

# Giants Awake to Fuentes as Infield Bell-Ringer

By PAT FRIZZELL

SAN FRANCISCO, Calif.—Rigoberto (Tito) Fuentes may be one of the most underrated infielders in the major leagues.

Although the quick Giant fielded with verve and batted .295 in 67 games late in 1969, he played only sporadically through much of last season.

But when Manager Charlie Fox put Fuentes in the lineup to stay in the latter part of the 1970 race, he demonstrated time and again his value with both glove and bat.

The agile, 26-year-old speedster made plays other infielders were not able to match. He got his throws away with remarkable rapidity, starting double plays and flipping accurately from deep in the hole.

Tito also made errors and occasionally perpetrated some erratic fielding.

But, increasingly, he showed his capability of getting the job done, even on AstroTurf.

At bat, the 5-11, 175-pound switch-hitter became more and more effective.

## Close to Goal

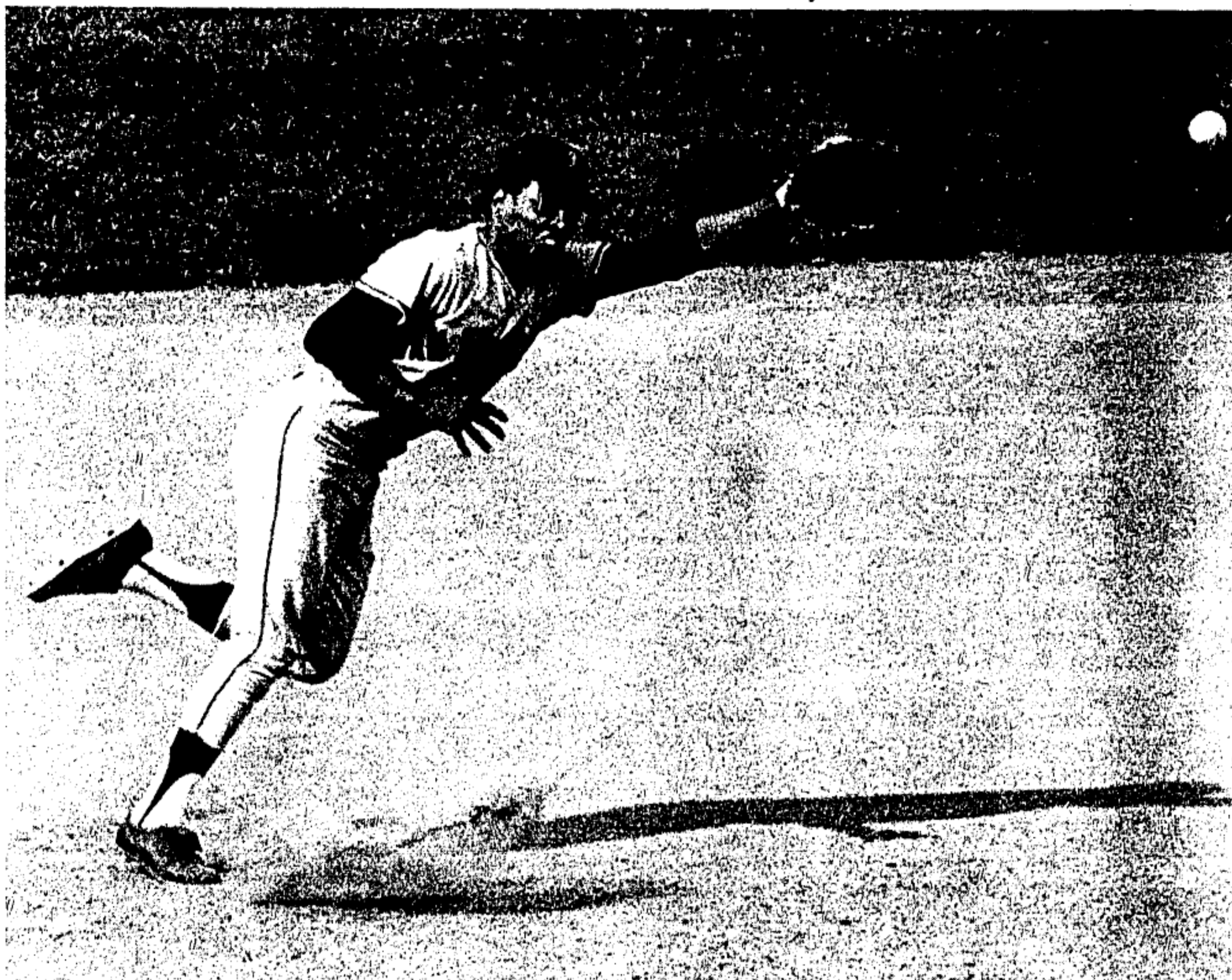
"My goal was to finish above .270, after I got kind of a bad start," Fuentes said.

He didn't quite manage that, but .267 was fair enough for 123 games and 435 times up.

After his recall from Phoenix (Pacific Coast) in the 1969 season, Tito proved especially effective in September, fielding nimbly and missed a .300 batting average only on the final day. He had hit .340 in 42 games for Phoenix.

Fuentes had been up before that. He spent part of 1965 and all of '66 and '67 with the Giants. In 1966, he hit .261 in 133 games. In '67, he dropped to .209, also in 133 games.

So it was back to Phoenix in 1968 for Tito and when he suffered a broken leg there, he missed most of that campaign.



Tito Fuentes . . . He'll Be in the 1971 Lineup Somewhere.

Now the talkative little guy appears to be up to stay and a fixture in the Giants' infield, somewhere.

"Tito may be our shortstop or our second baseman for next season," Fox said, not counting out other candidates. "Whatever happens, he'll be in the lineup somewhere."

Versatile enough to play any infield position, Fuentes began the past year as the Giants' second baseman, but he wound it up as the regular shortstop. In be-

tween, he played a number of games at third.

Fuentes' pivoting on double plays was something to see late in the season. Several times his pirouettes around second base made enchanting newspaper pictures.

At bat he collected 116 hits, 22 for extra bases, and drove in 32 runs. With six sacrifices, he tied Willie Mays for tops on the club in that department.

"I don't care so much what position I play," Tito said, "as long

as I don't stay on the bench. I like to hit, too. I've done quite a lot of things in this game."

One thing Fuentes wasn't sure he'd done before, however, was his throwing out of Houston's Joe Morgan, a fast runner, while sitting on the turf.

Cesar Cedeno was on first base and running with the pitch at the Astrodome when Morgan swung. Tito hustled over to cover second and the ball shot to his left.

He spun to turn back for it and sat down hard, but recovered and

grabbed the ball. Then he fired to Willie McCovey at first in time for the out.

Tito has a simple answer for his improved play late in the season—last year and this.

"For some reason, they don't use me much early in the season," he explained. "When I do get to play regularly, I begin hitting well and fielding better, too."

## Bat Mark on Rise

Fuentes' career batting average for three full years and parts of two others with the Giants isn't much above .250. But it has been rising and could continue to do so.

Just to make sure he gets in plenty of at-bats, Tito plans to play winter ball again in the Dominican Republic.

**Giant Jottings:** Fox and business manager Jerry Donovan were ready to talk trades at the World Series, but they weren't successful in making any. The Giants have pitchers and infielders in mind.

The scheme which will place the financial burden for Candlestick Park's expansion on spectators has been officially approved by the San Francisco Board of Supervisors by a 6-2 vote. The Giants probably will be forced to boost ticket prices 50 cents.

Juan Marichal led the baseball players in the Harrah's Invitational golf tournament at Reno. Marichal, who is staying in San Francisco with his wife and three daughters this winter, nosed out Willie Mays and Jim Davenport in the handicap event.

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# 'Don't Bust Up Cubs,' Beckert Asks Bosses

By JEROME HOLTZMAN

CHICAGO, Ill.—Are Vice-President John Holland and Manager Leo Durocher going to break up the Cubs—or will they try to win again with the same personnel in 1971? This is a big question. At this point, no one knows the answer.

Most of the players are hoping that there are few, if any, changes. And one of the Wrigleys who feels this way is Glenn Beckert, the club's second baseman. It may seem somewhat hard to believe, but Beckert is no longer a kid. He's now 30 years old, a nine-year pro, with six full seasons in the majors.

Like many of his teammates, Beckert is somewhat fearful that Holland and Durocher may tear up the club and start over again. Even so, Beckert is going ahead with plans to build a home here. He has purchased land in suburban Palatine and has hired an architect.

## On Road to Flag

Beckert feels that the Cubs, though unsuccessful in each of the last two seasons, do have the correct blueprint for a pennant and is of the belief that the Wrigleys could win in 1971 with the same personnel.

"Don't forget," Beckert said, "we are a much stronger club with Pepitone and Pappas. If they had been with us all year, it would have made a big difference."

Milt Pappas and Joe Pepitone

were acquired in mid-season waiver deals, Pappas coming from Atlanta and Pepitone from Houston. Both did well for the Cubs. Pappas was 10-8, with six complete games, while Pepitone hit .263 and drove in 43 runs in his 57 games.

Beckert had another big season

and, along with outfielder Billy Williams, comprised the only Cubs selected on the major leagues' Associated Press all-star team.

"That's a nice honor," Beckert said when advised of his selection.

"But I just don't think I had that good a season. Frankly, it

was frustrating. The idea is to win and we didn't. What can you say?"

Beckert, who hit .288, feels that he let the club down somewhat, especially in the last two or three weeks.

"Those last few weeks I just wasn't doing the job," he explained.

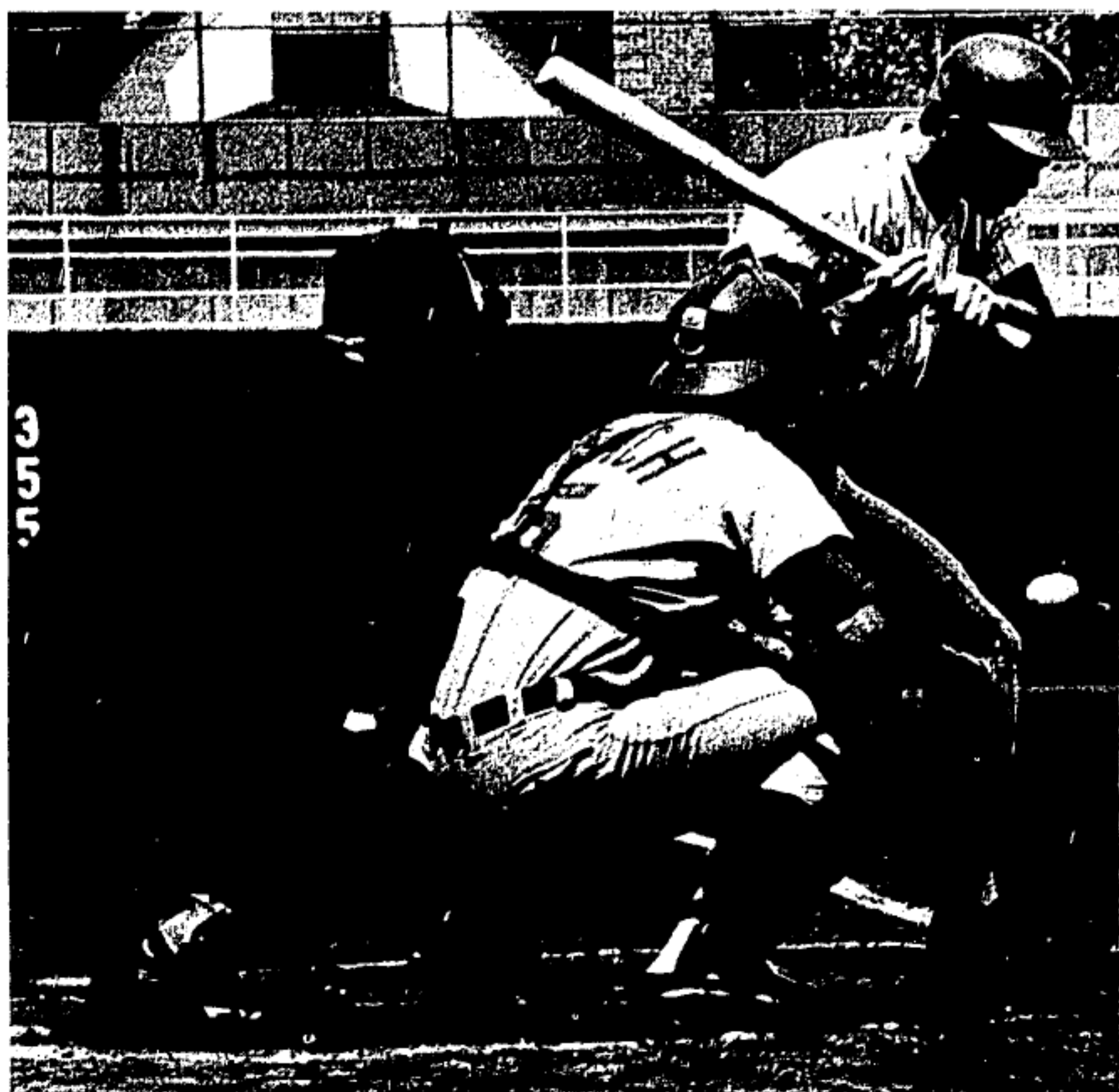
"I wasn't doing the basic things, like getting on base and advancing the runners."

## Glenn Likes Regan

As for the Cubs as a team, Beckert admitted that the Wrigleys were occasionally weak in the bullpen, but said he hopes Phil Regan, the No. 1 reliever, isn't used in a trade.

"I suppose our bullpen hurt us the most," Beckert said. "I know Phil has had better years, but he's a wonderful competitor. I would hate to see a fellow like Phil go. I predict he'll make a big comeback."

**Bruin Briefs:** The engagement of southpaw pitcher Ken Holtzman and Michelle Collons of Lincolnwood, Ill., has been announced. The couple plans a February wedding. . . . Billy Williams left town for a few days and joined pitcher Ferguson Jenkins on a Canadian hunting and fishing trip. . . . Quite a few of the Cub players will play about a 30-game exhibition basketball schedule in the Chicago area this winter.



Glenn Beckert (at Bat) Likes Cubs as They Are.

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