

# Concepcion Almost Immaculate as Shortstop

By EARL LAWSON

CINCINNATI—Sparky Anderson shuddered. Then he grinned.

"David Concepcion's picture is going to be on the cover of THE SPORTING NEWS," exclaimed the Reds' manager. "Is he going to be tough to live with!"

Then Sparky became serious.

"He deserves the honor," said Sparky.

"You know what, though," he added, "Ted Kluszewski, Alex Grammas and Delia should be in that picture with David."

Kluszewski and Grammas are Red coaches. Delia is Concepcion's wife.

"They're all a big part of the success Concepcion is experiencing today," said Sparky.

Anderson then quickly added the name of Tony Perez, Concepcion's roommate.

WHEN CONCEPCION needed consolation, Perez offered a shoulder. And when the young Red shortstop needed a boot in the rear, Tony was equally obliging with a ready foot.

It was Perez who taught Concepcion to forget yesterday, don't worry about tomorrow, it's what you do today that means the most.

"Tony like a big brother to me," Concepcion will tell you.

Anderson should have included another name—his own—when talking of Concepcion's success story.

Because Sparky's faith in Concepcion's ability has been unwavering ever since David first reported to the Reds' Tampa training camp as a rookie in the spring of 1970.

IT WAS Concepcion's fluid motion in the field, his range and his strong throwing arm that first attracted Anderson's attention.

"But I'll be the first to admit that I never dreamed Concepcion would become the hitter he is today," said Anderson.

Kluszewski, the Reds' batting coach, did recognize Concepcion's potential as a hitter, though.

"Ted predicted all along that David eventually would become a consistent .270 to .280 hitter," said Anderson.

Sparky's answer?

"If he does, you're a Houdini," Anderson would tell Big Klu.

"But," said Sparky, "Ted was right and I'm glad I was wrong."

"TED KEPT telling me the same thing about Cesar Geronimo, too," added Sparky. "And again he was right."

Geronimo and Concepcion were winners of the Gold Glove last year as members of THE SPORTING NEWS All-Star Fielding Team. And, like Concepcion, Geronimo batted .281 for the Reds in 1974.

"I tell Cesar the same thing that I tell David," said Sparky. "And that is both of them can thank their lucky stars we've got big Klu here with the club."

And Grammas?

"I'll tell you how much Concepcion thinks of Alex," said Sparky. "Delia is pregnant now with her first child. Concepcion has told me if the baby is a boy, he's going to name it David Alexandros."

Over the past five years, Grammas has developed more than a few blisters on his hands fungoing ground balls to Concepcion.

AND, TOO, Alex occasionally has grown hoarse, shouting at Concepcion, "Fire the ball, don't aim it!"

"That was Concepcion's biggest fault as a rookie," recalled Anderson, "... his wild throws."

Not many shortstops in the major leagues have a throwing arm as strong as that of Concepcion, claims Anderson. And none has a stronger arm.

"I don't care if the ball winds up in the 20th row of the seats. Just throw it hard, don't aim it or try to guide it," Grammas would repeatedly tell Concepcion.

But the time, patience and faith extended Concepcion by Anderson, Kluszewski and Grammas has paid off.

"There are some mighty good shortstops in the league today," conceded Grammas, "but Concepcion is a notch ahead of them all in all-round ability because his bat is stronger and his range in the field is greater."

Concepcion's .281 batting mark last year included 14 home runs and 82 runs batted in.

STATISTICS offer supporting testimony that the .287 batting average Concepcion compiled before he broke his ankle two days prior to the 1973 All-Star Game was no fluke.

And the 41 bases Concepcion stole last year offer conclusive proof that the broken ankle healed completely.

Anderson smiles when he remembers the slightly bewildered and more than a little self-conscious Concepcion who walked into the Reds' training camp as a rookie five years ago.

"He was just a baby then . . . 6-2 and only 158 pounds," recalled Sparky.

Was it little wonder then that Pete Rose, the Reds' three-time batting champion, took one look at Concepcion that spring of 1970 and cracked, "Kid, you may pull a bone, but with that body, there's no way you're going to pull a muscle."

Today, Concepcion is a 180-pounder.

"Today," said Sparky, "David is a man."

Anderson smiles, too, when he remembers the Concepcion who, with tears in his eyes, came to him in the midst of the pennant-clinching clubhouse celebration of 1970 and said, "Thank you, Sparky. Thank you for giving me a chance."

SPARKY nursed Concepcion along that

1970 pennant-winning season, having him share the shortstop position with veteran Woody Woodward, now a member of the Reds' telecasting team.

Still, as early as Concepcion's first season with the Reds, Anderson was telling one and all that within a few years the young Venezuelan would be baseball's premier shortstop.

"I put David on the moon before he even got his feet off the ground," said Anderson.

Sparky, though, is enthusiastic by nature, especially where young players are concerned.

But, in retrospect, Anderson now believes he hurt Concepcion more than he helped him by praising him too much too early.

For instance, there's the .205 Concepcion batted in 1971 and the .209 he averaged the following season.

"I guess the best thing I did for David was let him know in the spring of 1973 that no one on the club was going to be handed a job," said Sparky.

Concepcion accepted the challenge that spring of 1973 in the manner Sparky hoped he would.

"He earned the starting job on merit," said Anderson.

There are those who say Concepcion is a hot dog, a showboat, that he'd look a lot better with a little mustard on him.

Anderson, though, isn't one of them.

"LET 'EM call David a hot dog," said Sparky. "And, as for the mustard, I hope David never loses it. It's part of his self-confidence. What's wrong with playing the game with a flair? Most of the real players do. It's a display of confidence. You believe you're good and you're letting the fans know it."

Some might accuse Concepcion of enjoying the role of "teacher's pet."

Anderson will dispute this.

"David has been chewed out a lot of times," said Sparky. "So many times, in fact, that I think he used to have the idea I didn't like him. Now, though, he realizes those chewing outs were for his benefit."

Concepcion still feels the lash of Sparky's tongue since attaining All-Star status.

There was a night last summer in Montreal when Concepcion responded to an Anderson verbal whipping with three hits to lead the Reds to a victory over the Expos.

"He was paying more attention to the umpires than the pitchers," said Sparky.

"If there's to be any arguing with umpires, I'll do it," Anderson told Concepcion. "You just concentrate on hitting."

TODAY, though, Concepcion does so many things well on the field that Anderson admits he finds it increasingly difficult to bawl him out.

"It used to be I treated David like a kid," said Sparky. "Now, though, I treat him like a man, because he is one."

Concepcion was working in a Venezuelan bank when he was signed by the Reds after participating in a tryout camp.

Today, he's still counting money. Only now it's his own money. And, since he's closing in on the six-figure salary bracket, there's a lot more of it to count.

"I want to see Concepcion make as much money as his potential will allow," said Anderson. "When he returns to Venezuela, once he is through playing baseball, I would like to see him in a position where he'll never want for anything."

Anderson sees Concepcion "becoming a complete pro—on and off the field."

"There are athletes and there are the complete pros . . . guys like Bart Starr and John Havlicek," said Anderson, naming two non-baseball players deliberately, perhaps, so as not to offend anyone.

"We've got professionals on this club," said Anderson. "Players like Pete Rose, Johnny Bench, Tony Perez and Joe Morgan make a rookie feel completely at home the moment he sets foot in training camp."

CONCEPCION is aware of this because he received such a welcome on his arrival in camp for the first time.

"And I never want David forgetting to give newcomers the same treatment he received," said Sparky. "I don't think he will."

Anderson will go so far as to predict Concepcion will steal 60 to 70 bases this season.

"David is very intelligent," said Sparky, "and he has learned a lot about base running from Morgan."

"And, as Joe will tell you, it's David's speed, daring and height which will make him a good base stealer."

Height?

"A guy 6-2 like David can get back to the base quicker than a guy 5-8," said Sparky, citing the height difference between Concepcion and Morgan. "That means the taller player can take the bigger lead."

Added strength and confidence are two reasons for Concepcion's improved hitting the past two years. And, of course, the counsel of Kluszewski.

IT WAS ON Klu's advice that Concepcion switched to a lighter bat and moved closer to the plate.

"It's the speed of the bat, not how hard you swing, that means the most," said Big Klu. "Concepcion's hitting balls in front of the plate."

And, if he continues to adhere to Big Klu's advice, there'll always be plenty of food on the Concepcion plates and money in the Concepcion bank account.



Dave Concepcion . . . Counting His Own Money Now

# Concepcion Bearing Down At Last... Reds Impressed

By EARL LAWSON

TAMPA, Fla. — Who's going to open the season at shortstop for the Reds?

"That," said Manager Sparky Anderson, "is something I don't have to decide. The players involved will make the decision for me."

With the retirement of veteran shortstop Woody Woodward, there are two contestants for the shortstop berth.

Dave Concepcion, the 24-year-old Venezuelan, is one. Darrel Chaney, 24-year-old Indianan, is the other.

Ever since he first joined the Reds in the spring of 1970, Anderson has been predicting that Concepcion will be the league's premier shortstop.

Concepcion, though, has failed to respond to the buildup. So now it appears Sparky has decided to try another way of motivating the young Latin.

Every day this spring Anderson has given Concepcion a warning. Sparky's message is always the same—"Don't let me catch you goofing off."

Obviously there's nothing wrong

with Concepcion's hearing. Judging by his attitude and performance, he seems to be getting Sparky's point.

"Concepcion seems to have matured," said Anderson. "That's the biggest change I've noticed."

The young Latin's recent marriage might have something to do with this.

## A Serious Discussion

However, a little talk that Sparky had with Concepcion last fall probably has a lot more to do with the serious attitude Dave has displayed this spring.

Sparky's talk with Concepcion took place just before Dave headed home for Venezuela after taking some special fielding and hitting practice in Tampa last fall while the Florida Instructional League was in progress.

"For two years now I've given you the shortstop job on the club," Sparky told Concepcion, "but for two years now you've showed me you haven't wanted it."

Anderson went so far last year as to bench a startled Woodward, who

was batting around .400 at the time, and replace him with Concepcion.

That was just like handing Concepcion the job on a silver platter.

Anderson later admitted he made a mistake, but it's one the Reds' manager doesn't plan to repeat.

"I also told Concepcion last fall that when he comes to spring training he's going to have to win the job . . . that it wasn't going to be handed him."

Sparky said that he also pointed out to Concepcion that the Indianapolis (American Association) farm is only a short distance from Cincinnati.

"It's a short distance whether you're walking, traveling by automobile or by plane," Concepcion was told.

## He's All Business Now

"I've got to admit that not once this spring have I seen Concepcion display a nonchalant attitude," said Anderson one day late in March.

In the ninth inning of one game, Concepcion scooted to his left, scooped up Frank Robinson's torrid grounder and threw to first base to nail the Dodger slugger with feet to spare.

"See that play!" exclaimed an impressed Anderson. "Concepcion made two others just like it in a B game against the Cardinals earlier today."

The fact that Concepcion arrived in spring training after a season of winter ball in Venezuela gave him an edge over Chaney.

Concepcion not only played winter ball, but topped off the season with a spectacular performance both in the field and at the plate in the Caribbean playoffs.

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"I think he batted .394," said veteran catcher Pat Corrales, who also played in the Caribbean series.

"Pat told me," said Anderson, "that if Dave plays the same way for us, we've got no worries at shortstop."

"He's much more aggressive at the plate this spring," said Anderson, "and he's quicker with the bat . . . handling that inside fast ball."

## New Chance for Chaney

Chaney is back with the Reds after a season at Indianapolis where he batted a respectable .277. It was his first chance to play regularly since he performed for Anderson at Asheville in the Southern League in 1968. During the intervening two years Chaney whiled away his time on the Reds' bench.

At the time, the Reds' brass figured Chaney's future in the majors was that of a utility player. Darrel hoped his play at Indianapolis last year gave the Reds' front office some second thoughts.

Unfortunately, Chaney had only two hits to show in 21 at-bats after seven Grapefruit League outings. He wasn't his usual self in the field ei-

ther, committing four errors.

Meanwhile, the Reds bolstered their depleted infield ranks by acquiring veteran second baseman Julian Javier from the Cardinals March 24. The Reds dispatched pitcher Tony Cloninger to the Redbirds. Cloninger, unimpressive this spring, did not figure in Anderson's plans.

Javier should prove an able backup man. He was reported to be unhappy over lack of action with the Cardinals. Javier was an excellent second baseman for the Redbirds for 12 years.

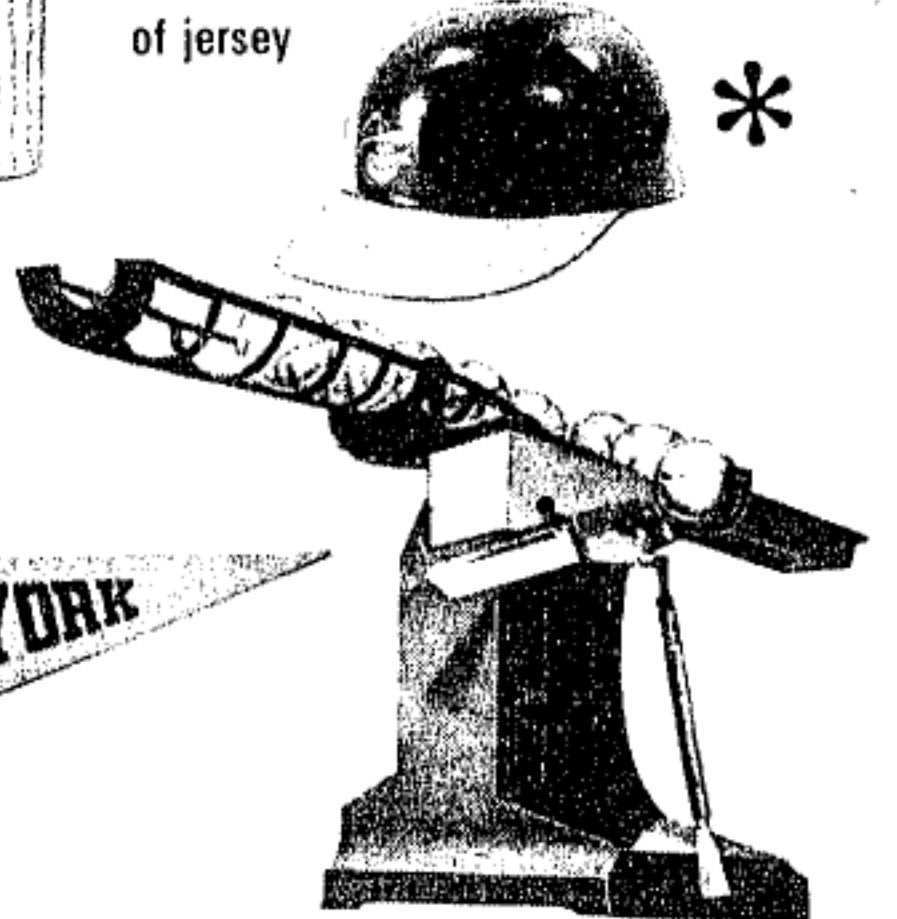
**Red Hots:** Cesar Geronimo continues to impress Anderson. As of March 22 Cesar had thrown out four baserunners in Grapefruit League play. . . Bobby Tolan made his first slide of the spring when he tripled March 21 against the Phillies. "If he doesn't get hurt again, Bobby's a cinch to open the season in center field," said Anderson. . . The Reds cut non-roster players Al Weis and Bob Aspromonte who were in camp on a trial basis after being cut loose by the Mets last year.

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## sportView

By JACK CRAIG



### Saturday Games on Trial

BOSTON, Mass.—If you can withstand that over-used cliché "crucial" just one more time, it is a fair description of the situation with nationally televised baseball this season.

The important public news about the new season is that there will be 10 Monday night telecasts, double the previous high of 1971. But the silent item is that if enough folks tune into these night games, it could spell eventual doom for the Saturday daytime telecasts.

NBC's Saturday games are at a standstill in audience, which translates to a backward step in a nation of ever-increasing population and television sets. During 1971, an average of 4,460,000 homes turned in for the Saturday telecasts, up a minuscule 10,000 homes over the previous season.

### Hit Five Million Once

More important, since 1966 the Saturday telecasts reached an average of 5,000,000 homes only once, in 1967.

These statistics do not necessarily reflect declining interest in baseball. Rather, they result from increasing competition from local telecasts on Saturday afternoons. Baseball especially seems to accent rooting interest. Apparently most fans would rather see their own club, miserable as it may be, than some team like the Orioles or Pirates.

In New York, for instance, the top television market representing some 10 percent of the national audience, NBC's weekly games are virtually

wiped out in the ratings when the Mets and Yanks also are on television on Saturday afternoons. In the cruel rating race, this is an enormous handicap starting out.

Proof of the network's trouble with Saturday baseball is found in its inability to sell time spots at anywhere near the \$32,000 per minute that has been listed on the rate card. It would be an understatement to suggest that the national TV games on Saturdays are a difficult sell.

### Monday Outlook Strong

But in contrast to the Saturday doldrums, NBC has legitimate cause for optimism on the night telecasts, going from an average 6,280,000 homes in '71 to 7,250,000 last season. The 15 percent rise last season in per-game audience was accomplished without any scheduling continuity to the five telecasts. They were spread out over the entire season. And television matches, even the sports kind, are prone to habit.

This season's 10 telecasts are dated to encourage habit. They are clustered consecutively, from June 12 through September 4, except for July 24 and August 21, when the national political conventions will dominate the tube.

Adding to the advantages resulting this season from fans' knowing automatically that there will be a game on each Monday night, will be an agreement among the 24 clubs not to televise any games locally on these Monday nights.

The end result could be another leap forward in Monday night audiences this season. And if it were

to be in the same proportion as last year, it would be approaching twice the Saturday audience.

Now NBC has an option for 25 Monday night telecasts, if it desires. It might choose to invoke it in 1973, when free from scheduling restrictions that exist in this political year.

If this were to happen, then the Saturday afternoon telecasts would probably face cutbacks. And once its continuity is lost, the weekend audience probably would plummet. Could the end of that phase of TV baseball be far away?

### 25 Saturdays Booked

For this year, however, NBC is ready to go with 25 consecutive Saturdays of telecasts, picking chummy Fenway Park for its opener on April 8, Tigers vs. Red Sox.

The one uncertainty remaining is the 15-minute pregame show before each Monday night telecast. Joe Garagiola, who was host last year, is not returning. Producer Don Ellis and Tony Kubek spent some three weeks in Florida gathering material, including one segment to be devoted to analyzing what combination of qualities are required to establish a top manager. A couple of 20-game winners probably are most important, suggests a cynic.

Missing from the TV lineup this year will be the network's top sports producer, Lou Kusserow, who recently left NBC under less than friendly circumstances. A signal of Kusserow's unquestioned talent may be the fact that he was the only guy in his specialty I ever heard lauded by the rival networks.

# Anemic Hitter **Concepcion** Begins to Blast Clutch Hits

By EARL LAWSON

CINCINNATI, O.—Big Ted Kluszewski noticed it the first few times he saw **Dave Concepcion** swing the bat this spring at the Reds' Tampa training site.

"He seems stronger . . . he's got more bat speed," observed big Klu, the Reds' batting instructor.

A few weeks after the season opened, Reds' Manager Sparky Anderson was surprised to see **Concepcion** drive a couple of pitches mid-way up into the stands during an off-day workout at Pittsburgh's Three Rivers Stadium.

Surprisingly, after 21 games of the season, **Concepcion** was tied with Johnny Bench for the No. 2 ranking on the Reds in RBIs.

What's more, the slender Venezuelan shortstop was batting a respectable .263. That's quite an improvement for a guy who batted .205 for the Reds last year.

**Concepcion's** 13 RBIs gave him two more than his roomie, Tony Perez.

"Davey," said Tony, "thinks I should be batting eighth and he should be batting fifth."

**Concepcion's** remark came after the Reds knocked off the Cardinals, 9-5, May 4 at Busch Stadium.

A two-run single by Davey broke a 4-4 deadlock. And a bases-loaded triple by Bobby Tolan climaxed the five-run eighth inning which gave the Reds their victory.

"I've got **Concepcion** straightened out," Perez had remarked after the Cardinal game, "but now I'm all loused up."

After delivering his key hit in the victory over the Cardinals, **Concepcion** sauntered up to Kluszewski.

"Maybe," he said, grinning, "they no use a pinch-hitter for me any more."

One can advance a couple of reasons for **Concepcion's** improved performance both at the plate and in the field.

He's more matured. His marriage during the winter and the responsibilities which came with it might have a little to do with this.

## Warning From Skipper

Last year, too, **Concepcion** learned there's more to being a major leaguer than wearing the uniform.

And there's the talk Manager Anderson had with **Concepcion** last fall just before Davey headed for his Venezuelan home after a two-week session in the Florida Instructional League.

"I gave you the shortstop job two years in succession," pointed out Anderson, "and you didn't seem to want it. Next spring you'd better come to camp prepared to win the job."

Sparky's words evidently hit home. **Concepcion** topped off his winter league play with an outstanding performance in the Caribbean series.

"In fact," said catcher Pat Corrales, who's now with Indianapolis (American Association), "no one could have played better than **Concepcion** in that Caribbean series."

**Concepcion** also represented a base-stealing threat on a Reds' team which is running more than ever before.

This probably doesn't surprise Vern Rapp, who had **Concepcion** at Indianapolis a few years back.

At the time, Rapp spoke glowingly of **Concepcion's** base-running instincts and predicted that in time he'd steal 20 or more bases per season.

As of May 10, **Concepcion** had five stolen bases in five attempts. As a team, the Reds had stolen 29 bases in 34 attempts.

The Reds stole six bases in six attempts May 10 against the Cubs, but still wound up a 4-2 loser.

Joe Morgan was 3-for-3 in thefts in that game, giving him a season record of 12-for-13. Tolan's theft gave him an 11-for-12 record.

In that same game **Concepcion** swiped two bases in two attempts.

## Leo Blames Pappas

While the Reds ran wild that afternoon, Cub Manager Leo Durocher wasn't impressed.

"Any grandmother could have done the same thing," Leo snorted disdainfully.

Durocher put the entire blame on pitcher Milt Pappas. And the Cub righthander was smart enough not to offer a rebuttal.

"Milt wasn't even bothering to look at the runners, let alone throw to a base," said Leo disgustedly. "Even Gabby Hartnett in his prime couldn't have thrown out runners under those conditions. I guarantee it won't happen again."

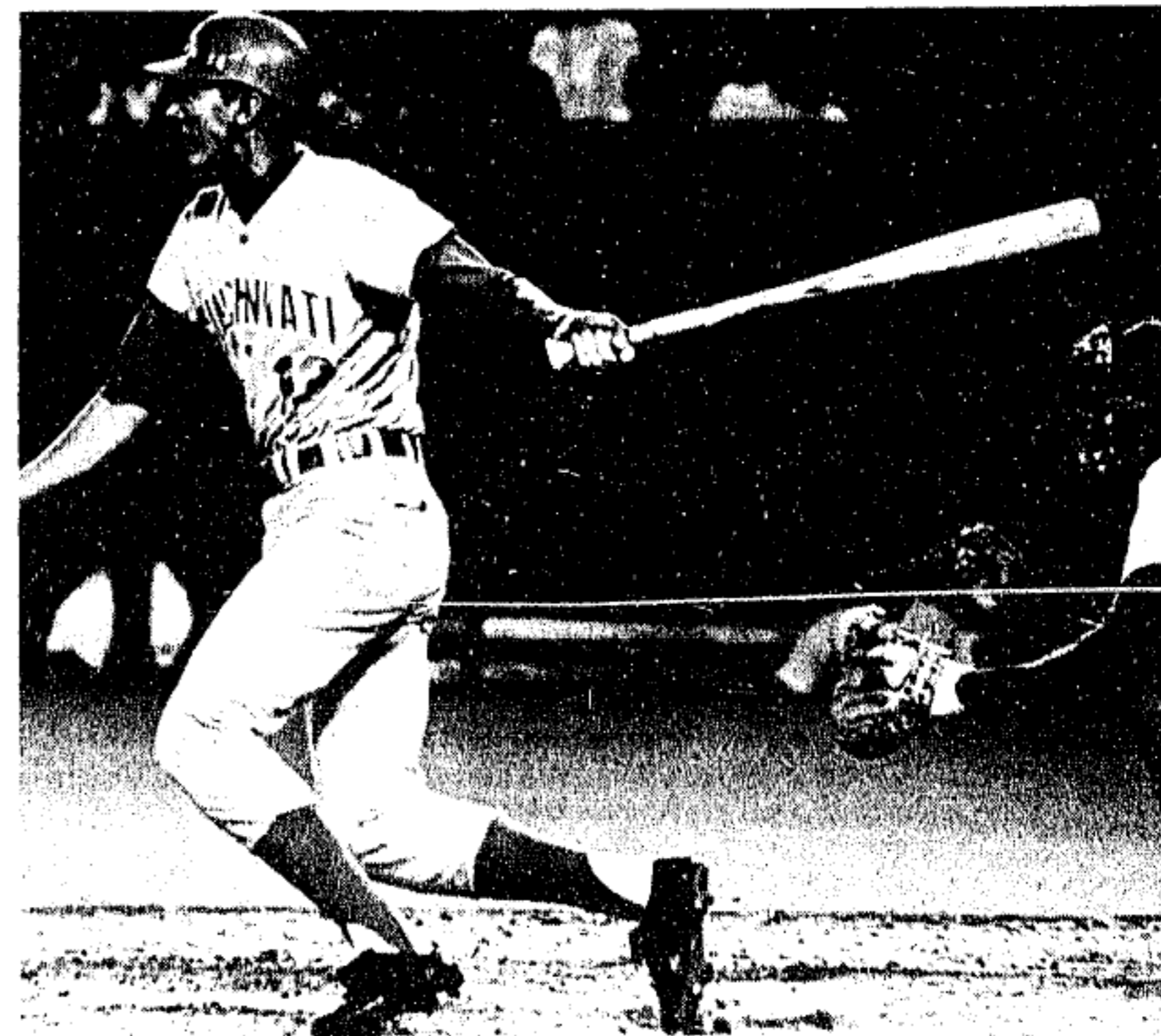
What pains Anderson is the Reds' thefts aren't paying the dividends he had expected. But that's because Johnny Bench and Perez haven't been delivering the big hits as expected.

In the May 10 loss to the Cubs, Bench went hitless in five at-bats. His average dipped to .205. Perez had two hits, one of the infield variety. But, while Tony was batting .271 as of May 10, he had only four extra-base hits among his 19. And he had driven home only 11 runs.

"Maybe," someone quipped, "when the Reds went for speed in off-season trades, they should have gotten guys who can steal home."

**Red Hots:** Gary Nolan suffered his first loss of the season when the Reds dropped a 4-2 verdict to the Cubs May 10. . . . The Reds went into a May 12 series with the Cardinals 6-8 against East Division clubs. . . . Jack Billingham went to the bullpen temporarily after dropping five in a row as a starter. . . . Don Gullett, suffering from subsiding hepatitis, is ready to handle relief chores. With Gullett in the bullpen, Tom Hall may draw occasional starting assignments.

Lefthander Jim Merritt reported to Indianapolis (American Association), where he was assigned by the Reds May 5. Merritt said he wants to prove he still can pitch and hopes he can come back to Cincinnati or make it with another club. He had pitched in four games, a total of eight innings and had a 4.50 earned-run average in Cincy.



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# Discipline Helps Chris Cash In at Indian Dish

By RUSSELL SCHNEIDER

CLEVELAND—A year ago, the questions asked of Chris Chambliss were different. Very different.

Then, the theme of most conversations with the Indians' first baseman was, "What's wrong?"

As of July 1, 1973, Chambliss, who always has been considered a potential batting champion, was hitting about .170.

But now, the interviewers usually begin with "congratulations," and go from there with something like, "What are you doing differently?"

And if you've looked lately at the American League leaders, you know the reason.

**CHAMBLISS GOT OFF** to a torrid start, hitting safely in the Tribes' first 11 games. And he now gives the impression of living up to his "potential," as predicted by many as early as 1971, when he hit .275 and was the American League's Rookie of the Year.

It's not that Chambliss flopped after his first season as a big leaguer. Not at all. He hit .292 in 1972, and despite the gosh-awful start in 1973, finished with a .273 average, which represents an amazing comeback.

"I'm not doing anything significantly different, and I didn't last season when I hit well after the bad start," said Chambliss, a handsome, 25-year-old lefthanded hitter who was the Tribe's No. 1 pick in the January, 1970 free-agent draft.

"Even when I was around .170, I didn't let it get me down because I was hitting the ball pretty good, even if a lot of hits weren't falling in.

"**MAINLY, I JUST** try to make good contact. I swing as hard as I can, although it's not that I'm trying to hit home runs. Some guys have home-run swings, but I don't and I know it.

"I just try to make good contact, that's all," he repeated.

"If I'm any different at all," he conceded, "it might be a matter of more discipline. That is, swinging at pitches I can handle. When I go after bad pitches, I'm in trouble and I know it."

Another factor might have helped, Chambliss thinks. "I played winter ball and kept my body in pretty good shape." The pitchers in Puerto Rico will attest to that.

Chambliss led the Puerto Rican League with a .363 average.

One of Chris' big backers is Indians' coach Larry Doby, himself a very good hitter during a Cleveland career from 1947 through 1955.

"**CHAMBLISS** reminds me a lot of Ferris Fain," said Doby. Fain was a first baseman for the Philadelphia A's during Doby's time in the American League, and also was a former A. L. batting champ.

"Fain and Chambliss hit a lot alike, although I think Chris has more power. But I hate even to mention the word power to Chris because he's such a better hitter if he doesn't think about home runs," said Doby.

Larry added quickly, however, "That's not to say Chris won't hit homers. I think he will, about 15 to 18, without trying. And he'll hit for a good average, too, because he's becoming a well-disciplined hitter.

"The more disciplined he becomes, the better he'll be."

What does Chambliss think about leading the league?

"I think I can do it someday . . . I'm sure it's a possibility," he re-

plied, not boastfully.

"**THERE'S NO** particular pitcher who gives me a lot of trouble. If they throw me strikes, I can handle them.

"Sure, everybody has trouble with the real good pitchers at times. I do, too. But again, with me, anyway, it's a matter of discipline. I've got to swing at pitches I can handle. When I go after bad pitches, I'm in trouble."

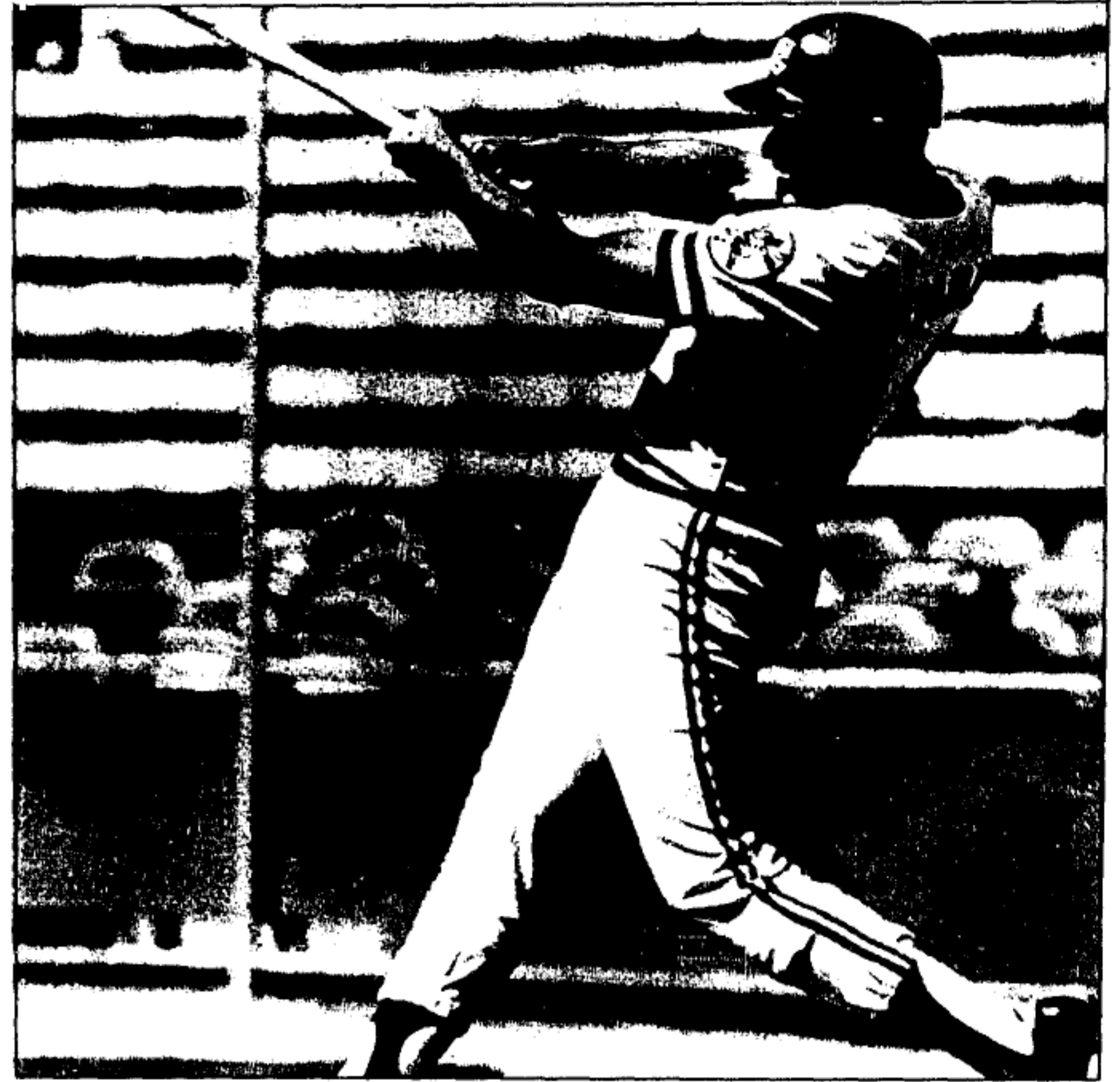
For now, however, the only trouble involving Chambliss is the trouble he's giving opposing pitchers. Which is quite different from a year ago this time.

**Tribe Tidbits:** Another thing that might be working in Chambliss' favor is that he got married last fall. "Maybe it helps," he said. "It helps keep a person more relaxed." Chris' wife Audrey is writing a weekly column in The Cleveland Plain Dealer entitled, "Baseball Wife." . . . The Indians, through General Manager Phil Seghi, are trying to arrange an opportunity for Gaylord Perry to prove to American League officials that he throws a very effective fork ball, and that it's not to be

confused with what some people claim to be an illegal spitter or grease ball. A. L. President Lee MacPhail says he'll try to cooperate by assigning umpire supervisors Dick Butler, Hank Soar and John Stevens to take part in Perry's demonstration. The problem, however, is to find a mutually acceptable time and place for Gaylord to attempt to prove his point.

Ken Aspromonte's younger brother, Bob, a former third baseman with the Astros and Mets, was hospitalized in Houston recently. His right eye was burned by a spark as he tried to use battery jumper cables to start his stalled automobile. For a while there was a fear that Bob might lose the sight of his eye, but doctors lately have issued optimistic reports.

When Jim Perry beat the Brewers, 3-2, that date, it gave the Perry brothers 373 lifetime victories, equaling the modern record by the brother combination of Christy and Henry Mathewson. However, the Clarkson brothers—John (1882-94), Arthur (1891-96) and Walter (1904-08)—won 384 games among them.



Chris Chambliss . . . Winter Baseball Helped a Lot

# Little David Supplying Big Wallop for Reds

By EARL LAWSON

CINCINNATI—The first time Pete Rose saw David **Concepcion** in the spring of 1970, the Reds' three-time National League batting champ grinned and said he looks just like Tony Perez "when we both were at Geneva, N.Y."

This was back in 1960 when both Rose and Perez were embarking on professional careers.

"Tony was so skinny," said Pete, "that in those days he was called Flaco, which is Spanish for thin."

Rose, about a 150-pounder at the time, wasn't exactly a heavy-weight himself.

A steady diet of steaks and the traditional Spanish black beans have turned Perez into a muscular, home-run hitting 200-pounder.

And, right after that first season with Geneva, Rose began a muscle-building program by handling heavy bulk mail in a post-office annex at Cincinnati. Today, he's a rugged 200-pounder.

**CONCEPCION** hasn't blossomed into any 200-pounder, but he has put on some 15 pounds since he reported to the Reds' camp as a 149-pound rookie in the spring of 1970.

"Kid, if you pull anything, it's got to be a bone because you sure don't have any muscles," Rose teasingly had remarked to Concepcion that first spring.

You don't hear any such wisecracks about the slender Venezuelan's frame these days.

That's because **Concepcion**, who

once looked like a young Perez, is beginning to hit like the Reds' slugging Cuban first baseman.

"Yep," said Manager Sparky Anderson, "it is beginning to look as if that .287 **Concepcion** batted before he broke his ankle last July is for real."

It's no mere coincidence that Perez and **Concepcion** are roommates.

**CONCEPCION** needs a confident, steady performer such as Perez around to keep him calm and from fretting too much when he goes a couple of days without a hit.

During a mid-April series with the Dodgers, **Concepcion** went 0-for-8 and was really down in the dumps when the Padres arrived in town one day later for a four-game series.

"I tell David to forget about the Dodgers . . . to go up against the Padres and if he sees his pitch, swing at it," said Tony.

That's just what **Concepcion** did as he singled and doubled to drive home three runs in the April 18 opener with the Padres. Perez did a little slugging himself following Concepcion's double with his fourth homer of the season.

**CONCEPCION** was particularly happy that his double came after an intentional pass had been issued to Joe Morgan.

"I know they gonna walk Joe," said the grinning David, "but they're going to soon learn that I'm no .200 hitter."

Anderson has been using Concepcion in the No. 3 spot against lefthanded pitching.

"I hope he keep me there," said David. "Then I'll drive home 80 runs this year."

"**Concepcion** is an excellent hitter with men on base," said Anderson. "If he would concentrate the same way Pete Rose does when no one is on, I think he could become a .300 hitter."

The RBIs in the game with the Padres April 18 gave **Concepcion** 11

for the season and tied him with Perez for the club lead.

"**OUR ROOM IS** going to drive home 200 runs this season," said **Concepcion**.

"You say 200 runs," exclaimed Perez. "What I got to do, drive home 150?"

Perez grinned as he looked across the clubhouse at Concepcion, whose face bore a feigned pout.

"That's all right, Davy," said Tony, consolingly. "I be happy with 125 if you get 75."

Last year, **Concepcion** was batting .287 and had stolen 22 bases when he suffered a broken ankle two days before the All-Star Game.

And since **Concepcion** had been named to a berth on the squad by Anderson, he was bitterly disappointed when he didn't play.

"**I THINK** David's gonna get that chance this season," said Anderson.

This is because Sparky believes that if **Concepcion** continues his brilliant play, he'll win a berth on the squad by the popular demand of the fans.

Anderson's confidence never has wavered in **Concepcion**. When David was a rookie, Sparky predicted that within a couple of years the slender Venezuelan would be the best shortstop in baseball.

The Red manager refused to change his mind even though Concepcion's average dipped to around .200 the next couple of years.

"Now," said Anderson, "I'm not so sure he won't become even better than I thought he would."

**Red Hots:** Gary Nolan, the ailing righthander who was optioned to Indianapolis before the season's start, returned to his Oroville, Calif., home. The latest report was he will be examined by Dodger orthopedic specialist Frank Jobe. Shoulder surgery may be the only cure for Nolan. It's understood he's willing to subject to an operation if one is recommended.



Dave Concepcion . . . 'I'll Drive Home 80 Runs'

# Feeble Reds Thankful for Concepcion

By EARL LAWSON

CINCINNATI—The first time the Reds' Pete Rose looked at Davey Concepcion, the National League's premier shortstop, he shook his head and grinned.

"Kid," cracked Rose, "there's no way you're ever gonna pull a muscle with that body you've got. You're all bones."

This was back in the spring of 1970 and Concepcion was a 21-year-old rookie who had divided the previous season between the Reds' Asheville (Southern) farm club and Triple-A Indianapolis (American Association).

CONCEPCION, a native of Venezuela, was a scrawny 155-pounder in those days. Today, he's a 6-2, 175-pounder.

"He reminded me a lot of Tony Perez when I first played with him in Geneva, our first year in pro ball," said Rose.

Perez' nickname in those days was Flaco, Spanish for skinny.

The first time Reds' Manager Sparky Anderson saw Concepcion perform in the field, he knew the slender Venezuelan was something special.

"He was so graceful... had such fluid motion," recalled Anderson.

The manager, after a brief glimpse of Concepcion in the field, never doubted the youngster was a major leaguer with the glove.

Anderson, though, did worry about Concepcion's bat.

"I NEVER THOUGHT he'd be much of a hitter," said Anderson.

Ted Kluszewski, the Reds' batting coach, differed with Anderson.

"I'm just glad Ted was right and I was wrong," said Anderson.

Concepcion batted a respectable .260 that first season with the Reds in 1970, when they won their first National League pennant under Anderson.

The manager's confidence in Concepcion's ability to cope with major league pitching might have wavered after Davey's mark dipped to .205 in 1971 and .209 in 1972. But Big Klu remained optimistic.

Today Concepcion has justified Kluszewski's faith in him. The Reds' shortstop took a lifetime .272 batting average into the 1977 season.

AND, THOUGH the Reds still were struggling around the .500 mark in June, Concepcion was hitting .288 and had swiped 16 bases in 17 attempts.

Even more impressive has been Concepcion's play in the field. After 51 games, he had committed only two errors.

Concepcion not only commits larceny with his legs by swiping bases, but he also has stolen many a hit from an opposing player with

both his glove and his hands.

"It's Concepcion's great range that makes him the best shortstop I've ever seen," said Anderson.

Kluszewski saw Marty Marion and Pee Wee Reese, a couple of Hall of Fame candidates, at their peaks, but still gives his vote to Concepcion as No. 1.

BIG KLU ALSO was a teammate of Roy McMillan when the ex-Red shortstop's exploits in the field were winning him ovations even when he opened one season with two hits in 52 at-bats.

Little Mac was great. His arm was strong and accurate and he had few, if any, peers at fielding balls on the short hop.

"But Mac didn't have Concepcion's tremendous range," said Klu.

The writer, who has been following the Reds since post-World War II days, agrees.

Concepcion is adept going either to his left or right. And, he can throw from any angle.

Bud Harrelson knows. He was amazed this season when Concepcion, charging a slow bouncer, bare-handed the ball while crossing in front of third baseman Pete Rose, and threw to first to nab the Met shortstop.

AFTER THE REDS traded Perez to the Expos, there was considerable speculation that his departure would have an adverse effect on Concepcion.

Perez and Concepcion had been long-time roommates. It was the older and wiser Perez who offered Concepcion counsel and encouragement when the young Venezuelan was down in the dumps.

Admittedly, Concepcion misses Perez. There isn't a player on the Reds who doesn't. Perez spreads sunshine. He's a doer, not a complainer. His shoulders are wide and they're there to lean upon, if one feels the need. And his good-natured jibes made many a teammate realize that the world doesn't end with a hitless day.

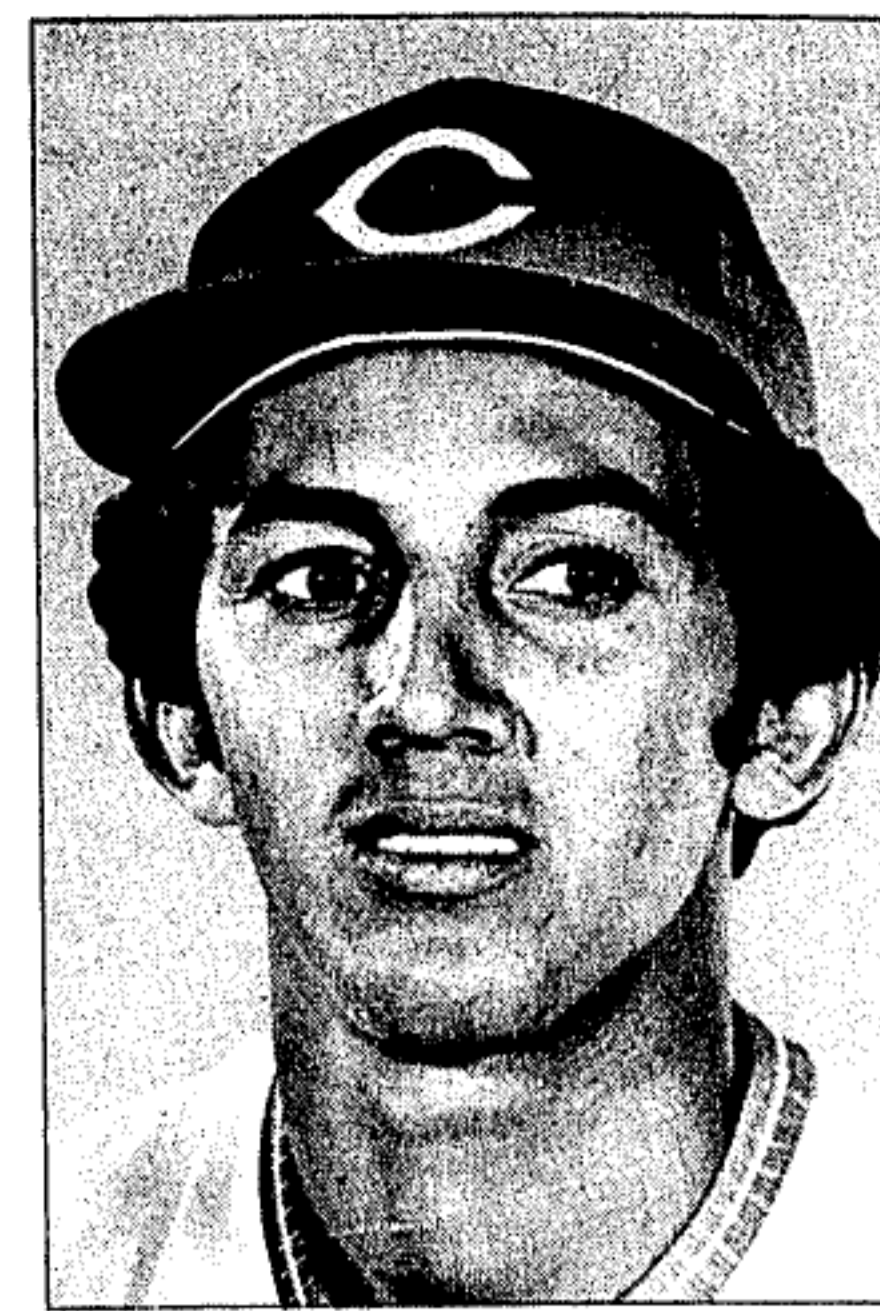
ANDERSON expressed confidence that Concepcion would prove to the skeptics that he's capable of standing on his own feet. Concepcion has.

"Look," remarked Anderson before the season's start, "Davey's going on 29 now. I think it's time he starts helping other youngsters the same way Perez helped him when he was breaking in."

Today, you won't find Concepcion looking for any shoulder to lean on. Perez was a good teacher. Concepcion now has confidence in himself.

And the five-year contract he signed this spring makes him one of the richest and most secure shortstops in the game.

Red Hots: Tom Hume, the rookie hurler recalled from Indianapolis, was rapped hard in two of his first



Dave Concepcion

three starts. . . . Johnny Bench took over the club RBI lead when he hit two homers and drove home five runs in a 14-4 victory over the Astros June 5 at Riverfront Stadium. The homers were the 10th and 11th of the season for Bench, tying him with George Foster for the club lead. Bench, though, was still batting .234. His comment: "Batting .300 never has been one of my goals."

The Reds' No. 1 choice in the June free-agent draft was an 18-year-old third baseman, Ted Venger, from Newhall, Calif. . . . Significantly, perhaps, three catchers were among the Reds' early choices.

## Expos' Valentine Displays Rifle Arm, Torrid Bat

By IAN MacDONALD

MONTREAL—Ellis Valentine already has reached the stage where he can thrill an audience merely because a ball is hit toward him in right field.

No longer does the Expos' brilliant young outfielder have to throw out a runner to earn the 'oohs' and 'ahhs' of the faithful. Opponents don't take liberties with Valentine's arm any more.

Manager Dick Williams thinks that is a tremendous compliment to a 22-year-old with just over one-half season in the major leagues.

VALENTINE enjoys the esteem, and like any young player, he has played the rifle role too often at

times by firing a ball over the cutoff man. He is learning, though, and cutting those indiscretions to the minimum.

Those players who crossed Valentine's path in the minor leagues knew well enough not to test the arm.

It is the established players and the coaches who have to do the learning. It doesn't take long.

All of which is great fun for Valentine, an enthusiastic individual, who just has to be prodded every now and then on the way to almost certain stardom.

The 6-4, 205-pounder was selected by the Expos in the second round of the 1972 free-agent draft and signed immediately out of high

school. Ellie feels that he should have been with the varsity before he finally was called in July of last year, but it is difficult to criticize the fashion in which he was brought along.

THE EXPOS were concerned about his hitting, particularly his lack of power. That's why he was left in the minors while others drafted or signed at the same time were brought up more quickly.

Finally in 1975, Valentine hit .306 with Memphis (International). He had earned his chance. But after a lackadaisical spring, it was back to Triple A until the call came again on July 18.

This season, it appears that the young talent has been nursed

along properly. The throwing skills, which have been a huge plus to the Expos' defensive picture, tell only half the story.

Ellie was in the top ten batters for almost two months. After 50 games, he was hitting .317. Included among his 57 hits were nine home runs.

AT THAT STAGE, Ellie had hit safely in 36 of the 44 games he'd played—he was out with a leg injury—had hit .367 with 17-for-47 against lefthanders and a respectable .301 on 40 hits in 133 tries against righties.

Valentine led his team in winning RBIs and stolen bases. He was one behind Gary Carter for the team home run lead and four be-

hind leader Tony Perez' 30 runs batted in.

And he was having fun.

Ellie tends to ham things up at times. He jumps around a little, claps his hands and gives with his patented wide grin, teeth glistening, when things go right.

Valentine waves to the fans and acknowledges applause by throwing all old balls into the stands. Hollywood? Hot Dog? Showboat?

"I don't look at it that way at all," Valentine said. "I'm just enjoying myself."

It is Ellie's contention that baseball should be fun.

"IT FEELS GOOD to be up here playing regularly. And anyway this game should be played as fun. It's nine innings, maybe three or four hours a day, and it should be fun. This is beautiful and you should enjoy yourself.

"If I'm doing well, I must be doing well for the team and we all should be enjoying ourselves."

While Valentine enjoys the crowd reactions to his throws he doesn't hide the fact that succeeding on offense is what gives him his biggest thrill.

"Hitting is the big excitement in this game," Valentine said. "Throwing runners out? That's a second excitement."

Expos: Ace righthander Steve Rogers was leading the league in complete games—nine; innings pitched—117; and strikeouts—90.

. . . Veteran journeyman Jackie Brown pitched a superlative five-hitter to top the Braves, 4-2. The curve-ball artist didn't give up a hit until there were two out in the sixth and didn't allow a run until the eighth. . . . Don Stanhouse, who started the season as No. 2 man in the rotation, is regaining his strength after fighting chest congestion by working from the bullpen. . . . Speaking of the bullpen, young Joe Kerrigan has been quietly effective for several weeks, getting those short jobs done.

## Money Super in a Switch to Keystone

By LOU CHAPMAN

MILWAUKEE—Brewer Manager Alex Grammas has a sense of humor, so his listeners didn't take him too seriously in spring training when he predicted, "Don Money will be the All-Star second baseman this year." After all, Money had been a third baseman practically all of his major league life.

So who was beginning to look like a prophet when the first All-Star balloting returns were coming in? That's right, Money was leading the pack at second base.

Even Money admitted "I'm surprised." It's difficult to adjust to a new position at any time, but Money, after all, had played 6½ years at third base and was expert enough to have been picked to the All-Star team.

WHAT'S MORE, he set fielding records in both majors (with the Phillies and Brewers). So switching to second base at this stage was

quite a big change for Money.

How did he do it? Well, you've got to have the right attitude, for one thing.

"That was the biggest thing I had going for me," said Money, as he recalled the day in spring training when the Brewer brass told him he was going to get a shot at second.

After all, his days at third were over because the Brewers had signed Sal Bando for a reported \$1.5 million in a five-year contract. But Money originally was earmarked as the designated hitter. Then it came out that the Brewers had plans at second for Money.

"I COULD have been feed off or asked them to trade me," said Don. "Instead, I tried to make the best of my opportunity. If I had sounded off, it would have defeated everybody's purpose.

"But I like it here. I just went out to make a second baseman out of myself. I had played 20 games

there with the Phillies in 1971, but I didn't like it. Remember, I'd only been in the big leagues for two years.

"This time it was different. My playing days at third with the Brewers were over. So I began making the adjustment at second. I like it now because I get a chance to play every day. I know I'm not going to play third unless something serious happens to Sal.

"So I don't even think about third any more. I haven't even taken one ground ball in infield practice there."

MONEY acknowledged that the brass might have been worried about the leg injury he suffered last year. He was out for six weeks.

"But I knew I was going to be all right," said Money. "I'd played racquet ball all winter and I knew the leg was sound. I knew I was okay one day when (coach) Jimmy Bragan hit me ground balls left and right. When I got through that day, I knew there weren't going to be any problems."

# Concepcion Delivers as Reds' New Goliath

By EARL LAWSON

CINCINNATI—Not even Nostradamus could have made the prediction, but there was the name of **Dave Concepcion**, perhaps the most unlikely candidate in the loop, perched on top of the National League's batting statistics after almost two weeks of the season.

For three years now, **Concepcion** has been getting advice on hitting from his roomie, Tony Perez.

And now, all of a sudden, **Concepcion** is beginning to hit like the Reds' slugging Cuban first baseman.

"FOR THREE YEARS I keep telling **Concepcion** not to get down on himself, but he no listen," Perez said after the slender Venezuelan's average vaulted to .500.

"What I tell **Dave**," continued Perez, "go in one ear and out the other. Now, though, he hearing me."

This was after **Concepcion** had rapped three hits, one a three-run homer, as the Reds knocked off the Padres, 7-6, April 16.

The day before, **Concepcion**

pounded out two hits and drove home four runs as the Reds walloped the Giants, 11-0, behind the four-hit pitching of Don Gullett in the first game of a doubleheader.

AND, IN THE second game, **Concepcion** chipped in with three more hits and an RBI as the Reds completed the sweep of the doubleheader.

**Concepcion** readily agreed with Perez. He admitted he fretted too much as he struggled to keep his average above .200 the last two years after hitting a respectable .260 in his rookie season of 1970.

"I think too much," said **Concepcion**. "I no sleep good and I no eat good."

**Concepcion**, though, isn't having any trouble eating these days. His weight is up to 171 pounds, the highest of his career.

"THAT ANOTHER reason why he hitting better . . . he stronger now," said Perez.

When he first began playing ball in the States, **Concepcion** weighed only 150.

"I hit balls over the right field fence then," said **Concepcion**, "but they always foul."

Pete Rose remembers the day **Concepcion** first arrived in the Reds' camp in the spring of 1970.

ROSE TOOK one look at **Concepcion's** skinny frame and cracked, "There's no way he's gonna pull a muscle. He doesn't have any."

When spring training opened this year, Manager Sparky Anderson said the shortstop position was up for grabs between **Concepcion** and Darrel Chaney.

"I'll play the one who shows me he deserves the job," remarked Sparky.

After **Concepcion's** hit splurge against the Giants and Padres, there was no doubt as to which player won the job.

Chaney, as of April 17, had only one hit to show for 23 at-bats. This, though, wasn't Darrel's only problem. On the morning of April 16, he awakened with pain piercing his right wrist.

DR. PAUL BAUER, the Padres' physician, diagnosed the ailment as tendinitis and administered a shot of cortisone.

"I checked a swing in that first game of the Sunday (April 15) doubleheader," recalled Chaney. "That's the only thing I can think of that might have caused the injury."

The larceny-minded Reds had stolen 17 bases in 20 attempts after winning eight of their first 11 games of the season.

Joe Morgan, who swiped 58 last year, was eight-for-eight when he was called out by umpire Ed Sudol on April 16 against the Padres.

THE WAY THE Reds stole bases in their first seven games with San Francisco, catcher **Dave Rader** must have had nightmares. You can't beat 13 out of 13 and that was the Reds' record.

Morgan, alone, was five-for-five in the April 15 doubleheader.

Twice that day, Morgan stole third base and a viewer was reminded of Joe's comment during the final weeks of the 1972 season.

"Next year," Joe had vowed, "I'm going to steal third more. Then it won't take a hit to get me home."

"I stole third only twice all last season, so now I'm already some



Dave Concepcion . . . Listening to Good Advice.

150 games ahead of 1972," quipped Morgan.

Rose figured the Reds supplied Ripley with a "Believe It or Not" in the April 15 opener.

"CAN YOU imagine this team getting 11 runs and none of the first four batters—me, Morgan, Bobby Tolan and Johnny Bench—scoring?" asked Pete.

"Yet," he added, "that's what happened even though three of the four of us were on base five times and Morgan stole five bases."

After the Reds' first 11 games of the season, Bench was batting less than .250 and, as he put it, "not worrying a bit."

"Pitchers aren't giving Johnny any pitches to hit," said Anderson, citing the 14 walks.

"THAT WILL change quickly, though, if Perez continues to hit around .390," added Anderson.

Tony, hitting like the Perez who was leading the league in batting, homers and RBIs mid-way in the 1970 season, owned a .395 mark. He also had three homers as did Bench.

"Let them keep walking

Bench," said the smiling Perez. "I take the RBI."

Red Hots: Roger Nelson, with a ninth-inning assist from Clay Carroll, blanked the Giants, 3-0, April 14 in San Francisco for his first National League victory. . . . Richie Scheinblum's first National League hit was a pinch-homer against the Giants April 13. . . . Denis Menke's sore arm put him on the sidelines during the San Diego series April 16-18. Phil Gagliano, acquired from Boston this spring, filled in. . . . Don Gullett is now pitching to spots, which is something he didn't do in 1971, even when he compiled a 16-6 record. "That young man is quite a pitcher," commented Bench after Don blanked the Giants April 15 for his second victory.

Gary Nolan still is in Tampa, Fla., receiving physical therapy for his right shoulder. He has yet to throw a ball.

Cesar Geronimo rapped out five hits in the first game of the April 15 doubleheader sweep of the Giants. That was the same day **Concepcion** had five for the afternoon.



## Melvin Durslag

When Reds Ruined Jessel

LOS ANGELES—Summoned to throw out the first ball for the opening game at Dodger Stadium, George Jessel surveyed Cincinnati in the field and he remarked that here was the team that ruined his life.

All along, people suspected that women and horses had done the job.

But Jessel blamed Cincinnati, for a reason you will presently discover.

"In 1910," recalled George, "I was the batboy for the New York Giants. John McGraw was the manager. Each time we would win, I would sing Irish songs in the clubhouse after the game. The players would toss me coins."

"WHAT HAPPENED when you lost?" he was asked.

"When we lost, McGraw would throw me out. 'Get outta here, you unlucky Jew s.o.b.," he would yell. And I would go over to the other team's clubhouse and sing Irish songs."

"Well, I did this one day when Cincinnati was in town. The manager at that time was Clark Griffith. He was impressed. He said I sang Irish songs better than any Jew he had ever heard. He asked me to work for Cincinnati. He said they would have a uniform made up for me."

Excitedly, Jessel went home to tell his mother.

"SHE TOLD ME that if I was going to sing, I may as well do it in vaudeville. She took me to see Gus Edwards. That's how I got into show business. If it hadn't been for Cincinnati, I would have been a 73-year-old batboy with the Giants today, instead of thousands of dollars in debt."

In view of what the Reds did to Jessel, you are not sure they deserve the position of affluence they enjoy today.

But Cincinnati has ascended to a powerful station in baseball, having now appeared in two World Series of the last three and is rated the favorite again this year in the National League.

THE TICKET OFFICE, what's more, is bustling, and a franchise that had pretty much lost its pulse, buried in a tenement called Crosley Field, is showing a healthy financial statement.

Tracing the rise of Cincinnati, you are able to ascribe its renaissance partly to luck, partly to

strong administration and partly to assistance from the city in which it operates.

It was no act of genius that brought Johnny Bench to Cincinnati. He had been passed by a number of teams in the player draft. When he fell into the clutches of Cincy, the club had come by one of the genuine super stars of this pastime.

IT WAS ALMOST as if he had fallen through the skylight. A catcher of such quality is a major asset, establishing stability throughout the club.

Then the Reds were given a \$50 million home in Cincinnati. Riverfront Stadium is convenient and comfortable, and has engendered an enthusiastic frame of mind among the whole populace.

Sports fans have become sensitive to surroundings. You offer them a dump in a shabby neighborhood, and they are going to occupy themselves with other pursuits. With television, the fan doesn't need any promoter in order to satisfy his taste for sports.

NEXT, CINCINNATI came upon an excellent manager who not only knows his business on the field, but has a fine sense of human relations extremely helpful to the club in other areas, such as publicity and ticket sales.

Sparky Anderson proceeds by the homeliest of philosophies, namely, that it doesn't cost anything to be nice. Furthermore, it is especially easy to be nice when a guy is on top.

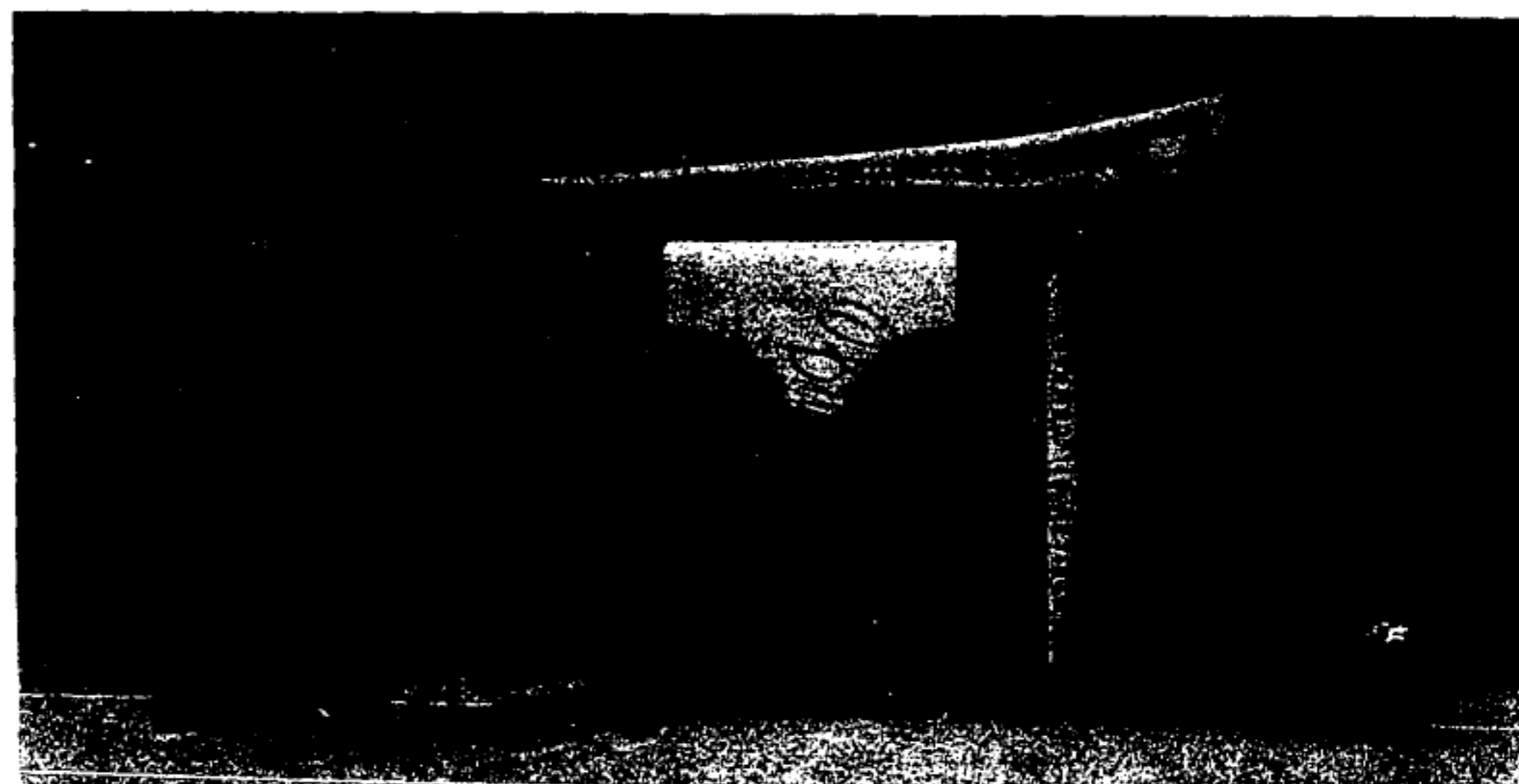
When you think of Sparky Anderson, and then you watch 20-year-old brats who are moody and unapproachable, and managers and coaches who are arrogant and cold, you can't help but reflect on the simple virtue of being nice.

FINALLY, CINCINNATI helped itself considerably with the multiple trade by which it put the arm on Joe Morgan. A spirited player, dangerous on the bases, Morgan fits well with the running game Anderson teaches.

In Sparky's judgment, a team must run these days, or perish. Pitching is too good for a club to keep waiting for hits.

So you can see how taste has changed in Cincinnati. The manager today likes runners, the one in 1910 liked Irish songs.

Jessel never before had thrown out the first ball. But when he has sung, people have thrown out Jessel.



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# N.L. WEST

(Continued From Page 34)

say, 'Oh, he's full of it.'"

Torre went to spring training largely unfamiliar with the Braves, having seen them only six times last season. But he saw enough to suspect the team needs to be more aggressive, more fundamentally sound and more confident.

"We (the Mets) felt if we got a lead on the Braves, we could probably beat 'em," he says. "It was a club that just seemed to . . . not to quit . . . but to get down on itself. It's just a sense I had."

"We have to be aggressive . . . resist the temptation to wait for the big inning. And hopefully our execution—bunting, things like that—will be better."

Joe Torre, the salesman, is ready to be sold.

**Wigwag Wisps:** Relief pitcher Larry Bradford won his arbitration case against the Braves. He'll receive \$130,000 instead of \$90,000. . . . Still unsigned as spring training opened: Dale Murphy, Ed Miller, Rufino Linares, Rick Mahler and Bob Walk. The Braves weren't concerned, though, because they could renew these players' contracts between March 1 and March 10 if necessary.

The Braves do not rule out the possibility of rookie pitchers Ken Dayley and Craig McMurtry making the staff. And it's virtually certain another rookie pitcher, Steve Bedrosian, will do so. . . . Rookie catcher Matt Sinatro also appears certain to stick, and rookie infielder Randy Johnson has a good chance to make the club as a utilityman.

TIM TUCKER



## Richard, Sutton Top Astros' Question List

COCOA, Fla.—On the surface, the Houston Astros' 1982 spring training camp would seem merely to involve the formality of veteran players getting in shape.

Most positions in the regular lineup, starting pitching staff and relief corps are assumed secure. General Manager Al Rosen made only one major off-season deal, acquiring third baseman Ray Knight from Cincinnati for Cesar Cedeño. No other big trades are likely.

Indeed, Houstonians are reminded of Rosen's words seconds after a bitterly disappointing third straight division playoff loss to Los Angeles to end the 1981 season: "We won't allow a moment of dejection to temper judgments we've made about our team over a full season."

Still, questions do exist about these Astros, questions which probably will be answered during training camp.

For instance:

- Is former All-Star pitcher James Rodney Richard sufficiently recovered from a 1980 stroke to make a significant roster bid? If so, where does Manager Bill Virdon fit him into a starting staff which already includes Nolan Ryan, Joe Niekro, Don Sutton, Bob Knepper and Vern Riffe? Or is Richard's brilliant career over, his courageous comeback at an end?

- Will Sutton rebound quickly enough from a broken kneecap suffered in October to pitch at the season's outset?

- How much effect will a fourth position switch in four years have on Art Howe, the Astros' leading hitter last year with a .296 average?

- What is the future of talented but troubled Mike Ivie?

- How much of a challenge will young shortstops Dickie Thon and Bert Pena offer two-time All-Star Craig Reynolds? And will one among that trio eventually be utilized as trade bait?

- Will Terry Puhl, still a young player at age 25 and recently granted a lucrative four-year contract, show the offensive form which made him one of Houston's two most dependable hitters (along with Jose Cruz) from 1977-80? In 1981 he hit only .251 and produced few runs.

The Astros line up this way beginning spring training:

Puhl, Cruz and Tony Scott are the outfielders, all holdovers from the 1981 starting lineup.

Knight replaces Howe at third base, with Howe replacing the departed Cedeño at first base. Reynolds remains at shortstop. Phil Garner, who joined Houston last August from Pittsburgh, is at second base.

Alan Ashby is the catcher.

Backing the starting pitchers are relievers Joe Sambito, Dave Smith and Frank LaCorte.

Thon, Pena, Joe Pittman and Kiko Garcia are back to battle for middle infield work. Veterans Harry Spilman, Denny Walling and Danny Heep are available to play first base and the outfield.

Ivie hopes to overcome emotional problems and provide the power the Astros need.

Dave Roberts hopes to rebound from a dismal 1981 campaign to be the No. 1 utility man.

Luis Pujols is again backing up Ashby. Meanwhile, youngsters Alan Knicely, who catches, plays third base and the outfield, and center fielder Scott Loucks have drawn raves from Rosen.

With all this, chances for an unsung prospect to make the roster seem slim. However, Rosen, Virdon and Chairman

of the Board John McMullen are aware that Houston's recent success has happened because of pitching, not hitting, so they will be receptive to anybody who can hit with power.

The Astros haven't done much to improve their attack, one of baseball's weakest. Knight is an occasional home-run threat, but so was Cedeño.

Virdon points out, though, that Houston has outperformed its opposition almost every season, including 1981. One conclusion is that it's the spacious Astrodome, not the athletes themselves, responsible for the lack of power.

**Astronotes:** Catcher Pujols signed a one-year contract, so all Astros with more than two years' experience are inked for 1982. . . . Tom Williams, former Houston Oiler's official, is in spring training as a director of conditioning. . . . Among the instructors in spring training and full-time Astro employees for 1982 are former big league manager Les Moss and Denis Menke, who hopes some day to pilot a major league club.

HARRY SHATTUCK



## Robinson, Players Big on Confidence

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz.—Unlike last year, when there was competition at several positions, the San Francisco Giants began spring training with a fairly set lineup and only a few question marks.

The more stable situation gave Manager Frank Robinson a different approach in his second camp with the club. He is able to concentrate on development and fundamentals rather than placing an emphasis on evaluation.

"I feel much better coming to camp this time," said Robinson, who guided the club to a 56-55 record last year. "We don't have as many holes to fill and we don't have as many logjams at some positions."

"There's more confidence by me and the players because we've been together an entire season. I don't have as many questions to answer because I've seen most of these guys play. Last year we had to feel our way for awhile."

The swapping of veteran outfielders Larry Herndon and Jerry Martin has cleared up the outfield situation, at least temporarily. Jack Clark will be in right field, Jeff Leonard in center and rookie Chili Davis in left.

Davis, who batted .350 at Phoenix (Pacific Coast) last year, was being groomed to supplant Billy North in center field, but Leonard was promoted from Phoenix and did a fine job at the position, so it's his unless he proves unworthy.

"Jeff wants to play center and he showed me he can do it, so he's getting the first crack at it," explained Robinson, no longer thinking of switching Leonard to first base.

Robinson will carry five outfielders and Jim Wohlford and Max Venable seem to have the reserve roles cinched. Rookie Bob Brenly, primarily a catcher, also can be used in the outfield.

Robinson indicated he would carry three catchers, one spot going to veteran Milt May and the other likely to Brenly. The other receiver probably will be rookie Jeff Ransom, a defensive specialist with a powerful arm.

If three catchers make the roster, there will be room for seven infielders, which could present a problem unless a trade is negotiated. The main trouble spot is at second base.

Joe Morgan and newcomer Duane Kuiper seem a cinch to stick, but so may Rennie Stennett. Robinson reiterated he would be "playing with 24 men" if Stennett is on the squad, but Owner Bob Lurie indicated he has no intention of paying off a \$1.2 million contract over three years.

Since Enos Cabell and Dave Bergman are the first basemen, Darrell Evans is entrenched at third and Johnnie LeMaster is the shortstop, the second base trio already makes it a seven-man infield with no backup at shortstop. Robinson would like to keep either Joe Pettini or Guy Sularz for that spot, so a swap is likely.

If it involves Cabell, however, the Giants may be without someone capable of filling in for Evans at third. If no trades are made and three second basemen remain on the roster, Robinson may be forced to go with two catchers as an alternative.

The 10-man pitching staff has one or two vacancies, depending on the status of veteran righthander Doyle Alexander. If Alex reports, Robby will be searching for only one new pitcher, probably rookie Alan Fowlkes.

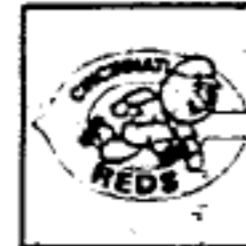
Robinson indicated that Vida Blue, Fred Breining, Al Holland, Gary Lavelle, Greg Minton and newcomers Doug Capilla, Rich Gale and Dan Schatzeder have made the squad. The battle for the remaining one or two spots figures to be furious.

"We have a lot of good, young arms and I feel much better about our pitching than I did at this time last year," said Robinson, who will be without swapped veterans Ed Whitson and Tom Griffin, and may be minus the stubborn Alexander.

**Gi-antics:** Reliever Greg Minton, who had a club-record

21 saves last year, lost his arbitration case, but still got a \$163,000 raise. He had requested \$495,000, but the arbitrator went with the club's figure, \$343,000. . . . Fowlkes is one of two non-roster players given a chance to stick; the other is rookie first baseman Dorian Boyland, a former Pirates farmhand. . . . Excuse the erroneous information, but left-hander Bill Bordley did not have rotator cuff surgery. His shoulder is fine and the young hurler is recuperating from a tendon transplant in his elbow.

NICK PETERS



## Some Big Changes In Reds Lineup

TAMPA—They pinned the label of "push button" manager on Sparky Anderson when he was managing Cincinnati during the glory years of the Big Red Machine.

Filling out a lineup card was a monotonous but pleasant job for Anderson in those days. Before every game, he'd just jot down the same eight names on his lineup card. Only the name of the pitcher changed.

John McNamara, who succeeded Anderson as manager of the Reds in 1979, hasn't enjoyed that same comforting feeling while filling out his lineup cards the past three years. Johnny Bench, Dave Concepcion and Dan Driessen are the only remaining members of the 1976 team that gave the Reds their second straight world championship. And this season Bench will be at third base, not behind the plate, where he became one of baseball's all-time greats.

After the departure of Anderson and Pete Rose, the Reds went through a transition period. Older players, most of them pitchers, were phased out and replaced by youngsters from the club's fertile farm system. Three such youngsters were Mario Soto, Frank Pastore and Bruce Berenyi, who today, along with veteran Tom Seaver, comprise the big four on the club's pitching staff. There were others—Mike LaCoss and Charlie Leibrandt and two top relievers, Tom Hume and Joe Price.

But not since the winter of 1971 when then general manager Bob Howsam traded first baseman Lee May, second baseman Tommy Helms and handyman Jimmy Stewart to Houston for second baseman Joe Morgan, among others, has there been a shakeup on the club that comes close to the face-lifting that Dick Wagner performed on the Reds this winter.

When the Reds opened camp February 23 McNamara foresaw an opening day lineup that will bear only a slight resemblance to that which opened the season last year. Of that starting eight, only first baseman Driessen, second baseman Ronnie Oester and shortstop Concepcion survived Wagner's face-lifting.

Bench suited up with the batterymen when they staged their first workout here a week before the official reporting date for infielders and outfielders.

Another early arrival was Cesar Cedeño, acquired in the deal that sent Ray Knight to the Astros and created the opening at third for Bench. Cedeño, claiming his acquisition by the Reds has given him a new lease on life, will be replacing the departed Ken Griffey in center field.

Clint Hurdle, another off-season acquisition, is ticketed to replace George Foster in left field. But yet to be answered is the question of whether Hurdle is ready to realize the potential Kansas City scouts saw in him when he was signed as a teen-age phenom.

Rookie Paul Householder, a 23-year-old switch-hitter who batted .300, slammed 19 homers and swiped 33 bases for Indianapolis (American Association) last year, is scheduled to get first crack at the right field position; vacated when Dave Collins signed with the New York Yankees.

The Reds have veteran outfielders Larry Biittner, Mike Vail and Sam Mejias as insurance.

McNamara sees Householder and Oester as the top candidates for Collins' vacated leadoff spot. He's leaning toward Householder, even though he has home run power.

Oester appears better qualified for the second spot. Like Householder, he's a switch-hitter. He's also the best bunter on the club. And he's a guy who hits to all fields.

Concepcion will retain his third spot in the order. The reason is obvious. Last year, the Reds' shortstop, batting third, experienced the most productive season of his career at the plate.

Cedeño is the top candidate to replace Foster in the cleanup slot. McNamara indicates he'll flip-flop Bench and Driessen in the fifth and sixth spots, depending upon whether the Reds are facing lefty or righty pitching. Hurdle figures to bat seventh and catcher Alex Trevino eighth.

Present plans call for Joe Nolan to back up Trevino. Rafael Landestoy, a holdover, figures to be one of two spare infielders the Reds will carry.

The Reds gave up righthander Paul Moskau in exchange for Wayne Krenchicki, a 27-year-old lefthanded swinging infielder acquired as a backup for Bench at third base.

Greg Harris, the 26-year-old righthander the Reds acquired in the Foster deal, appears to have the best chance of joining Seaver, Soto, Berenyi and Pastore in the five-man starting rotation.

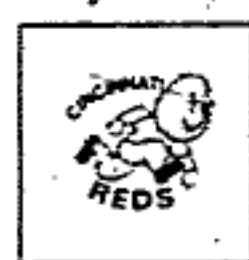
EARL LAWSON

# N.L. WEST

## \$4.5 Million Nixed By Concepcion

CINCINNATI—The Reds have broken their long-standing policy of refusing to offer guaranteed contracts.

The Reds also displayed a willingness to shell out big bucks when club President Dick Wagner offered Davey Concepcion, eligible for free agency in the November re-entry draft, a five-year, guaranteed \$4.5 million contract.



Wagner was more than a little disappointed when Jerry Kapstein, Concepcion's agent, announced that the Reds' All-Star shortstop was rejecting the offer.

"The package, including a signing bonus, was the largest offered any player in the club's history," said Wagner. "And I'm sure, too, it's the largest ever offered any shortstop in baseball."

Obviously, though, Concepcion and Kapstein were confident that more than a few clubs will be willing to top the Reds' offer.

Kapstein and Concepcion's demand for a more complete guarantee than that offered by Wagner squelched what chance the club might have had of signing the veteran shortstop.

"The guarantee we offered," said Wagner, "contained the exact language Kapstein used in negotiating four major contracts within the last year except for very, very minor changes.

"Kapstein," he added, "said, 'Fine, we'll take your offer, but it will cost you an extra \$630,000.'"

"Since we were assuming more risks, the price went up," explained Bob Teaff, Kapstein's associate.

No deal, Wagner responded. "I don't think there's a club in the majors that could afford the type of guarantee Kapstein's seeking," said Wagner. "It's wild. I'd call it a 'deal breaker.'"

Kapstein did admit that only one of his clients has been signed to a contract with the guaranteed provisions he's seeking for Concepcion. While Kapstein refused to admit as much, it's believed the one player is Chicago White Sox catcher Carlton Fisk.

Three other Kapstein clients—California's Fred Lynn, Milwaukee's Rollie Fingers and Kansas City's Dennis Leonard—were signed within the last year with guarantees worded in the same language contained in the offer to Concepcion.

Wagner said he still had a "glimmering hope" that Concepcion would change his mind about rejecting the Reds' offer. Wagner's feeling perhaps stems from the fact that Concepcion requested Kapstein to keep the door open for further negotiations with the Reds.

Prior to the September 23 series finale with the Padres in San Diego, Kapstein, in announcing Wagner's offer had been rejected, said there would be no more discussion of the shortstop's contract until after the November 13 re-entry draft.

Wagner said in Atlanta September 25, prior to a three-game series with the Braves, that he planned no further discussions with members of the news media concerning contracts until the Reds' season ends. The Reds entered that series trailing Houston by 2½ games with 10 remaining.

Outfielders Ken Griffey, Dave Collins and Mike Vail also are eligible for free agency at the end of the season.

"There will be no discussion of contracts with any of the three until after the season," emphasized Wagner. He also refused to speculate on his chances of signing Griffey and Collins now that the club has abandoned its no-guaranteed policy.

The club's offer to Concepcion suggests Wagner will make a determined effort to sign the two. The Reds aren't interested in Vail.

If Concepcion defects, second baseman Ronnie Oester, a shortstop throughout his minor league career, will be his replacement. The Reds, excluding Concepcion, have five second basemen on their roster—Junior Kennaedy, Rafael Landestoy, German Barranca, Neil Fiala and Tom Lawless, who played for Waterbury (Eastern) this season.

Their names, though, can't be mentioned in the same breath with that of the talented Concepcion.

It's conceivable that Johnny Bench, along with spelling Danny Driessen at first base occasionally, could become a part-time right fielder in 1982 while the Reds nurse along rookie outfielder Eddie Milner. That's in case Collins leaves.

The Reds seem willing to gamble that rookie Paul Householder can do the job in center if Griffey departs.

It's conceivable that the Reds would trade slugger George Foster during the winter for the right offer. Something is better than nothing. And nothing is what they'll

Dave Concepcion and his agent, Jerry Kapstein apparently think they can get even bigger bucks and better guarantees elsewhere.



receive if Foster becomes a free agent after the 1982 season.

**Red Hots:** The Reds announced that all four of Manager John McNamara's coaches—Harry Dunlop, Bill Fischer, Russ Nixon and Ron Plaza—will return next year. So will Ted Kluszewski, the batting instructor. Former Reds lefty Freddie Norman has been hired as a pitching instructor next year for Triple A and Double A farm clubs. . . . Even if the Reds don't win a berth in the divisional playoffs, they're likely to wind up the season with the best overall winning percentage in the major leagues.

EARL LAWSON



## Dodgers' Luxury: Resting Regulars

LOS ANGELES—On a Sunday afternoon, September 20, the Los Angeles Dodgers employed a lineup minus six regulars against Cincinnati.

Three-fourths of the starting infield was missing, as well as the entire outfield. Even the pitcher was a rookie—Ted Power, making his first start in the majors.

Third baseman Ron Cey and shortstop Bill Russell were out because of broken bones. Cey in his left forearm, Russell in his right instep. Russell has had his injury for some time; it's just been bothering him considerably more of late.

Dave Lopes, starter at second base had some trouble with his back, and outfielder Dusty Baker had a sinus headache. The other outfield regulars are Ken Landreaux and Pedro Guerrero, though Guerrero has been playing third base since the loss of Cey.

Manager Tom Lasorda can afford to have so many regulars out of the lineup because of the Dodgers' first half title in the National League West.

Lasorda is asked often about incentive, questioned whether the Dodgers really care about winning these final weeks.

And Lasorda replies, usually quite loudly. "Incentive! You bet we've got incentive. If we win the second half we get four home games for the playoffs. Besides, these guys are professionals and they've got pride." And on and on . . .

The argument isn't quite as convincing as it might have been with six regulars sitting out of a game with the Reds, the Dodgers' long-time rivals.

But Lasorda is taking aim on the playoffs in a couple of ways. He is resting his players, several of whom are ailing, and he's doctoring his pitching rotation.

For the final two weeks, Lasorda abandoned his five-man rotation in favor of a four-man: Fernando Valenzuela, Jerry Reuss, Burt Hooton and Bob Welch.

Dropped from the rotation was Dave Goltz, the \$3 million free agent of a year ago, who was winless in six starts between August 19 and September 15. He was 1-4 the second half. Now, he's not even sure he'll be with the Dodgers in 1982. Goltz is signed through 1985, but his no-trade clause expires.

"I'd be surprised if I'm here next year," Goltz told John Lowe of the Daily News. Goltz was 7-11 last season, 2-4 this year. He'd been replaced as a starter by Power, an 18-game winner at Albuquerque (Pacific Coast).

**Dodger Dope:** The Reds' sweep of the September 18-20 series marked the first time in a year the Dodgers had been swept in a three-game series. The Reds swept them almost a year ago to the day—September 19-21. . . . When rookie Mike Marshall took over for Derrel Thomas at third base late in the September 20 game, he became the 57th player to man third base in the Dodgers' 23 years in Los Angeles.

Dave Stewart's string of success against the Reds ended abruptly. He gave up a two-out, two-run pinch-homer to Johnny Bench on September 18. Stewart had made nine previous relief appearances against the Reds, totalling 16 innings, and hadn't given up a run. . . . The

Dodgers still haven't won a season series from the Reds since 1975. . . . Reggie Smith took over at first base the final seven innings September 15, marking the first time he'd played in the field all season. Because of his right shoulder, operated on last year, he had been used exclusively as a pinch-hitter. . . . Former baseball writer Toby Zwickel was appointed the Dodgers' Director of Publications. He has been in the club's publicity office since January.

GORDON VERRELL



## 'Improved' Astros Master Hitting

HOUSTON—As the season entered its final week, the Houston Astros hadn't clinched any 1981 titles. Not the first half. Not the second half. Not during intermission.

But Manager Bill Virdon and his players agreed that this team, clinging to the National League West second-half lead, is better than Houston's 1980 division winner.

"We're better talent-wise and we've got more experience," Virdon said. "We're getting excellent pitching, we're scoring more runs and we don't have an inexperienced player on the field except occasionally at first base (when Cesar Cedeno is injured)."

"But it is hard to make the flat statement that this team is better because we won last year and we haven't won yet this season," Virdon quickly added.

If not for the strike-caused split season, the Astros' status into the final days would have been desperate. They trailed both Cincinnati and Los Angeles in full-season standings. But that's because of a 4-12 first-half start. Since the first three weeks in April, no N.L. West club has fared better than Houston.

"I feel our club is at least as good as any other team we've put on the field," catcher Alan Ashby said. "We've made a lot of changes over last year (four regular starting positions and two new starting pitchers), but they've been good changes."

"The biggest difference I see is in added depth," shortstop Craig Reynolds said. "You can take anybody out of the lineup for a game or two or even longer and another player comes in and does the job."

"We're a different type club than last year. We've got more maturity. Offensively, we're better off, especially since we added Tony Scott and Phil Garner (in trades during the season). Our pitching has been every bit as good, if

(Continued on Page 24, Column 1)

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(Continued From Page 27)



## Concepcion Having Rebirth Under Rose

CINCINNATI—When Pete Rose took over as manager of the Cincinnati Reds, he thought the Dave Concepcion he was seeing was an imposter.

The Concepcion whom Rose had known during most of the 1970s was a solid .280-to-.300 hitter with a reputation for delivering base hits in clutch situations. He was also a shortstop whose ability in the field had earned five Gold Gloves.

"Davey had let his skills deteriorate," said Rose.

The Concepcion whom Rose inherited when named manager was batting in the .230s. He lacked aggressiveness at the plate and on the bases. And he appeared to be going through the motions in the field.

Rose, however, soon learned that playing with a loser for three years had gotten to Concepcion, who became one of Rose's prime projects. Hardly a day passed without Rose zinging Concepcion with a barb.

Results began to show shortly before the season ended. Rose commented on changes he was seeing in Concepcion after he had a pair of hits and three runs batted in to lead a 6-3 victory over the Atlanta Braves September 26.

"Three or four weeks ago, Davey was hitting nothing but fly balls to right field," Rose said. "Now, he's even aggressive at the plate in batting practice. He's stinging balls. His arm is still strong, too. I've been surprised by the velocity of a couple of his long throws to first."

Concepcion has welcomed the verbal abuse he has taken from Rose.

"I was waiting for someone to kick me in the tail," he said. "I needed someone to fire me up. And Pete's the right man to do it."

"Davey has seen our young pitchers throw, and he has seen the way (Cesar) Cedeno and (Dave) Parker have been hitting. He now realizes this team can win. He wants to be part of it," said Rose.

Parker, experiencing his best season since 1979, was edging toward a .300 average and 100 RBIs as the season ended. Cedeno had hit .300 while playing regularly since Rose took over as manager August 16.

**Red Hot:** Mario Soto earned his 17th victory, matching his career high, when he beat the Braves September 26. Soto had two hits and three RBIs in beating the Astros in Houston September 21. The two hits boosted Soto's total for the season to 16 and earned him \$100. Coach Tommy Helms had bet Soto he wouldn't get more than 14. Soto also had a pair of hits in beating the Braves in his next outing. "It's a real shot in the arm when your pitcher hits for you," said Rose. Cedeno had four hits, one his 10th homer of the season, in a September 21 win over the Astros. Before the game Cedeno had complained of an upset stomach and dizzy spells. "He insisted on playing," said Rose. "So I told him to play until he vomited. When he didn't throw up after sliding into second head-first on his double in the ninth inning, I knew he was going to finish the game." Rose, batting .370 since returning to the Reds, moved within 99 hits of Ty Cobb's all-time record of 4,191 with a pair of singles September 25 against the Braves. "If I play, I'll get my hits," he said. "My concentration is good. That's because when I don't play every day I take extra hitting practice."

EARL LAWSON



## Just How Did Astros Lose the Division?

HOUSTON—True, the Houston Astros finished far behind the Padres in the National League West Division.

The real question, however, is why.

And don't expect the answer from hard, cold statistics.

For instance, consider the two teams' pitching performances: As the season neared its conclusion, the Astros' earned-run average was 3.33, the Padres' ERA was 3.56. Hitting? The Astros were batting .265, the Padres .258. Defense? Houston had committed 126 errors, San Diego 133. And the Astros had turned 151 double plays, the Padres only 133.

If anything, the Astros were superior to San Diego this season in pitching, hitting and fielding.

But what about runs scored and runs allowed, you ask? That's the bottom line for any team, isn't it?

Not in this case.

With four games remaining for each club, the Astros had scored 677 runs, the Padres 669. Houston pitchers had permitted 615 runs, San Diego pitchers 626.

Yet the Padres were headed for the playoffs and the Astros were scrapping until the final weekend in an effort to avoid the second division.

Does anybody have an idea how this could happen?

Several Astros do.

"Stats are meaningless," said infielder Phil Garner, who played on world championship teams at Oakland and Pittsburgh. "The secret to winning is doing whatever is necessary



Pete Rose discovered that three years of losing had taken its toll on Dave Concepcion.

each game to beat the other team. If the other team scores seven runs, you need enough hitting to score eight. If you score two runs, you need enough pitching to hold the opponent to one run. That's what San Diego did. And it's what we didn't do. I don't know why we didn't. But for some reason, we didn't get the big hit or didn't make the big pitch or play to win games.

"A lot of people don't realize that the Oakland A's went to three World Series without one regular batting .300," Garner said. "And though Oakland had good pitching, it wasn't a pitching powerhouse. But those Oakland teams almost never made a mistake when it counted. They didn't miss cutoff men. They moved runners over on the bases. They did whatever was necessary to beat the other teams. I see that in San Diego, too."

"What are the records in close games?" Garner asked. The Padres were 34-22 in one-run decisions, the Astros 27-27. San Diego had a wide edge in two-run decisions, too.

Houston first baseman Enos Cabell cited the Padres' ability to beat Houston and Atlanta, plus the feats of reliever Goose Gosage, as prime reasons for San Diego's success.

"When you get ahead by seven or eight games early, the way they did, all you have to do to stay on top is split with other teams," said Cabell.

San Diego beat the Astros 12 of 18 times and was similarly effective against Atlanta.

"I don't know how the stats stack up, but against us they played good baseball," shortstop Craig Reynolds said. "They've just beaten us."

Nobody can dispute that.

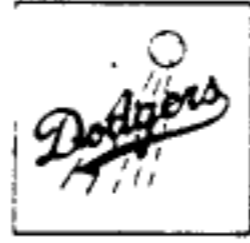
**Astronotes:** Houston management, still concerned about the future playing status of shortstop Dickie Thon, signed Reynolds to a three-year contract extension, meaning Reynolds, who could have declared free agency, is in the fold through the 1987 season. "I wanted to stay in Houston, and I think we reached an agreement fair to me and to the club," said Reynolds, who drove in more than 60 runs and had a marvelous season. Thon, a 1983 All-Star, suffered impaired vision when hit in the head by a pitched ball in Houston's fifth game. He didn't return but hopes to play next season.

Manager Bob Lillis and coaches Don Leppert, Denis Menke, Les Moss, Jerry Walker and Cot Deal already are under contract for 1985, but some speculation was that Lillis may pay the price for a disappointing record and unexpectedly low attendance. If so, several teams reportedly are interested in him.

The Astros drew 122,000 fewer fans at home than last year, and total attendance has dropped more than one million in four seasons. Houston won its only division championship in 1980.

Outfielder Kevin Bass, given his first opportunity to start every day since April, responded with a 12-game hitting streak and tied a club record with three doubles in one game at Los Angeles. Nolan Ryan missed the final 10 days of the season because of a pulled hamstring, his third major injury this year.

HARRY SHATTUCK



## Campanis: 'We Have No Untouchables'

LOS ANGELES—In looking ahead to 1985—not a bad idea, considering 1984—the Los Angeles Dodgers have two primary aims in mind: a third baseman and a good-hitting outfielder.

Toward that end, Dodgers Vice-President Al Campanis said, "We have no untouchables."

That's not exactly true. It's highly unlikely the Dodgers plan to dispatch Fernando Valenzuela, for example. But Campanis is not limiting his trading power by embracing what you might call a nucleus and leaving others wondering.

"Now, everyone's wondering," said shortstop Dave Anderson.

Finding a third baseman will be the first priority. And when assessing who might be available, there's a certain ring to the Dodgers' thinking.

The name Buddy Bell, Texas' third baseman, keeps popping up and, although all parties were denying any talks between the two clubs, the Dodgers plan on making a major pitch to the Rangers this winter.

The Dodgers' third-base problems have been discussed before. And just to emphasize how uninviting the position, at least at Dodger Stadium, is to some players, the moment Pedro Guerrero was told his days at third base days are over, he might as well have shouted "Ole!"

It was at the start of the Dodgers' final trip when Guerrero, who had been playing more and more in center field, was told he's through with third base, where he played all of 1983 and committed 30 errors. In the first 13 games after getting the good news that he's an outfielder again, Guerrero suddenly regained his batting stroke of the previous two years.

He hit four homers and drove in 16 runs in that span, taking the club lead in runs batted in for the first time all year with 66. And the Dodgers won nine of the 13 games.

"It's obvious the way Pete goes is the way the team goes," said veteran Bill Russell.

Russell was quick to add that the Dodgers' collapse the last two-thirds of the season, when they sank from first place to fourth in the National League West, is not the sole responsibility of Guerrero.

But Russell added, "He's our whole offense. Pete's had a lot of pressure on him because of the big contract (\$7 million for five years) and his big numbers in the past (32 home runs and at least 100 RBIs each of the previous two seasons). A lot was expected of him. It took him getting hot before he was able to handle all that pressure. He wasn't able to handle it earlier. But he's grown up."

Jerry Reuss, the winning pitcher on September 24 when Guerrero slugged a three-run homer—his first three-run shot since April 26—said, "Pete's production the last two years was so extraordinary that people think he's had an off year."

Guerrero raised his average to .297, a point below his 1983 average.

Reuss assessed his 5-1 victory over Houston, his third win in a row after losing six straight, this way: "We got great defense, guys making the plays, good pitching and Pete hit a three-run homer. What you saw tonight was an example of the way we all thought we should have played all season. It looked easy. You wonder why it hadn't happened all year."

**Dodger Dope:** The early reports on Steve Howe, working out with the Dodgers' team in the Arizona Instructional League, were positive. "He's having the time of his life," said his attorney, Jim Hawkins. "There's no doubt Steve Howe will be playing baseball next year. The only question is where and for how much money." Howe was suspended for the 1984 season because of repeated involvement with cocaine. He is granting no interviews in Arizona. The Dodgers' entire coaching staff will return in 1985. Monty Basgall, 61, will be back for his 13th season, Manny Mota, 46, for his sixth, Joe Amalfitano, 50, for his third, Ron Perranoski, 48, for his fifth, and Mark Cresse, 33, for his ninth.

Former Seattle Mariners hitting coach Ben Hines joined the Dodgers as a minor-league instructor. The Dodgers topped three million in attendance on September 25. The night before, they drew only 20,654 to Dodger Stadium, the smallest home turnout in three years. On talks of a new contract, Russell, who turns 36 on October 21, said, "I don't expect any problem, but you never know." Russell, in the final year of his contract, wants a two-year deal.

GORDON VERRELL

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