

# Worry-Free **White** Wiends Wicked Warclub for Yanks

By JIM OGLE

NEW YORK, N. Y.—One of the few early-season bright spots for the Yankees has been **Roy White's** lively bat and speed. He was on the bench when the season started, but there is every indication the versatile young man will collect no more splinters.

Is **White** ready to prove he is a major league hitter and a full-time player? That is the most interesting question around the Yank encampment these days, primarily because no one else on the club, except Mickey Mantle, is hitting his weight.

Roy, who was leading the Pacific Coast League with .343 at Spokane when the Yanks recalled him last July, has settled into a definite position for the first time in his major league career, and that could make a difference.

"Look, I'm making no predictions and setting no goals beyond staying in the lineup," **Roy** said. "This is my third chance to hold a job, but it is the first time that I haven't had some mental problems to go with it. I think I'm ready to prove that I can do a good job as a major league hitter, but I'm not popping off.

## No Experience in Garden

"In 1966, I came into the Yankee camp as an infielder, but suddenly found myself in the outfield. I didn't care where I played, but it was only natural that I would worry about myself as an outfielder, since I had no experience.

"It was on-the-job training," **White** said, "but it was a mental hazard. I was well aware of my lack of training in the outfield and worried about making mistakes. In addition, my arm wasn't too strong at that point of my career and that was an added worry."

The late Johnny Keane was managing the Yanks in 1966 and moved **White** to the outfield for two reasons. **Roy** had a spectacular spring with the bat, winning the James P. Dawson award as the outstanding rookie, but Bobby Richardson had second base nailed down and that had been **Roy's** position in the minors.

**White** was handed the left field job, a tough spot at the stadium, but ran into his problems at bat. **Roy**, a spray hitter, really had too good a start because he hit five or six homers early in the year. He became overly ambitious,

changed his natural style and soon couldn't buy a hit.

"It was a subconscious thing," **Roy** said. "I knew I wasn't a home-run hitter, but because of those early homers and the short right field in the stadium, I started trying to pull the ball. I'm naturally a hitter who goes with the pitch, so when I started trying to pull, I got out of stride.

"I finally got wise to myself, but I was on the bench by that time. I think I might have gotten straightened out had I continued playing, but I didn't, and wound up with a bad year, although I began to hit again late in the season."

## Tough Hitter in PCL

In the spring of '67, **White** didn't even return to New York with the Yankees. Desperate for a shortstop, the Yanks got John Kennedy in a deal with the Dodgers and, as part of the deal, **White** was optioned to Spokane and immediately started spraying base-hits around the PCL.

"I rejoined the Yankees in Cleveland," **Roy** recalled. "I got off to a good start, but went 0-for-8 in an extra-inning game with Minnesota. I hit the ball solidly, but always right at somebody. The next day, I was 0-for-5 and I was in a slump overnight.

"I ran into one of those periods when I couldn't get a ball to fall safe. At the same time, I had a mental problem again, worrying about my defensive play at third base.

"I knew I wasn't a good third baseman and it worried me, which affected my hitting.

"I was really happy this spring when Ralph (Houk) told me to forget all about the infield and concentrate on the outfield. I took stock of myself, remembered all the things Joe DiMaggio, Tom Tresh, Mickey Mantle and others had told me about playing the out-

field. I also had some help from Gene Woodling this spring.

"With no infield to worry about," **Roy** said, "I spent a lot of time this spring trying to improve myself in the outfield. I worked a lot at charging the ball, cutting off balls in the hole and getting my throws away faster. I think all the work has paid off and I feel I can stop worrying about my outfielding."

Houk remarked often this spring that **White** was the most improved player in camp. He made great use of his speed to cover the outfield, making plays he never had made before and showing much more sureness in covering his position.

**Roy** was on the bench when the season started, but the injury to Joe Pepitone and Steve Whitaker's slow start opened a job in the outfield. **White** took over April 18 at Anaheim and delivered three hits and has been the regular right fielder ever since.

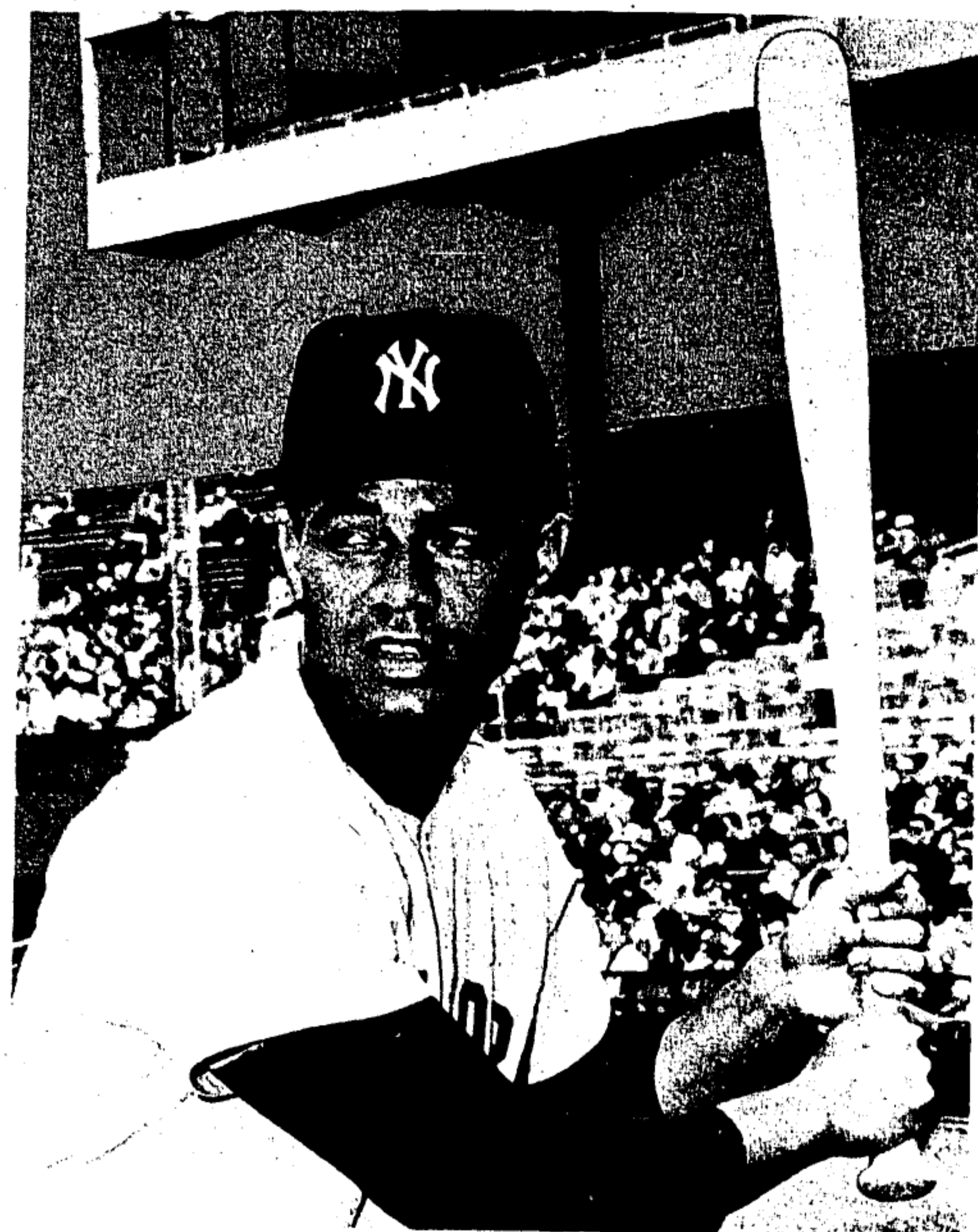
## Speed No. 1 Quality

While most of the Yankees were struggling to stay over .200, **White** was among the league's top five hitters and quickly took over the team lead in hits and was among the top RBI men. As May Day arrived, **White** was the only Yankee outfielder with any job security.

One of **White's** big assets is his speed, which makes him a fine base-runner and base stealer. In a dozen games as a regular, **White** stole seven bases to put him among the league leaders in that offensive category.

"I think I can be a contender for the base-stealing title," **Roy** said, "but I'm not thinking about that. My main thought right now is to keep hitting and stay in the lineup. For the first time as a Yankee, I have confidence I can do it.

"I feel I can hit around .290 or .300 and, if I do, I should be able



**Roy White . . . Third Time Is the Charm.**

to steal quite a few bases. Sure, I would like to have a shot at the base-stealing title, but don't forget I have to hit to get on base and have a chance to steal. Being able to steal means nothing if you don't hit."

**White**, who is only 24, is one of the few Yankee farm products of recent years to move up and give indications of being a real major leaguer.

His fielding has been first rate, including robbing Dick McAuliffe of a homer with a fine catch that had him tumbling into the seats after grabbing the ball.

"It's a long way to October," **Roy** said, "but this time I feel I'll still be in the lineup when we get there. I feel a lot more con-

fidence this time around and this is the year I should prove something."

**Yankee Doodles:** Dooley Womack, last year's ace reliever, was off to a bad start with three losses in five appearances. He gave up only six homers all last season, but had been tagged for three in nine innings to date. . . . Joe Pepitone was eligible to come off the disabled list on May 6 and figured to return to action within a week. . . . After 18 games, the Yankees still hadn't hit in double figures in any game and ten times had been held to five or fewer hits. . . . Charlie Smith made the trip to Baltimore and Chicago with the club as he continued getting ready for a return to the active list.

# Braves Yelp Behind Tito's Tomahawk

By WAYNE MINSHEW

ATLANTA, Ga. — Manager Luman Harris still gets a chuckle out of the story.

"One of my coaches came up to me the other day, and he said, 'Luman, if you keep playing the scrubini, you're going to ruin our bench.'"

A scrubini, according to baseball terminology, is a reserve, a substitute, a scrub. Take your pick. But every time Harris inserts one into the lineup, things happen.

The latest scrubini star on the Braves is veteran Tito Francona, the quiet journeyman player who is seeing service with his seventh major league club.

## Francona Hot at Dish

After Tito failed as a pinch-hitter five successive times, Harris decided in a recent series against the Giants and Dodgers to insert Francona into the starting lineup.

Against the Giants, in his 1968 starting debut, Tito merely went 4-for-4 against possibly the best pitcher in baseball, Juan Marichal, drove in two runs with three singles and a homer and stole two bases. The Braves won the game, 7-2.

That was April 29. Two days later, at Los Angeles, Francona was in the lineup again and was up to his old tricks. This time he

managed "only" three hits in four trips, but drove in three runs in a 7-3 victory. Then, on May 4, Tito drove in three runs with a double in the ninth inning to beat the Astros, 5-2.

What did the silent one have to say about his exploits?

"It sure beats pinch-hitting," said Tito.

## Tito Can Play in Garden

When Francona started, he played first base in place of slumping Deron Johnson, but he can also play in the outfield.

Which brings up another aspect of the Braves' scrubinis. They just might be the most versatile in the major leagues.

For example, Tommie Aaron has already played first base and left field this season and has been among the league's top ten hitters most of the year.

In the series against the Dodgers, Aaron turned more than a few heads with his stellar play at first base in a 17-inning game May 2. He handled 13 chances in the last nine innings of the game, several in spectacular style.

Said Harris: "You won't see first base played too much better than he played it in that game."

Then there is Marty Martinez, who can play at third, shortstop and second as well as most defensibly. Marty added a new dimension May 1 when he debuted as a

starting catcher against the Dodgers.

Harris decided to use Martinez against the Dodgers "because they like to run and I don't think they will on Marty."

They didn't. They didn't even make a bluff in two games. There was a reason.

"You should have seen those Dodgers watching Marty throw during infield practice," said Harris. "He popped their eyes with that gun he has for an arm."

Martinez caught a winner in his

## Braves Drag Feet in Dome After Arriving at 8 A. M.

HOUSTON, Tex. — Why should a series-ending game be played in the daylight hours? The Braves can tell you why.

After playing 17 innings under the lights and losing, 2-1, to the Dodgers at Los Angeles, May 2, they were on an airplane most of the night and did not arrive here to begin a series with the Astros until around 8 a. m. the next day.

All the Braves quickly retired to their rooms, but fans at the Astrodome watched a lot of tired athletes attempt to play baseball the night of May 3, losing, 5-3.

debut, helping Pat Jarvis through a 7-3 victory.

"I didn't have to shake him off at all," said Jarvis. "Marty called a fine game and he caught well."

Actually, it was not Martinez' first action as a catcher. He was behind the plate in the late innings of three games last season, but never when it meant something.

Moving on down the Braves' bench you find Mike Lum, a gifted defensive outfielder who is a pinch-hitter de luxe.

Then there is Woody Woodward, another defensive dandy. Woody can play three positions, third, shortstop and second in major league fashion.

"I have to like our bench," said Harris. "But I thought all along that it was going to be stronger than last year's."

Score one for the Braves' scrubinis. . . . Now if the regulars can get going, the Braves could make things interesting.

**Tepee Topics:** The Braves have recalled rookie lefthanded pitcher Skip Guinn for bullpen duty. . . . Hank Aaron's 0-for-6 in the 17-inning, 2-1 loss to the Dodgers May 2 ended a nine-game hitting streak for the Braves' super-star during which time he was 18-for-36. . . . When the Braves tallied seven times against the Giants in a 7-2 win April 29, it marked their most productive output of the season.