

Indians' Good Humor Man Is Happy Again

By RUSSELL SCHNEIDER

CLEVELAND—It's people like Walter Williams who make life pleasant for sportswriters who are stuck covering a losing team.

Williams wants to win as badly as anybody, but to him, the important thing is playing the game "the way it's supposed to be played," which is what the Indians have been doing lately.

Unfortunately, it's too late in the season for the Tribe to do much climbing in the American League East, and Walter is sorry for that. But it's not reason enough to roll over and play dead.

The main thing that bothers Williams is idleness, especially the kind of idleness—languishing on the bench—he suffered until mid-July.

Now, however, the Tribe's Good Humor Man has become a fixture in left field and is another key factor in the club's success since the All-Star Game.

"I ALWAYS FEEL good when I'm playing baseball," he explained. "It's my hobby as well as

my job, and I'd enjoy the game even if I weren't getting paid, as long as I'm playing. When I'm not playing, I feel terrible . . . anxious and all that."

Which is to say Walter spent a lot of "anxious" days during the first half, when he was only a spare part of the Indians.

"I couldn't really blame anybody, at least early, because so many of the other guys had such a good spring training and I didn't."

Williams' average climbed 69 points since mid-July, to .289 (highest on the team), through the Indians' 131st game. They won 26 of 50 dating back to July 6, which represented the halfway mark of the schedule.

WALTER HAS A plausible theory for what happened. He said, "There doesn't seem to be so much pressure now. We're all looser—but I don't know if we're winning because we're loose, or whether we're loose because we're winning."

"The only thing I'm sure of is

that we're all playing now the way we did when we were kids. You know, having fun playing the game.

"I think if you let guys play that way instead of making it like a school with lots of rules, it's better."

Williams came to the Indians in a trade with the White Sox last October for infielder Eddie Leon.

"BOY, WAS I EVER happy to get traded," recalled the 29-year-old blithe spirit. "I knew the White Sox had a lot of outfielders and the Indians didn't."

"I thought, 'Oh, boy! At last I'm with a team that needs me.'"

"But after that, they kept trading for more outfielders and the newspapers kept saying how good they all were going to be."

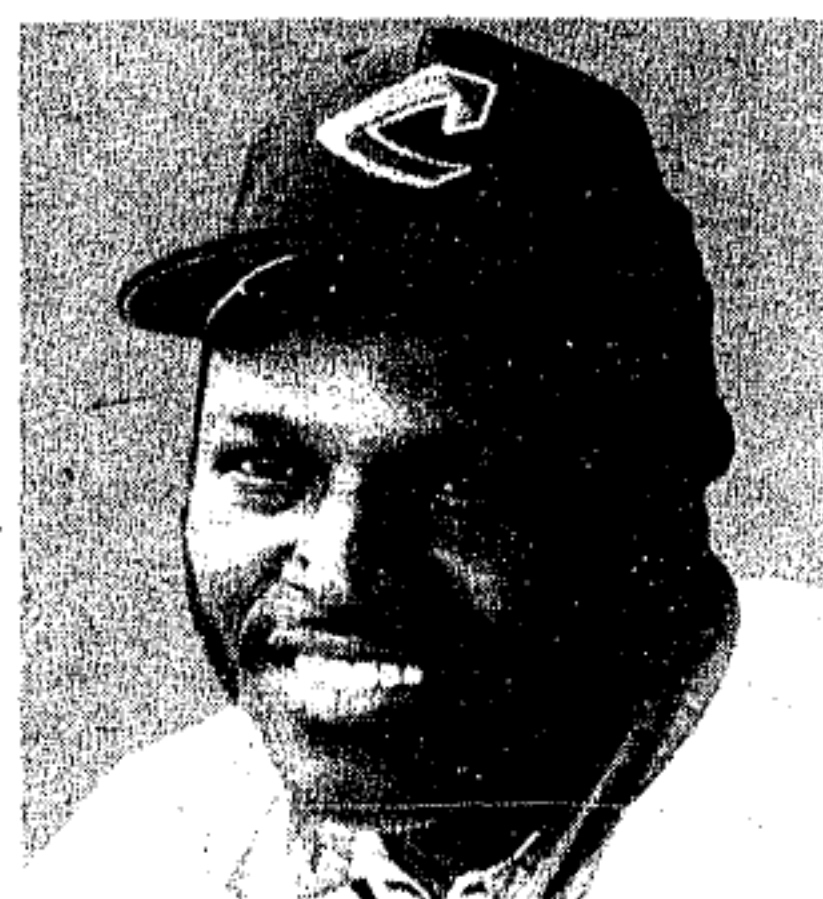
"That's when I thought maybe I ought to become a sportswriter," he said, laughing. "All I wanted was a chance to prove it was a good deal for both clubs."

Which is what Walter has done, and very well, despite the abun-

dance of outfielders wearing Cleveland uniforms.

Tribe Tidbits: Indians' General Manager Phil Seghi was not nearly as disturbed as one might expect when Texas pitcher Jim Merritt "admitted" on a television interview that he threw "about 25 or 30" grease balls in beating Cleveland, 9-0, on a three-hitter August 26. According to Seghi, neither was American League President Joe Cronin perturbed. "I talked to Cronin," said Seghi, "and he didn't seem to be terribly upset, and neither am I. I think it was just a put-on by Merritt. I never suspected during the game that Merritt was doing anything illegal, and neither did Kenny (Aspromonte). I think the only thing that bothered Cronin was that Merritt would make such statements."

Average attendance for the different starting times this season are as follows: 10 Sunday double-headers that began at 1 p. m.—16,289; 16 Monday, Tuesday and Thursday twilight games that



Walt Williams

began at 6 p. m.—7,723; 10 Saturday twilight games that began at 6 p. m.—7,684; eight Wednesday afternoon games that began at 1 p. m.—4,200; and nine Friday night games that began at 8 p. m.—8,184. Not included in the breakdown of averages were the opening weekend crowds of 74,420 and 10,798 on April 7 and 8. Both were 2 p. m. starts. . . . At this writing, Gaylord Perry had served up 29 gopher balls, 12 more than he did all last year when he won the American League's Cy Young award.

Dent Making Big Splash as New White Sox SS

By JEROME HOLTZMAN

CHICAGO—It's too early to say that the White Sox have another Aparicio-style shortstop waiting in the wings, but if first impressions are correct, rookie **Bucky Dent** may be starting a long and distinguished major league career.

Dent, in his fourth season of pro ball, is among the Chisox rookies who suddenly found themselves in the majors because of injuries to the club's frontliners. The Sox recalled him on August 4 from their Iowa (American Association) farm, where he won all-star selection.

Dent is part Cherokee and part Irish and bears somewhat of a resemblance to Aparicio, the nonpareil shortstop who also surfaced with the White Sox. Like Aparicio, **Dent** is small and quick, 5-9 and about 160 pounds, though he doesn't appear to have Aparicio's base-running speed.

IT COULD BE that **Dent** also doesn't have Aparicio's complete range, nor the rifle arm. He doesn't appear to be quite the classic stylist. He is more of a scrambler. But **Dent** does have soft hands and a sureness about him

not often found in rookie shortstops.

Manager Chuck Tanner, who now has a passel of young talent, has been alternating most of the rookies in and out of the lineup with the exception of **Dent**, who has been playing every day. And the more **Dent** plays, the better he looks.

"I like everything about him," said Wilbur Wood, one of the team elders. "He looks terrific on defense and I like the way he stands up at the plate. He's an aggressive hitter. He gets his rips."

Third baseman Bill Melton also is impressed with **Dent**. "I'd rather see a young guy who is aggressive with the bat," Melton said. "And he's aggressive. He's always swinging. To me, that's a good sign."

ALSO IN DENT'S favor is that he obviously enjoys baseball. This is immediately apparent. He even smiles during infield practice as he swoops in and picks up grounders with a wonderful confidence and enjoyment.

Yet, **Dent**, for all of his confidence, isn't a brash kid absolutely certain he's going to catch the brass ring. When a reporter told him one day he thought he looked good, **Dent** replied, "Gee, that's wonderful, but I think Eddie Leon plays a terrific shortstop. I've learned from watching him."

If **Dent** is to make it with the Sox and blossom as a full-time regular next season, Leon is the man he'll replace. Leon also can make all the plays, and had a strong first half, but weakened at the plate after the All-Star break.

What plans, if any, Manager Tanner has for **Dent** are not known. But Tanner, like everyone else, is impressed.

"HE'S AN aggressive little player," Tanner said. "He believes in himself and he's not afraid. All he needs is the opportunity."

Tanner also said there was one thing that especially pleased him in regard to **Dent**. On August 22 in Cleveland **Dent** faced Gaylord Perry, one of the league's best pitchers. Perry gave the kid a rough time, getting him four times on strikes and the fifth time on an infield roller.

"You saw what **Dent** did the next

day," Tanner said. "He came back and went 2-for-3. He didn't let yesterday's game bother today's game. This is what it takes to be a good major league player."

Dent is quite a handsome fellow. A native of Miami, he was originally drafted by the Cardinals in June, 1969, when he was graduated from high school. But he went to college for one year and didn't sign until the following June, when the White Sox drafted him.

DENT WAS assigned to the Sox' Sarasota club in the Florida Rookie League, where he immediately caught the attention of farm boss Glen Miller.

From August 18-27, **Dent** was in the starting lineup every day, missing only the second game of a doubleheader. In this stretch of nine games, **Dent** not only didn't make an error, but not once bobbled a ball. Don't forget the name—**Bucky Dent**. He could be a big leaguer for a long, long time to come.

Sox Yarns: Jim Kaat's White Sox debut was a smashing success and resulted in a three-hit, route-going victory over the Tigers. This win set the Sox off on a three-game winning streak, their longest such streak since early June. . . . Even Wood, who has been struggling, bagged a victory, getting No. 21 after seven consecutive failures. . . . Melton broke out of an 0-for-21 slump with a first-inning homer in the second game of an August 26 doubleheader vs. the Tigers. The homer came in Melton's first time at bat as a designated hitter. . . . Carlos May, who had been the club's DH for the previous month, returned to left field, but was still having trouble getting to fly balls.

Expos Flip Lids Over Rookie Rogers

By IAN MacDONALD

MONTREAL—"What's the kid's record, 5-3?" Bob Bailey asked. "The way he's pitched, he should be 9-0."

The subject of these comments was Steve Rogers, the 23-year-old rookie just two years out of the University of Tulsa, who has become the Expos' stopper.

Rogers had just blanked the Dodgers, the team with the best record in all of baseball and one of the most difficult to shut out.

The 4-0 victory was the third shutout and fifth complete game for the young petroleum engineer from Springfield, Mo., whose family, friends and relatives back home were watching him pitch in the majors for the first time. The action was NBC's Monday night game of the week.

ROGERS allowed the Dodgers three singles—two by Joe Ferguson and one by Willie Davis.

Since being purchased in late July, the righthander threw a 4-0 one-hitter at Steve Carlton and the Phillies and followed that with a seven-hit, 1-0 decision over the Mets. That earned him N. L. Player of the Week honors.

Steve pitched eight innings in a 2-0 win over the Padres and he walked home a run in defeating the Cubs, 6-1.

So, in his five wins, Rogers allowed just one run. He served up a two-run homer to Willie McCovey in losing, 2-1, to the Giants at San Francisco. His other losses were 3-1 to the Braves and 3-2 to the Giants.

IN 75 INNINGS, Rogers had allowed 47 hits. His earned-run average stood at a sparkling 1.20. He had struck out 35 men and walked just 22.

The irony of Rogers' spectacular performance is that his minor

league statistics gave absolutely no indication of such ability.

"I don't think there's any parallel," Manager Gene Mauch said, "to what Rogers is doing. Usually, when a man comes up and makes an instant splash, it's because he's a strikeout pitcher. That's happened on a number of occasions."

"But Rogers isn't doing that. He isn't blowing anybody out of there."

"HE HAS GREAT confidence in his sinker ball. He has a great feeling for the game. He knows himself."

"In his win over the Dodgers, he knew that he had nothing on his curve so he stayed away from the breaking stuff. He just went to something else. He has the poise of a complete pitcher."

The man who has become an in-

(Continued on Page 22, Column 4)

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Every Winter Wind Blows Greenbacks to Bucky

By PHIL PEPE

NEW YORK—Take a good looking kid with a handsome, warm smile and an engaging personality, give him athletic ability and a nice, catchy name, and you might not have anything special.

But stick that same young man in the uniform of the Yankees, put him in the World Series and let him get some timely hits in front of a national prime-time television audience of 100 million and you have a bonanza named **Bucky Dent**.

Actually, Madison Avenue had **Bucky Dent** this winter, when he was one of the hottest commercial properties available. In the 10 weeks from the end of the World Series (in which he batted .415 and was named Series MVP), **Dent** was on a whirlwind tour of appearances, endorsements and commercials that kept him constantly on the move.

It all started with **Dent** appearing at the Plaza Hotel at a luncheon sponsored by Sport Magazine, which was presenting **Bucky** with a new car for being named the Series MVP. Hordes of fans mobbed him as he posed for publicity photos outside on the street and the **Bucky Dent** ballyhoo was off.

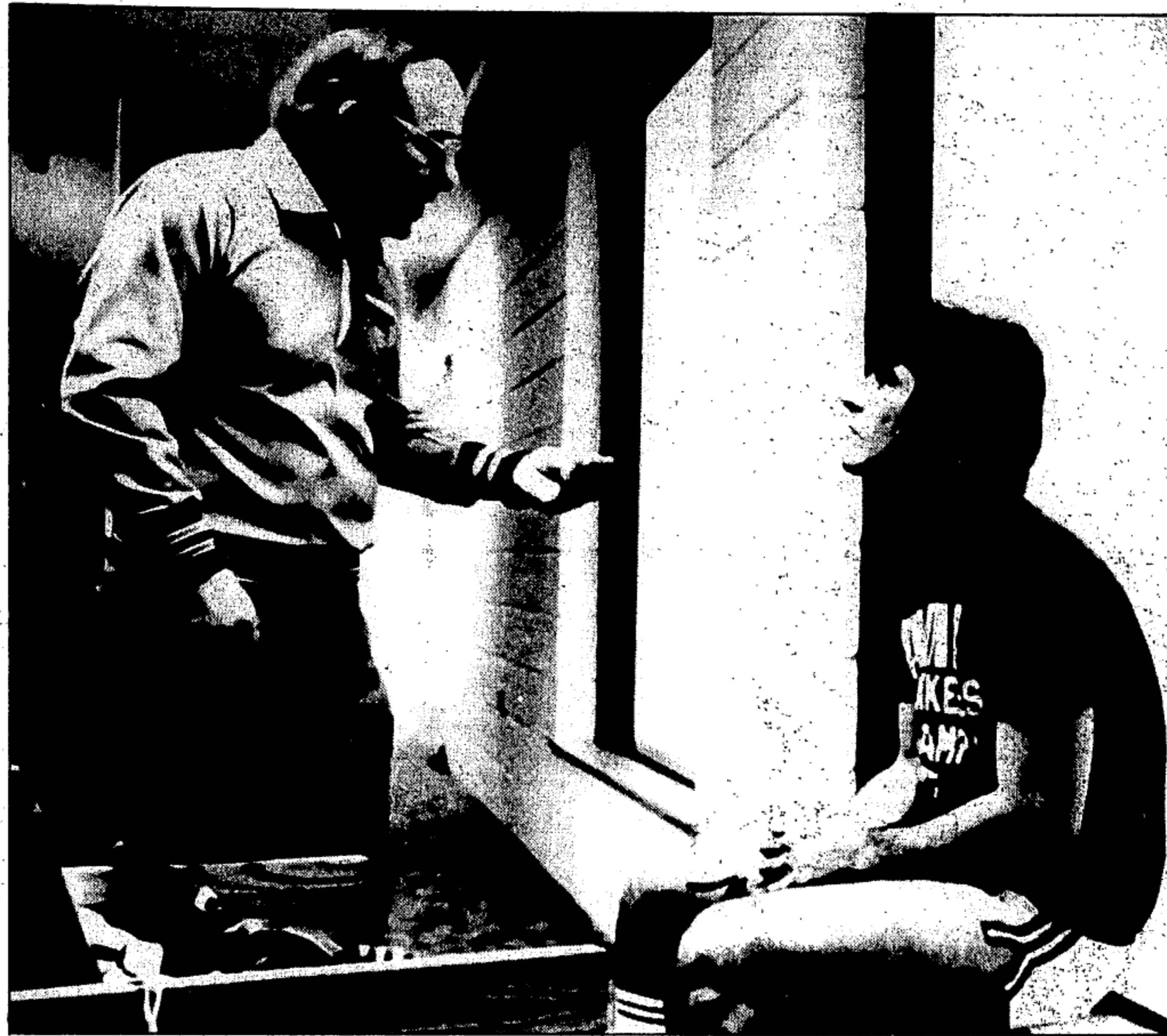
WHEN **BUCKY** appeared as a guest on a sports show for a small New Jersey cable television station, two special guards were required to hold back admirers.

When officials of **Dent's** adopted home of Wyckoff, N. J., honored him with a parade through town and a day in his honor, they almost were rewarded with a riot. Somehow, people from all over the metropolitan area found out about the event and descended on the tiny town.

He was besieged by fans during the ticker tape parade through New York City arranged by Mayor Koch for the victorious Yankees.

If **Bucky** is the latest sex symbol of sports, it is no surprise to his legion of fans who were there even before he became a World Series hero. Almost from the day he put on pinstripes, he was the Yankee team leader in one category—most fan mail.

BUT HIS SUPER Series put **Dent** in a new echelon and, with the help of the William Morris Agency, he quickly capitalized on it.



BACK TO BASEBALL: **Bucky Dent** takes a conversational break with Yogi Berra following a workout at the Yankee coach's racquetball club in Fairfield, N. J.

He won the Cutty Sark Baseball Award.

He rode a float in Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade.

He signed to be a special commentator for "Sports Extra," a weekly New York sports television show.

HE CO-HOSTED the "AM New York" television show for a week.

He and his attractive wife, Stormy, modeled fur coats for the Emilio Gucci fur salon.

He did a television commercial for American Motors.

He modeled men's wear for Playboy Magazine.

He posed for a poster that is ex-

pected to rival posters of Andy Gibb, Shawn Cassidy and KISS with the teen-age set.

A **Bucky Dent** sugarless gum, shaped like a baseball, is in the works.

He appeared on the television game show, "Sports Challenge."

He and Sparky Lyle flew to Las Vegas at the request of their friend, Chuck Magione, to present an award to the jazzman for the "Entertainer of the Year" network television show.

And he filmed a television movie, "The Dallas Cowboy Cheerleaders" for ABC, playing a halfback who gets cut, but finds consolation

by falling in love with a cheerleader.

DENT REFUSES to say how much money he earned this off-season, largely because he is not really certain. There are several deals pending, he says, but when it's all in the books, it could exceed his annual baseball salary of \$170,000.

Dent is sensitive to the image, projected by some, that he is a money-grubbing ballplayer, taking everything tossed his way. Actually, he has turned down many opportunities, selecting only those he feels have some lasting value. TV work and movies, for example, in-

terest him as something he might want to do when his playing days are over.

"Our premise with **Bucky**," said his agent, Jim Griffin of William Morris, "is that we want to begin to broaden his horizon. We took the TV deal because **Bucky** wants to learn the television business."

"**BUCKY WAS** our client for about a year and a half before the World Series. We didn't jump on his bandwagon when he was named the Series MVP. It's my belief that a lot of the things he got would eventually have come his way, because he's good-looking and personable. The World Series just brought a lot of things to a head."

Griffin also would admit that all the things that came to **Dent** were less likely to happen had he remained in Chicago.

"Coming to New York was a break," Griffin said. "Being the star of the World Series in a New York uniform was another break. Let's face it, here he's in the middle of the No. 1 media market. All the agencies are here. When he does something for the Yankees, all the advertising people are aware of it. Being here, they can't help knowing him, getting swept up by what he does."

DESPITE IT ALL, the commercials, the adulation, the posters, the dollars, **Bucky Dent** has managed to keep a balanced view of things. He went like 60 for 10 weeks, but vowed he would wind down his appearances after the first of the year, and has. He returned to Miami with his family, away from the big city and the lure of MadAve.

"That's it," he said six weeks before the start of spring training. "From now on, I'm only doing what is necessary. I'm going to take it easy for a while and be ready when spring training starts. After all, I'm a baseball player first and I realize that all of what's happened to me was only made possible by baseball."

A money grubber? Not **Bucky Dent**. He could easily have done twice as much as he did, made twice as much money as he made. But his head would not be turned by all the dazzle.

Now it was time to get ready for baseball.

Chambliss Leads Cheers for Deal That Failed

By PHIL PEPE

NEW YORK—The news came on a cold Saturday afternoon, two weeks before he would be leaving for spring training, and it warmed Chris Chambliss.

"The deal is off," somebody said. "You're still a Yankee."

"That's great news," said Chambliss. "I'm glad. I never really wanted to leave here, especially to be going from a championship club to a non-contending team. But if they made the trade, there was nothing I could do to stop it."

His name had been dragged through the newspapers as one of the players the Yankees would give up to land Rod Carew. It made sense. Even Chambliss could see that.

If the Twins lost a first baseman, they would need a first baseman in return. And if Carew came, determined to play first, there would be no room on the Yankees for Chambliss.

STILL, A SECRET voice within

told him it wouldn't happen. And he was right.

"I had the feeling they wouldn't make the deal," Chris explained. "It didn't make sense that they would give up all those players (four for one) and then still have to negotiate a full free agent contract with Carew. If it was just a trade, if he had a few years left on his contract, then I could see it."

In the end, Chambliss was mentioned as one of the reasons the Yankees did not make the deal, in a prepared statement by owner George Steinbrenner following a five-hour staff meeting that, in turn, followed two weeks of talks with Twins' Owner Calvin Griffith.

"Another reason for our decision," Steinbrenner's statement read, "concerned a player who really wants to be a Yankee—Chris Chambliss. He conducted himself like a real man throughout this period and we realize it must have been difficult for him. But he came across with the dignity and class we feel exemplifies the New York

Yankee tradition."

Those remarks were in contrast to earlier remarks Steinbrenner had made about Carew's attitude, another reason the deal did not go through, Steinbrenner claimed.

"I have great respect for Rod Carew," he said. "But if a man doesn't understand the privilege of playing for the New York Yankees, in the greatest baseball city in the world, and has stated that New York would not be his first choice and that he'd be more comfortable somewhere else, then I don't think it would be fair to our fans in New York or to the other ballplayers who have won two world championships in a row to pursue the Carew matter any further."

"When a man is asking for \$4 million over five years and says he feels like he's being 'tossed around like a grocery item,' it's a little humorous."

Another reason, Steinbrenner said, was to preserve the Yankees farm system. In addition to Chambliss and Juan Beniquez, the

Twins were asking for two minor leaguers. At first they wanted one of them to be either Dave Righetti or Paul Mirabella, the two young lefthanders obtained from Texas in the Sparky Lyle deal. The Yankees declared them untouchable and said the same went for infielder Damaso Garcia and outfielder Garry Smith.

EVENTUALLY, Griffith requested pitcher Chris Welch and infielder Rex Hudler. The Yankees were unwilling to part with Hudler, their No. 1 pick in last June's free agent draft and likely their short-stop of the future.

Ironically, the Twins could have made that deal two weeks before, but they waited too long and the Yankees finally withdrew.

"We had to consider our player development program," Steinbrenner said. "We have maintained that we soon would be replenishing our needs from within our organization and minor league

system. . . . We don't want to do anything to upset this program in any way."

So, the deal fell apart. Rod Carew went to the Angels and Chris Chambliss stayed a Yankee. In the end, everybody was happy.

Yankee Doodles: George Steinbrenner was one of those who received a special invitation to the funeral of former Vice-President Nelson Rockefeller. . . . Yankee players were sorry to see popular assistant trainer Herman Schneider leave the club, but they were happy to see him get the top job with the White Sox. . . . Steinbrenner, Reggie Jackson and Sparky Lyle were among those who attended a roast for Thurman Munson in his hometown of Canton, O., on February 7. . . . Bob Lemon was the "Fall Guy" at the Newark Saints and Sinners Roast, the first of a round of New York area banquets for the Yankee manager during a hectic weekend.