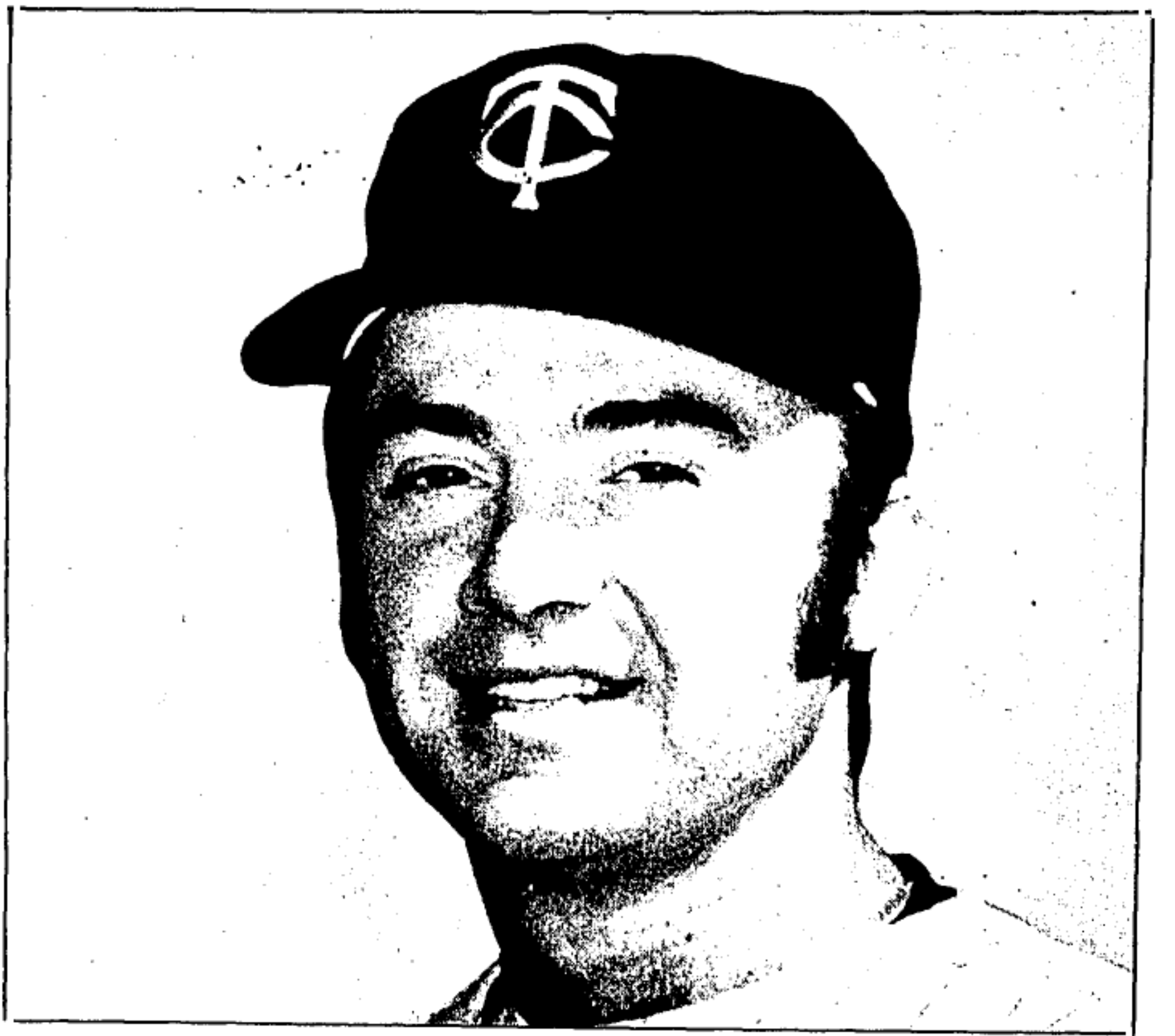
Twins' Talk: Luis Tiant pitched for the first time in three weeks when he started an exhibition against Atlanta, giving up four hits and one run in four innings. Rigney said he was disappointed in Tiant's control, but impressed with his speed. "He didn't throw that hard once last year," the manager said. . . . Rigney said he probably would platoon again this season. Against righthanders he would use this batting order: Cesar Tovar, lf; Rod Carew, 2b; Tony Oliva, rf; Harmon Killebrew, 3b; Rich Reese, lb; Jim Holt, cf; Leo Cardenas, ss; Paul Ratliff, c. Against southpaws it would be: Tovar, 3b; Carew, 2b; Killebrew, lb; Oliva, rf; Brant Alyea, lf; Paul Powell, cf; Cardenas, ss; George Mitterwald, c. "That way, we keep Tovar in the game all the time," the manager said.

Calvin Griffith tried to obtain a pitcher but failed. Washington's Bob Short was interested in trading for Tovar, but said he wouldn't give up one of his six top pitchers for Cesar. . . . Stan Williams started against Houston in Cocoa and gave up 10 runs in three innings. "I can't remember when I last started a game," the relief pitcher said. "But I'm sure this was my last one for a long time." His ERA was up to 15.75 and he felt good about it because that's where it was last spring and he won 10 games with 15 saves.

Griffith was honored by the Orlando Chamber of

Commerce for having his teams train in the city for the past 35 years. . . . Attendance at Tinker Field for the first nine dates totaled 17,397, compared with 16,016 for all 14 dates last year. A more attractive schedule was the big reason for the increase. . . . Of the first 10 squad cuts, only pitchers Dick Woodson and Pete Hamm were with the Twins last year. Woodson, who had a 1-2 record in 21 games, was returned to the minors with the instructions to start every fourth day. The Twins know he has the arm to be a good pitcher. Now they want him to get the experience and quit trying to be a relief pitcher. Hamm was 0-2 in 10 games in 1970.

Young Bert Blyleven was the victim of poor support in the field March 24 and watched his spring earned-run average soar to 6.12 when the Royals beat the Twins, 6-3. Minnesota outfielders lost balls in the sun, and the offense couldn't capitalize in key situations. "But it's the best Bert's thrown all spring," said Rigney.



Rich Reese . . . A New Man?

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