

# CHANGING LEAGUES

It's impossible to predict how a change of uniforms will affect an athlete's performance on the field. Sometimes it buoys a flagging career; sometimes it works in reverse.

Andre Dawson had the season of his life after leaving the Montreal Expos for the Chicago Cubs in 1987. Tony Pena suffered through his worst year in the majors after being traded by the Pittsburgh Pirates to the St. Louis Cardinals.

But if changing clubs is a sometimes-major adjustment, changing leagues can be a switch from night to day. Batters are required to face a new array of pitchers. Pitchers face hitters they've never seen. Every game is played against an

unfamiliar opponent in an unfamiliar stadium.

Thanks to the designated hitter, not even the rules are the same.

The switch is easier for the less-known players because expectations are not so large. But when sluggers switch leagues and lineups are rearranged, the spotlight captures their every move.

Such were the cases for Ted Simmons, Lance Parrish and Dave Winfield when they crossed over in the past. Such will be the case in 1988 for three players who made off-season changes in address.

■ Dave Parker arrives in Oakland after 15 National League seasons in Pittsburgh and Cincinnati. He brings a reputation built on 273

home runs and nearly 1,200 runs batted in.

■ Kirk Gibson dons Dodger blue after nine eventful American League seasons with the Detroit Tigers. Expectations? Gibson hasn't hit fewer than 24 homers in any of the last four years.

■ Jack Clark, who spent 13 seasons in San Francisco and St. Louis establishing himself as one of the N.L.'s most feared hitters, lands in Yankee Stadium, where George Steinbrenner will expect him to duplicate last year's 35-homer, 106-RBI season.

Following is a closer look at three special cases where the spotlight will burn brighter and the pressure will rest heavier in 1988.

## Adjusting to DH Role May Be Tougher Than Crossover, Says Yankees' Clark

By MOSS KLEIN

NEW YORK—Jack Clark, a hitter who doesn't believe in periods of adjustment, is ready for anything American League pitchers want to throw at him.

"The approach I've always followed is to keep it simple. For me, that means looking for fastballs. The rest usually takes care of itself," said Clark, the former St. Louis Cardinals slugger who signed a free-agent contract with the New York Yankees over the winter.

Clark, who with Don Mattingly, Dave Winfield, Rickey Henderson and Co. gives the Yankees a modern-day Murderers' Row, isn't concerned about switching leagues after 11 seasons in the National League.

He'll be encountering new pitchers and a different pitching style in unfamiliar ball parks with ball-strike calls being made by umpires whose songs he doesn't know. He'll be doing all that in the culture-shock role of designated hitter. To top it off, he'll be performing in this brave new world under the watchful eye of the ultimate Big Brother, Yankees Owner George Steinbrenner.

But Clark, 32, insists he's ready to earn the salary that will reach \$2 million per year if he stays healthy.

Hitting has rarely been a problem for Clark, but many observers feel the DH factor may be the most difficult adjustment of all.

"Jack is used to running out on the field and playing a position," said Yankees hitting coach Chris Chambliss, who played nine years in the American League before spending his final seven seasons with Atlanta of the National League. "Being a DH is like pinch-hitting four or five times a game. That's going to be his main adjustment."

Said Clark: "DH-ing is new to me, but I think I'll get used to it. It'll be different, but I'll find ways to stay loose. There's a lot of time between at-bats, and I want to avoid thinking too much. I want hitting to be a reaction thing, the way it has always been for me."

In an effort to adjust to the role,

Clark asked the advice of teammate Gary Ward, who's experienced in the DH approach.

"Ward told me he would go in the clubhouse between at-bats and pedal the (stationary) bicycle while he watched the game on TV," Clark said. "When a ball was hit to the outfield, he'd pedal harder, like a simulated game. Also, he got a better look at the pitchers with the TV camera on them."

Said Ward: "What works for me might not work for Jack. You have to find your own way. But the key is to keep your legs loose. It's not going to be an easy adjustment for him, but he's such a good hitter he'll do fine."

Clark said: "I knew when I signed here that I'd be mostly a DH. I like to play a position, but I'm not the greatest defensive player in the world. I'm here to hit."

And that's what he expects to do—no matter how A.L. pitchers pitch to him.

Clark knows the old philosophy, that N.L. pitchers challenge hitters while A.L. pitchers rely on finesse, often throwing breaking pitches even when they're behind in the count.

But Yankees broadcaster Tommy Hutton said, "In Clark's case, the usual rules might be reversed. National League pitchers used American League style on him, pitching around him in that St. Louis lineup.

"But American League pitchers might have to use National League style. In this lineup, with a Henderson on base and a Winfield or Mattingly behind him, he's going to see more fastballs than he saw in the other league."

Clark walked 136 times last year—the most in the majors since San Francisco's Willie McCovey, drew 137 walks in 1970—and he missed 31 games because of injuries.

"There were times when I thought I was a special case, that I just wasn't getting fastballs," he said. "But I think there has been an overall change in the last few years."

"I remember when the National League was a fastball league, but now even Nolan Ryan changes

speeds, and he still throws as hard as ever. Dwight Gooden was using change-ups, trying to make guys look bad. The better pitchers, like (John) Tudor and (Fernando) Valenzuela and Mike Scott, you can't expect fastballs."

Clark's approach, looking for fastballs and adjusting to off-speed pitches, might be oversimplified, but it has certainly worked for him. Last year, he hit 35 homers and drove in 106 runs—both career highs. And since his switching leagues has brought him into the middle of a high-powered lineup, his adjustment could be even easier.

"I don't think pitchers can work around him as much," said Winfield, who didn't miss a beat when he came to the Yankees seven years ago after playing eight years for the National League's San Diego Padres: "A hitter of Clark's caliber, in a lineup where he's surrounded by good hitters, isn't going to have any trouble making adjustments. It's the pitchers who'll have problems."

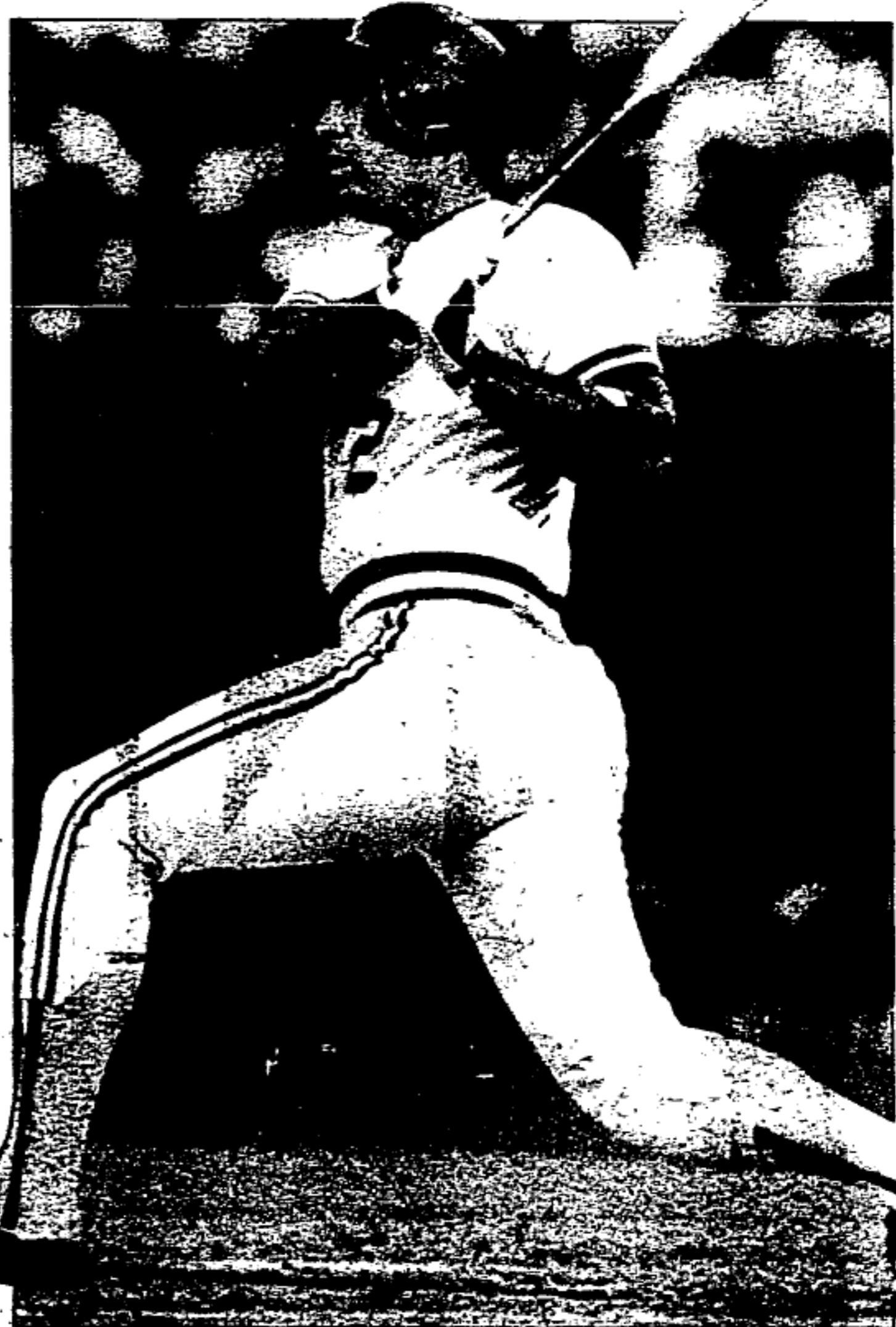
The approaches used by pitchers in each league, as Yankees righthander Rick Rhoden said, are the result of the ball parks.

"The parks dictate how the game is played," said Rhoden, who joined the Yankees last year after 12 seasons in the National League. "The American League has smaller parks and it's hard to challenge hitters, unless you can throw like Roger Clemens, because a 2-0 fastball can end up in the seats."

And because of the smaller stadiums, Rhoden and others expect Clark's slugging to reach new heights, even though he'll be playing home games at Yankee Stadium, where the expansive left-center field is a potential deterrent to his righthanded power.

"This league has better ball parks for hitters," said Yankees lefthander Tommy John, who has switched leagues twice during a 25-year major league career. "We've got some bandboxes over here, a lot more than in the National League."

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