

## Baseball

### A.L. EAST

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training. To do that, the oft-injured Kittle must remove any question about his physical ailments, including a herniated disc he suffered in 1989.

**KEY MOVES:** Seven Indians filed for arbitration, including 15-game winner Tom Candiotti, who is willing to pass up free agency in October if he can sign a multi-year contract now. Candiotti, who made \$1.050 million last year, asked for \$3.050 million in arbitration. The Indians offered \$2.150 million. . . . Stan Jefferson was eligible for arbitration but agreed a one-year contract worth a reported \$260,000. . . . After brief negotiations with lefthander Dave Otto, 26, the Indians signed the former Oakland pitcher to a Triple-A contract that included an invitation to spring training. . . . In a minor league deal, the Tribe sent first baseman Troy Neel to the A's for third baseman Larry Arndt.

### Tigers Improve Spring Facilities



Upgrading the Tigers' spring training facilities in Lakeland, Fla., has been a priority for President Bo Schembechler. Several indoor batting cages have been constructed so that hitters will no longer have to use a nearby hangar during inclement weather. "When I went to the hangar last spring, the catchers couldn't see all the pitches and there was a leak in the roof that was dripping on the batting cages," Schembechler said. "Now we'll have new facilities to use, as well as a new weight room." Schembechler has concentrated on making improvements in the Tigers' minor league system as well. For the first time ever, the Tigers will have a manager, coach and pitching coach for each of their minor league teams.

Schembechler says he will be so deliberate in naming a replacement for ex-general manager Bill Lajoie that it might not even occur until after the 1991 season. "We're going to take a while on this because we want to make the right choice," Schembechler said. "We're in no hurry." . . . Catcher Mike Heath had hoped to re-sign with the Tigers, but when they refused to make him an offer beyond the 1991 season, the new-look free agent accepted a two-year offer from the Braves instead. . . . Former White Sox general manager Larry Himes was hired as a scout and will work the west coast of Florida during spring training.

### Jays Might Finally Live Up to Potential



For several years, the Blue Jays have looked good on paper but have failed to live up to their potential on the playing field. This year, after a major overhaul that has included an influx of new players,

Kelly Gruber thinks things will be different. "Why do you think I'm so excited about this season?" he said. "We had great players before, but we didn't win, did we? With the new Jays, things are going to be better in the clubhouse and on the field, better than it's ever been since I've been here." Gruber thinks the Jays will have better chemistry this year, something they lacked in the past. "We now have so many guys who like to play the game of baseball," he said. "For the first time since I've been here, you're going to see nine guys, whichever nine guys it is, on the field, giving 100 percent." Lefthander David Wells agreed with that assessment. "I would say we'll be a little more at ease in the clubhouse," Wells said. "It's going to be a lot of fun. We've had a lot of controversy the last five years that I don't think we'll have this time."

**KEY MOVES:** Gruber, eligible for free agency at the end of the 1991 season, is bidding to become the highest-paid player in team history. He filed an arbitration figure of \$3.3 million, compared to an offer of \$2.5 million from the Jays. Gruber earned \$1.25 million in 1990. Ideally, Gruber says he would like a multi-year package. "I'd be discouraged if I didn't get three years and \$10 million-\$11 million," he said. . . . Outfielder Devon White reached agreement on a one-year contract for \$750,000. . . . Also signing for one year were minor league pitchers Randy Tricek and Pat Hentgen and catcher Carlos Diaz.

### Court Date Set In Clemens' Incident



Two days before pitchers and catchers are to report to spring training, Red Sox righthander Roger Clemens has a date—a court date. Clemens is free on \$2,000 bond following his arrest on an assault charge stemming from an altercation with an off-duty Houston police officer. Attorney Mike Ramsey will represent the two-time Cy Young Award winner in court and is confident of acquittal. "We're going to find six to eight witnesses who had direct view of the event," Ramsey said of the incident, which also involved Clemens' brother, Gary. "I'm very optimistic, mainly because there are so many witnesses."

**KEY MOVES:** Righthander John Dopson, who made four starts last year before undergoing season-ending elbow surgery, signed a one-year contract for \$265,000. That equaled the amount of his base salary for 1990. . . . Outfielder Mike Greenwell entered an arbitration figure of \$2.8 million, more than double the \$1.225 million he earned last year. The Red Sox offered the 27-year-old Greenwell \$2 million. However, Greenwell and the Red Sox apparently are close to agreement on a four-year, \$12 million deal. . . . The Red Sox signed three free agents—shortstop Mike Brumley, lefthander Tony Fossas and righthander Cecilio Guante—to Triple-A contracts.

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#### Gaetti Goes West For 'New Beginning'



After Gary Gaetti ended his 12-year association with the Minnesota Twins and agreed to a four-year, \$11.4 million contract with the California Angels as a new-look free agent, the third baseman said he finally decided it was time for a change. "It was obviously a tough decision," agent Jim Bronner said. "Gary felt a tremendous tie to the Twins and Minneapolis. The contract proposals were very different. Based on the last couple of seasons, he felt it was time for a new beginning." The Angels guaranteed Gaetti \$2.7 million for 1991 and '92 and \$3 million in both 1993 and '94. "There ain't no more money in the saddlebags," Rick Brown, president of the Angels, said in reference to the bankroll of club Owner Gene Autry. But Brown conceded that the Angels had filled a gaping hole with the addition of Gaetti, a four-time Gold Glove winner who averaged 22 home runs in his nine years with the Twins. . . . The signing of Gaetti signaled the end of third baseman Jack Howell's days with the Angels. Howell said he had made some calls to measure other clubs' interest. The best bet was that he might wind up with the New York Yankees. Mike Port, the Angels' general manager, said of the Gaetti signing, "Third base was obviously an area where we were looking for improvement, either from Howell or somebody else. We're expecting that Gary will give us the hoped-for improvement. We've pretty much addressed every need on the club. Certainly, if we have good health, we're going to be a factor in the (American League) West."

... Gaetti hit only .229 with 16 homers and 85 RBIs last year. His career went into a descent in 1989, when he hit .251 with 19 homers and 75 RBIs. Coincidentally or not, Gaetti's poorer statistics corresponded with his revelation that he was a born-again Christian. The introspective demeanor of Gaetti, once a beer-drinking pal of Twins first baseman Kent Hrbek, changed the clubhouse atmosphere. Hrbek said the change in Gaetti hit him "like a death in the family."

#### Pagliarulo Is Instant Gaetti Replacement



As the Minnesota Twins bade goodbye to Gary Gaetti, General Manager Andy MacPhail moved quickly to sign free-agent third baseman Mike Pagliarulo as Gaetti's replacement. Pagliarulo, who has played with the New York Yankees and San Diego, received a one-year contract for \$600,000. Pagliarulo, a lefthanded batter, hit .254 with seven home runs for the Padres last season. "In the last month, we kept everyone else at bay to see if Mike could be an everyday player with Minnesota," agent Al Nero said. According to Nero, the Yankees,

Texas and Pittsburgh were interested in Pagliarulo, but only as a part-timer. . . . Gaetti, a new-look free agent, agreed to a four-year deal with the California Angels for a guaranteed \$11.4 million although the Twins raised their offer to what might have amounted to \$11.6 million for the same period. The Twins offered \$2.6 for 1991, plus \$1.5 million guaranteed over each of the next three years. In addition, the Twins' offer for 1992-94 had incentives of \$1.5 million a year if Gaetti averaged 154 games a season. "We gave it our best shot and then a little more," MacPhail said. "I'm sad Gary's going west, but I'm satisfied we did our best to try to keep him." First baseman Kent Hrbek said he felt as if the old gang of Twins had been split up. "There ain't nobody left," he said. Gaetti and Hrbek were the clubhouse leaders of the 1987 world champions.

**KEY MOVES:** The Twins, who have not had a salary arbitration hearing since 1986, avoided hearings this year by signing lefthander Allan Anderson for \$785,000 plus a \$25,000 All-Star Game incentive, second baseman Nelson Liriano for \$507,500 and first baseman-outfielder Gene Larkin for \$1.625 million over two years. Larkin will get \$725,000 this year and \$900,000 in 1992.

#### Witt First Beneficiary Of Stadium Vote



Five days after voters in Arlington, Tex., approved a sales tax increase that will finance construction of a \$165 million stadium, the Texas Rangers made righthander Bobby Witt the first recipient of a projected increase in gate receipts. Witt agreed to a three-year contract that guarantees him \$6.8 million. He got a \$100,000 signing bonus and salaries of \$1.35 million, \$2.35 million and \$3 million for 1991 through '93. For 1994, the Rangers have the option of a \$3.25 salary or a \$500,000 buyout. "We look at Bobby as one of the cornerstones of the pitching staff," General Manager Tom Grieve said. "He epitomizes everything the Rangers stand for—good scouting and good player development. He's pitched himself to a point where he's earned this kind of contract." Witt, who was 17-10 with a 3.36 ERA last year, had asked for \$1.75 million in arbitration. "I'm giving up a couple of years of arbitration and possibly the chance to make even more money with free agency out there," Witt said. "To me and my family, though, this was such a good deal security-wise that I didn't want to pass it up." . . . The new stadium, to be built about one mile south of Arlington Stadium, will seat 45,000 to 50,000. The facility is expected to open in 1994 and there is a possibility it could be site of the 1995 All-Star Game. Preliminary plans call for a stadium access road to be named the Nolan Ryan Expressway.

**KEY MOVES:** Reliever Rich Gossage agreed to terms of a contract he will try to earn in a spring-training audition. The

deal calls for a \$325,000 base with a chance to earn \$150,000 in incentives. "It's not a big gamble on our part because he has to make the team," Grieve said. "But I think he feels he can make a contribution. He likes the way Bobby (Manager Bobby Valentine) uses the bullpen."

#### Lansford 'Won't Be A Couch Potato'



Carney Lansford, in recounting the snowmobile accident at his farm in Baker, Ore., that will force him to miss most of the 1991 season, if not the entire campaign, said he would not shy away from snowmobiling in the future. "I'm not going to just go home and become a couch potato in the winter," the Oakland A's third baseman said. Lansford said he doesn't believe there is a great risk involved in riding a snowmobile, unless one happens to be racing, and he said he would be able to collect his \$1.3 million salary for 1991 because his contract contains language that permits him to ride a snowmobile for recreational purposes. He admitted that he was thankful his 6-year-old son, Joshua, who often rides with him, was not on board at the time of the accident. . . . Lansford, 34, underwent surgery on his left knee and has begun physical rehabilitation. He said he expects to be ready to play by August. "I'm as positive as I can be," he said. "The doctors have tried to drill into my head that there is going to be a time when my knee feels extremely well, but has not healed—that nature must take its course." . . . Designated hitter Harold Baines underwent arthroscopic surgery for repair of cartilage in his right knee. He expects to be ready to play in spring training.

**KEY MOVES:** Outfielder Nelson Simmons and catcher Wil Tejada signed minor league contracts with the A's. Also signed were righthanders Dan Eskew and Joe Turek, who were selected in the major league draft at the winter meetings.

#### Thigpen Joins Raines In \$3 Million Class



With the signings of Tim Lincecum and Bobby Thigpen to \$3 million contracts, the Chicago White Sox payroll will increase by 50 percent to \$17 million in 1991. Thigpen signed a three-year guaranteed contract with two option years for a total of nearly \$16 million. His average salary matches that of Oakland's Dennis Eckersley, who had been baseball's highest paid reliever. Thigpen, who set a major league record with 57 saves last year, received a \$500,000 signing bonus and salaries of \$2.25 million, \$3 million and \$3.25 million. The two option years are worth a total of \$6.5 million. "Bobby has a lot of things that make him a good risk," Sox Chairman Jerry Reinsdorf said. "He hasn't pitched a lot of innings, he was an outfielder in college and he's not a slider pitcher so there's no

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knees.

The 33-year-old power hitter has been battling knee surgery ever since he was 13. Six years later, he had all the cartilage removed from the left knee, and he has had four more operations since.

"Periodically, the doctors have to go in and scrape the joint," said Zisk. "They have to give the bones a new surface to rub against. Basically, all it does is reduce the pain. I've played in pain ever since I can remember. Everything I have done has been done on one leg."

The continuing problems Zisk encounters stem from the lack of cartilage in the knee. The constant grinding "chews away at the surface of the bone," says Zisk. "The one thing I have going for me is my legs are really strong. Although the joint is not real good, the surrounding muscles are a tremendous help."

What didn't help Zisk was his decision last summer to try to improve his stamina by taking up jogging. The pressure that jogging put on his knee added to the pain.

This winter, he has returned to swimming and riding a bicycle as well as continuing to work out on a Nautilus program.

"Swimming and bicycling work the quads (quadriceps) without the joint having to bear the weight," said Zisk. He also is cutting down on his weight. He went to spring training in 1982 at 215, down from previous springs. This time, he's shooting for 210.

"I want to go as light as I can without losing strength," said Zisk.

**Mariners Log:** Reliever Bill Caudill and Diana Bowser were wed recently. They honeymooned in the Caribbean. . . . The Mariners will have a 1982 highlight film, their first since 1978.

Reports have surfaced in Seattle that Bruce Bochte will retire. The first baseman-outfielder went through the re-entry draft, but had wanted to stay in Seattle. Bochte says he will make a decision after the winter meetings. . . . A.L. hitters compiled a .192 batting average against Caudill last season, getting only 65 hits in 338 at-bats. The second lowest batting average against a Mariners pitcher was .205 against rookie Bob Stoddard (48 hits, 234 at-bats), who spent the last six weeks with the big league club. . . . The M's set a club record with 131 stolen bases last season.

TRACY RINGOLSBY



## Gaetti Winters In Twin Cities

**TWIN CITIES** — While his teammates departed to other parts of the country, mostly in search of warmth, Minnesota Twins third baseman **Gary Gaetti** is spending the winter in the frozen north.

**Gaetti** and Kent Hrbek are the only players on the Twins' roster spending the off-season in the Twin Cities. Hrbek, raised in Bloomington, is a veteran of Minnesota winters. For **Gaetti**, this is a new experience.

"It's OK so far," **Gaetti** said. "I'm from downstate Illinois (Centralia), and we get some winter there, too. It arrives a bit earlier here, that's all. I talked to people at home the other day and they said they weren't wearing coats yet."

**Gaetti** said this on a late November morning in Minnesota, when the temperature had fallen to a single digit. "I can handle the weather," **Gaetti** said, "but I'd like to be able to find a job."

In addition to the area's reputation for climate, few Twins stay around the Twin Cities during the off-season because little is available in the way of personal appearance work. When a car dealership or department store wants a celebrity to sign autographs, they generally hire Vikings or North Stars, rather than members of the down-and-out Twins.

**Gaetti** has made a few appearances for the Twins' publicity department and, if the team tours outstate communities in January, **Gaetti** is expected to go along.

Mostly, **Gaetti** spends time with his family, with Hrbek, and working out on a Nautilus program at a local health club.

"I'm working on weights for the first time in my life," **Gaetti** said, "but the idea isn't so much strength as to add some flexibility, some speed. I want to add a step or two going to first base. I want to be able to steal a base. Last season, I didn't steal a base, and that's the first time that's happened since I was about six years old. It was embarrassing. . . . no steals."

For a while last season, **Gaetti's** statistics were embarrassing. His strikeout ratio was one in every four at-bats, his batting average around .200. There were feuds with batting instructor Jim Lemon and frequent quotes from Manager Billy Gardner that **Gaetti** was about to be sent to the minors.

It probably would have happened, but Larry Milbourne proved to be such a bust at second base after being acquired from the New York Yankees that John Castino moved to second permanently. That left **Gaetti** as the Twins' third baseman.

When the season was over, **Gaetti's** average was only .230, but he had 25 home runs and 84 RBIs. "Average has never been my big concern," **Gaetti** said. "If I'm getting the RBIs, then I'm satisfied."

**Gaetti** also reduced his strikeouts over the second half of the season, finishing with 107 in 508 at-bats. By contrast, when Philadelphia third baseman Mike Schmidt was a rookie in 1973, he struck out 136 times, and batted .196, with 18 home runs and 52 RBIs.

"That's interesting," **Gaetti** said. "Print those statistics. Maybe I'll get a bigger raise. Hopefully, next winter I'll have made enough money during the season not to have to worry about a job."

**Doubletakes:** Three members of the Twins were named to the Topps major league all-rookie team, but **Gaetti** wasn't one of them. He was beaten out at third base by Ryne Sandberg of the Chicago Cubs. Hrbek was a unanimous choice at first base, and catcher Tim Laudner and outfielder Tom Brunansky were also named to the team. . . . The Twins named Tom Kelly, manager at Class AA Orlando (Southern) last season, as third base coach. . . . A new method of treatment for Jim Eisenreich's nervous disorder is working, and the Twins are hopeful Eisenreich will be able to report to spring training and compete for the center field position.

PATRICK REUSSE



## A's Ask Burgmeier To Set an Example

**OAKLAND**—Things appear to be shaping up a bit in that no-man's land that used to be known as the Oakland A's bullpen.

The addition of lefty Tom Burgmeier gives the bullpen something it hasn't enjoyed for a number of seasons—discipline and flexibility.

Burgmeier was 7-0, with two saves and a 2.29 earned-run average last year in Boston. The A's signed him because the 39-year-old free agent has excellent habits, confidence and the ability to be a good influence on younger players.

But most of all, the A's signed Burgmeier to a two-year contract worth an estimated \$800,000 because they feel he still has the ability to be a good pitcher.

"I'm not going to be the savior," Burgmeier said at a press gathering on the day he signed. "It takes several relievers to win games."

The addition of Burgmeier frees left-hander Tom Underwood to become a starter. Burgmeier can be used in either long or short relief.

"It's certainly a step in the right direction for this staff," said Bill Rigney, a special assistant to A's President Roy Eisenhardt. "He brings the character we'd like to create. He's been on a lot of good staffs. He'll instill a little confidence down there when we're at the end of the game."

Burgmeier has been in the major leagues for 15 seasons, almost solely in relief (he has made just three major league starts). Burgmeier has pitched for California, Kansas City, Minnesota and, for the last five seasons, the Red Sox. He has a lifetime record of 70-48 with 95 saves.

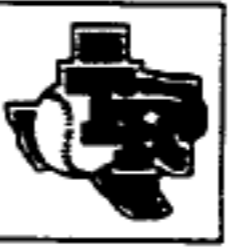
Burgmeier was the first 1982 free agent to sign. One of only two players selected by the A's in the re-entry draft, he immediately impressed Eisenhardt by taking a four-mile run with his new boss along the Oakland Estuary.

Eisenhardt called Burgmeier "a good physical example" for younger players who "at age 22 feel they're immortal."

**A's Acorns:** The A's hired former San Francisco Giants pitching great Juan Marichal as director of Latin American scouting. Marichal pitched 16 years in the majors, 14 with the Giants. He had a lifetime record of 243-142 and was on 10 All-Star squads. He resides in Santo Domingo. . . . Burgmeier's number, 39, matches his age.

The A's moved their Class AA club in the Eastern League from West Haven to Albany. . . . Now that the A's have signed Burgmeier, it seems unlikely they will be in hot pursuit of Bob McClure, the Milwaukee pitcher who is the only other player they selected in the re-entry draft. . . . The A's will have six color combinations for their uniforms next season. Look for a return of California Gold shirts.

KIT STIER



## Sundberg Annoyed By Critics' Barbs

**ARLINGTON**—For the first time in seven years, Texas Rangers catcher Jim Sundberg didn't have to worry about finding more space in his crowded trophy case.

After six straight Gold Glove seasons, the Rangers backstop saw his reign as the American League's premier defensive receiver come to an end. California's Bob Boone was voted the Gold Glove, preventing Sundberg from capturing a seventh straight Rawlings award for defensive excellence.

Sundberg wasn't particularly surprised that he failed to win the Gold Glove. He was, however, still hurt.

"I was kind of expecting it," admitted the 31-year-old Sundberg, who began his Gold Glove string in 1976, his third year as the Rangers' starting catcher. "I think I came under too much criticism the last of the year for it not to have some effect. The criticism came from management and eventually filtered down through the managers and coaches."

When it became apparent that the Rangers could lose 100 games (they lost 98), the role of scapegoat was up for grabs.



Jim Sundberg . . . No trophy case addition.

Sundberg, criticized mostly privately for his game-calling and because of failure to block the plate, was a nominee.

"I think the criticism about calling a game is most unfair," Sundberg said. "You can get on me about not hitting, or about my throwing or not blocking the plate or not catching the ball, but when you start blaming a catcher for a particular pitch, you're reaching. There's nothing a catcher can do when a pitching staff isn't throwing well."

The criticism bothered Sundberg. "I let it affect my year," Sundberg admitted. "I was hitting about .320 when it all started and I let it get to me. Of course, I'm responsible for that. I've got to handle whatever comes my way without letting it affect me. In June I hit .160 and in July .230. It wasn't until August and September that I began to climb, but it was too late and I couldn't help the club."

Now Sundberg must rebound if he intends to regain his hold on the Gold Glove voting.

"Baseball likes to tag people and I may have trouble shaking this," Sundberg admitted. "It took me a third year of hitting before people realized I could hit. But I think I can win it back."

"I talked to Bob Boone last winter and he told me they more or less got all over him about his catching in Philadelphia (before he was traded to the Angels)," Sundberg added. "He'd won several Gold Gloves before that. For him to change leagues and win one makes me think it shouldn't be any more difficult for me to regain it. Bob was a good choice. If I wasn't going to win it, he'd be the one I'd have picked."

**Rangers Roundup:** General Manager Joe Klein's plan for the winter meetings was to improve his pitching, even at the cost of hurting his offense. And no one was considered an untouchable, including Sundberg, Buddy Bell and Larry Parrish. Klein was hoping to land a No. 1 or No. 2 starter. "When you lose 98 games, everybody's available," said Klein. "We're willing to take a chance on lessening our offense to bring quality pitching." But giving up Sundberg, Bell or Parrish? "Those are players who could bring a No. 1 pitcher. But if somebody expects to come at us for those players, they'd better come with quality pitching to start with—and work from there."

Klein is also interested in adding left-handed hitting and would love to improve the Rangers' speed, especially at the middle infield spots. . . . The Rangers may consider using Frank Tanana as a short reliever if he's not traded. The only two pitchers who seem assured starting jobs are Charlie Hough and Danny Darwin. . . . Righthander Jim Farr was 2-1 with a 1.80 ERA after 12 games at Caguas in Puerto Rico. Pete O'Brien was hitting .246, with one homer, and Mike Smithson was 2-2 with a 4.24 ERA.

JIM REEVES

## OVERSEAS MILITARY MAIL ADDRESSING

A complete address is a MUST for military mail. Last year over 9 million pieces intended for overseas APO/FPO delivery were either incorrectly or incompletely addressed. Approximately 3 1/2 million pieces did not include APO/FPO numbers in the address. There are four essential elements to an overseas military address. They are:

1. The serviceman's identity — grade, full name, service number
2. His military unit — complete
3. Gateway post office — New York, San Francisco, or Seattle
4. APO or FPO — a five digit number

When any of these elements is missing, the article is subject to the possibility of return to sender. In any event, the mail is delayed due to the requirements for a time-consuming check in military directories. Your cooperation will help speed copies of THE SPORTING NEWS to servicemen.

# Young Twins Pile Up Mistakes

By PATRICK REUSSE

TWIN CITIES—Rookies? You want rookies? Talk to the Minnesota Twins.

During the 1982 season, 15 players officially designated as rookies have played for the Twins. On several occasions, Manager Billy Gardner has started lineups that, including the pitcher, contained eight rookies.

What happens when a team places such a reliance on first-year players?

With the halfway mark of the season approaching, the Twins were operating at a pace that would break the all-time futility mark for a 162-game schedule. That mark was established by the 1962 New York Mets (40-120, two-rain cancellations, 250).

The Twins and their rookies went over seven weeks without winning two games in succession. If the pitching didn't get them, and it usually did, then a lack of hitting would prove to be their undoing.

"I'll bet that one mistake has beaten us in at least 20 games," said third baseman Gary Gaetti, one of the rookies.

The Twins are, in a twisted way, solid evidence that experience wins close games. When its record stood at 16-52 (.235), Minnesota was 0-9 in extra innings, 4-11 in one-run games and 3-12 in two-run games.

Through the gloom, Gardner could see some progress. "Up here, you learn by your mistakes, and we've made enough of them so that we're starting to show improvement," Gardner said. "The most obvious mistakes have been in baserunning and in not being selective at the plate. If there is anything experience will show you, it is that—when you get a pitcher in a certain spot—wait for your pitch. Except for Herbie, we haven't been doing that."

Except for Herbie...

Several of the rookies have been ringing up respectable offensive statistics, but it is Herbie Kent Hrbek, the big first baseman from the Minneapolis suburb of Bloomington—who has stood out from the rest.

Earl Weaver, the Baltimore manager, called Hrbek the best hitter to come into the American League since Eddie Murray. In Minnesota, he has been compared to both Harmon Killebrew—because of his power—and to Tony Oliva—because of his consistency.

During one stretch, Hrbek had a 23-game hitting streak and then a 17-game streak. In his first 55 starts, Hrbek had failed to hit in only four games. And the lefthanded hitter was carrying a .384 average against lefthanded pitching.

"Hitting lefthanders is what has me fired up," Hrbek said. "Now I say, 'If I'm hitting lefthanders, I should kill righthanders.' Ever since I've opened up my stance, I've been decent against lefthanders."

"In California, Rod Carew was standing in the outfield and I asked him, 'What is your basic approach to lefthanders?' He said, 'Open up so you see the ball with both eyes instead of seeing the ball with one eye and your nose with the other.'"

Gaetti, Hrbek's road roommate and closest friend with the Twins, said, "At first, I thought Kent was just hot. After watching him for two months, I decided he was that good. If we keep playing in this ball park, I have a hunch Roger Maris' home run record will fall."

The park—the Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome in downtown Minneapolis—opened in April, and it has become the American League's launching pad. Of Hrbek's first 15 home runs, 11 came in the Metrodome, although only a couple were obviously aided by the short fence and cozy dimensions in right field.

"If Hrbek stays healthy, he has a chance to hit 400 or 500 home runs," Gardner said. "I usually wait until the end of their second-year before I commit myself on players, but after seeing the way he's handled clubs the second time, I'm convinced."

"He's very capable of leading the league in hitting, too. For a kid that young (22), I haven't seen such a complete player since Al Kaline came into the league and led it in hitting." (Kaline won the batting title at age 20, hitting .340 for Detroit in 1955, his second full season.)

Hrbek's performance has been an amazing contradiction to the Twins in general. His name has been among the league leaders in average (.330 through June 27), home runs (15) and RBIs (49). In recent weeks, he has been attracting national attention. On the Twins' first Eastern trip, Hrbek appeared on ABC's "Good Morning America."

"The phone is ringing all the time," Gaetti said. "I'm sure Kent isn't getting as much sleep as he would like, because reporters are constantly calling in the morning."

It took Rod Carew a decade and a half-dozen batting championships in Minnesota to attain the type of national exposure Hrbek has been getting lately. But Gaetti said the publicity hasn't changed Hrbek, and Kent is hoping that it won't.

"People expect me to do things for them since I'm from around here, but I have to have my free time, too," Hrbek said. "It's more them making you change. I'm still trying to be Kent Hrbek."

Hrbek would like to stay as unchanged as possible. The Minnesota fans, extremely cynical over the failure of the Twins' front office to retain the team's most talented players, already are talking about five years down the road, when they assume Hrbek will be playing elsewhere.

"First of all, it's too early to say I'm going to be good enough to be in demand," Hrbek said. "You can't call me Ted Williams



or Mickey Mantle until I've played for five years and the law of averages takes effect.

"But, if I do well, I'd definitely love to stay here the rest of my life. I haven't found a place I like better. I'll make sure the money is what I'm worth, but I want it to happen here. I hear all the time that George Steinbrenner (New York Yankees owner) will have me in a couple of years. The only way he'd get me is if he came here and coached."

Hrbek's arrival as a star is a contrast to the struggles of his pal, Gaetti. Both Hrbek and Gaetti had excellent spring training performances, and they entered the season with similar expectations. On opening night in the Dome, Hrbek had two singles and two RBIs. Gaetti hit two home runs, was thrown out at the plate trying for a third (inside-the-park) and drove in four runs.

From that meteoric start, Gaetti slipped to the point the Twins were talking about sending him back to the minor leagues. Even when he reached nine home runs, there was talk Gaetti would be sent to Triple A.

Gaetti's average has remained around .200, but that talk has started to subside. When someone produced the statistics that, in his first season at Philadelphia, Mike Schmidt batted .196, with a strikeout every 2.7 at-bats, the Twins seemed to get over their disappointment in Gaetti, and Gardner re-inserted him at third base.

Like his manager, Gaetti believes the toughest thing for a rookie hitter is to be selective in RBI situations. "I've cost myself plenty this year by being overly anxious," Gaetti said. "But I'm learning. I think we're all learning. It would be nice if we could all have the consistency of Kent, but he's a special case. I'm just hoping that, if he happens to cool off, I'll have made the adjustment by then, and I'll get hot. The young players on this team do have a strong feeling of togetherness."



Kent Hrbek (above right) hit the major league scene with a bang, while Gary Gaetti has struggled but shown promise.

In addition to Hrbek at first base and Gaetti at third, five other positions—catcher (Tim Laudner), shortstop (Ron Washington), center field (first Jim Eisenreich and now Bobby Mitchell), right field (Tom Brunansky) and designated hitter (Randy Johnson and Jesus Vega) are being filled by rookies.

Eisenreich, troubled by a nervous disorder since late April, was placed on the disabled list for the second time June 18. That left the Twins with 12 rookies on the 25-man roster.

The first big league season has not gone well for Gaetti. Laudner, Mitchell, infielder Lennie Faedo and pitchers Paul Boris, Terry Felton and Frank Viola. Two other rookies—pitcher Pete Filson and outfielder Randy Bush—came to the Twins and, after short stays, returned to Triple A.

Washington is the Twins' most unlikely rookie success story. When the Twins traded shortstop Roy Smalley to the Yankees in April, one of the advertised reasons was to make room for Faedo. But when Faedo struggled at the plate and in the field, Gardner inserted Washington, a 30-year-old career minor leaguer.

Washington has held his batting average around .290, and his play in the field, while sporadic, occasionally has been spectacular.

The Twins have proven that putting a dozen or more rookies on the same team virtually guarantees defeat. For sure, the 1982 Twins are an endorsement for the value of experience.

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Bats Left      Throws Right  
Height 6-0      Weight 187  
Born 8-20-64      San Diego, Calif.  
Craig Nettles  
Puff  
5 Thirdbaseman 6

NETTLES		
5 Thirdbaseman 6		
11-5	31-14	51-9
12-25	32-26	52-27
13-14	33-7	53-20
14-30	34-31	54-32
15-8	35-14	55-8
16-28	36-33	56-34
21-32	41-24	61-24
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# BASEBALL

MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL

A.L. WEST

## CALIFORNIA ANGELS



**FLY ON THE WALL:** Veteran third baseman Gary Gaetti says the Angels seemed to be pushing him toward retirement this winter, and that's the reason his agent has been trying to arrange a trade. He says he has not asked to be traded. According to Gaetti, Angels Vice President Whitey Herzog called his agent over the winter and asked if Gaetti intended to retire. That wasn't likely, since Gaetti has two years left on a contract that guarantees him \$6 million. Retiring would mean walking away from the game and the money



**Gary Gaetti:**  
Not ready to retire.

at age 34. But if the Angels don't want the former All-Star, Gaetti hopes somebody does. "I can read between the lines," Gaetti says. "They trade for a third baseman (Kelly Gruber) and they trade for a first baseman (J.T. Snow), and I play both of those positions. I don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure it out."

**LOOKING AHEAD:** With the Angels' second-base job virtually handed to him before spring training, all Damion Easley had to do was stay healthy. He couldn't do it. Easley is suffering from shinsplints. Although the Angels hope Easley will be cleared to play next week, Manager Buck Rodgers began making contingency plans. "I've never in my life seen shinsplints be a career-ending or season-ending injury," Rodgers says. "It's painful. It takes time to get well, but it's never been an extremely serious thing. Saying that, I hope this isn't the first one." As insurance, Rodgers might move Rene Gonzales from third to second and let Gaetti work at third base again.

—DAVE CUNNINGHAM

## CHICAGO WHITE SOX



**FLY ON THE WALL:** Bitterness between the White Sox and Carlton Fisk might not be over. Contract terms weren't settled until March 3, the Sox having failed to invite the 45-year-old catcher to spring training after he agreed to a minor league contract with guarantees that he wouldn't be sent to Triple-

A Nashville. Why problems every year? "Good question. You tell me," Fisk says. "Now you know what I've been dealing with for years." Club Chairman Jerry Reinsdorf had called Fisk "a baby" and a "prima donna." He then issued Fisk a deadline by saying, "The time has come to put an end to this silliness. (General Manager) Ron Schueler needs to know if he's going to have Pudge this year." Fisk concludes: "I always have been part of the team; I've focused every year on helping us win. Now I've got to refocus."

**LOOKING AHEAD:** Ozzie Guillen, Ellis Burks and Bo Jackson got off to good exhibition starts in their comeback attempts from major injuries. Guillen suffered torn knee ligaments last April. The first time he slid in camp was a big moment. "After eight months of rehabilitation, I was worried I'd blow it out in one second," the shortstop said. Two days later, Guillen played in his first game. "I'm ready to play my 155 or 160 games," he says. . . . Sen. Carol Moseley Braun (D-Ill.) will throw out the first ball at the home opener April 9 against the Yankees.



**Ozzie Guillen:**  
Ready to play.

—JOE GODDARD

## OAKLAND ATHLETICS



**FLY ON THE WALL:** The A's considered pursuing free-agent designated hitter Jack Clark, who lives in the East Bay area, but their interest quickly faded. Boston's release of Clark had prompted Manager Tony La Russa to say, "He's worth talking about." Soon thereafter, General Manager Sandy

Alderson downplayed Clark's appeal and said, "Right now, we're looking at Troy Neel as our guy." Neel, who unlike Clark hits lefthanded, led the Pacific Coast League last season with a .351 batting average. Neel opened exhibition play with five hits in his first eight at-bats. . . . One of pitching coach Dave Duncan's prime projects this spring is Bobby Witt. After six-plus seasons of wildness, Witt is making some adjustments in his delivery. He will shorten his stride and try to improve his body balance before he releases pitches.

**LOOKING AHEAD:** Righthanded pitcher Shawn Hillegas suffered a small cartilage tear in the back of his right shoulder, eliminating him from contention for the fifth spot in the starting rotation. The field has narrowed to Bob Milacki, Joe Slusarski and Curt Young. Onetime starting candidate Kelly Downs is now pegged for middle relief. . . . La Russa says Bob Welch or Ron Darling will start against Detroit on Opening Night, April 5. Until leaving for Toronto via free agency, Dave Stewart had started five consecutive openers for the A's.



**Bobby Witt:**  
Pitching project.

—RON KROICHICK

## KANSAS CITY ROYALS



**FLY ON THE WALL:** Mark Gubicza's first exhibition appearance provided pleasant Sunday watching for the Royals. Gubicza breezed through three innings against the Tigers, allowing four hits and a run while striking out four. That continued a good spring for Gubicza, who missed the second half of last sea-

son with shoulder problems. Kevin Appier, however, pitched two innings of pure misery the previous day in his first outing. Appier, who missed the last month of the '92 season with a sore shoulder, threw 58 pitches against the Tigers and allowed three hits and four walks. Appier says his arm feels fine, it's just his mechanics that need refining. . . . Felix Jose sprained his left shoulder on a swing in the Grapefruit opener and sat out a day. But he was able to bat lefthanded and was back in the lineup last Sunday, banging a homer off the Tigers' David Haas. He wasn't supposed to swing from the right side for at least five days.

**LOOKING AHEAD:** Mike Boddicker's knee surgery for a cartilage tear proved more extensive than expected and he could miss up to four weeks. . . . Aside from pitching, the most spirited competition in camp is the battle for the catching spot between Mike MacFarlane and Brent Mayne. If Mayne, a lefthanded batter, wins the job, he will be platooned with MacFarlane. If MacFarlane takes it, Mayne again will be limited to about two games a week.



**Mark Gubicza:**  
Promising start.

—DICK KAESEL

## SEATTLE MARINERS



**FLY ON THE WALL:** The Mariners will start the regular season without Dave Fleming in their starting rotation. A bone scan of the lefthander's left elbow revealed a "stress overload syndrome," trainer Rick Griffin says. "He doesn't have a fracture or stress fracture, and what we're dealing with is something of an unknown," Griffin says. "This is very uncommon and probably is related to fatigue and overuse." Fleming, 23, pitched 228 1/3 innings last season when he compiled a 17-10 record. His elbow bothered him late in the season and again during the offseason. He felt discomfort from the beginning of training camp and underwent a battery of tests soon after throwing a 10-minute batting practice session two weeks into camp.

The injury to Fleming undoubtedly will stall, if not stop, trade talk involving Randy Johnson and Erik Hanson. Both have been rumored to be on the trading block because the club is more than \$2 million over budget.

**LOOKING AHEAD:** Although the Mariners don't have a home field this spring, they have arranged to be the home team in seven exhibition games. . . . The Mariners have sold out their home opener for the fourth consecutive season. . . . The club also surpassed the 10,000 season-ticket mark for the first time in franchise history.



**Dave Fleming:**  
Elbow injury.

—JIM STREET

## MINNESOTA TWINS



**FLY ON THE WALL:** Chuck Knoblauch and Scott Erickson are upset at one-year contracts they had to sign for \$500,000, or see their contracts renewed for less money. They can go to arbitration next year. . . . Pitcher Paul Abbott, who dislocated his right shoulder three times in the past year, was

released. A third-round draft choice in 1985, Abbott could file a grievance. "We just weren't satisfied with the progress with the shoulder," G.M. Andy MacPhail says. "The medical reports became more and more pessimistic. Through no fault of his own, he just didn't make any progress."

**LOOKING AHEAD:** Manager Tom Kelly is not yet convinced Scott Leius can be a full-time shortstop. Kelly remembers Leius struggling at the plate in 1992 when he was used every day at third. Leius is expected to get about 120 starts at shortstop, with Jeff Reboulet starting the other 40 or so. "Scotty really hasn't proved to us — or had the chance to prove — that he can be a 160-game shortstop at this level," Kelly says. . . . Mike Pagliarulo, in camp on a minor league contract, has taken strides toward earning a job platooning at third base with Terry Jorgensen. "Without pulling any punches, his approach to hitting is much better than it was last year — forget the injuries," Kelly says. "Injuries don't mean a thing to me. They were unfortunate, yes, but what's important to us is his approach"



**Scott Leius:**  
120 starts at SS?

—JEFF LENIHAN

## TEXAS RANGERS



**FLY ON THE WALL:** Julio Franco is having trouble with his left knee and Billy Ripken is making spectacular plays, making it fairly obvious that Franco will be limited to designated hitter and Ripken will start at second base. Franco's left knee is bothering him in the same spot that caused the problems

with his right knee last season. The Rangers have no reason to believe it's the same injury or is as significant as last year, but they want to proceed cautiously. Thus, Franco is being held back in workouts. "After last year, he doesn't want to be caught in the same situation," trainer Danny Wheat says. Wheat says the swelling could be caused by overcompensating for the right knee and trying to do too much too soon. Franco admits the knee is "messing with my head." He says the knee feels good enough for him to be used at D.H., but he also told Manager Kevin Kennedy it will keep him from making the plays Ripken has been making.

**LOOKING AHEAD:** Catcher Geno Petralli will miss the first six weeks of the season after undergoing elbow surgery. John Russell is the leading candidate to replace him as Ivan Rodriguez's backup. As for a lefthanded pinch-hitter, Kennedy will look at Dan Peltier, Rob Maurer, Rob Ducey and Benny Distefano. . . . Kennedy says the center-field spot is wide open and he will look at five candidates: Ducey, David Hulse, Gary Redus, Donald Harris and Doug Dascenzo.



**Billy Ripken:**  
Sharp at second.

—T.R. SULLIVAN