All Washed Up? Last Chance for Groat

Phils Betting Vet Will Rise To Challenge

By RAY KELLY CLEARWATER, Fla.

For Dick Groat, the pattern never changes. It started when he was a collegian at Duke University and has continued unabated through 14 seasons of baseball in the National League.

"Can't run . . . can't throw . . . lacks bat power . . . doesn't cover enough ground . . ." the whole bit.

Now something new has been added. They're wondering if Groat, the shortstop who has moulded a remarkable career in spite of so many shortcomings, is all washed up. Has he lost that extra step?

And, at 35 years of age, Dick can't help wondering himself.

It is well to remember, however, that nobody ever accused Groat of not being a competitor. And here he is, wearing the familiar No. 24 with a new team, the Phillies, and facing up to the biggest challenge of his athletic life.

Don't bet he won't make it!

Gene Mauch, manager of the Phillies, knows more than a little bit about the game and the people in it and he's gambling a chance for the pennant on Groat's ability to rise to an occasion. It's a calculated risk, but Mauch is confident a change of scenery will pump new adrenalin into Dick's aging veins.

Light-Hitting Shortstops

Yet the irony of it all is that ever since Abner Doubleday invented baseball, managers have always been willing to settle for shortstops who can make the routine play and hit .250.

There are exceptions. Groat hit ,254 for the Cardinals last season and immediately was labeled finished by those who pretend to know about such things.

The veteran infielder refuses to kid himself. He knows it was his worst season. He knows he's with the Phillies on a one-shot deal, that at best he can expect another season or two, provided "I do the job -and I might say, quickly."

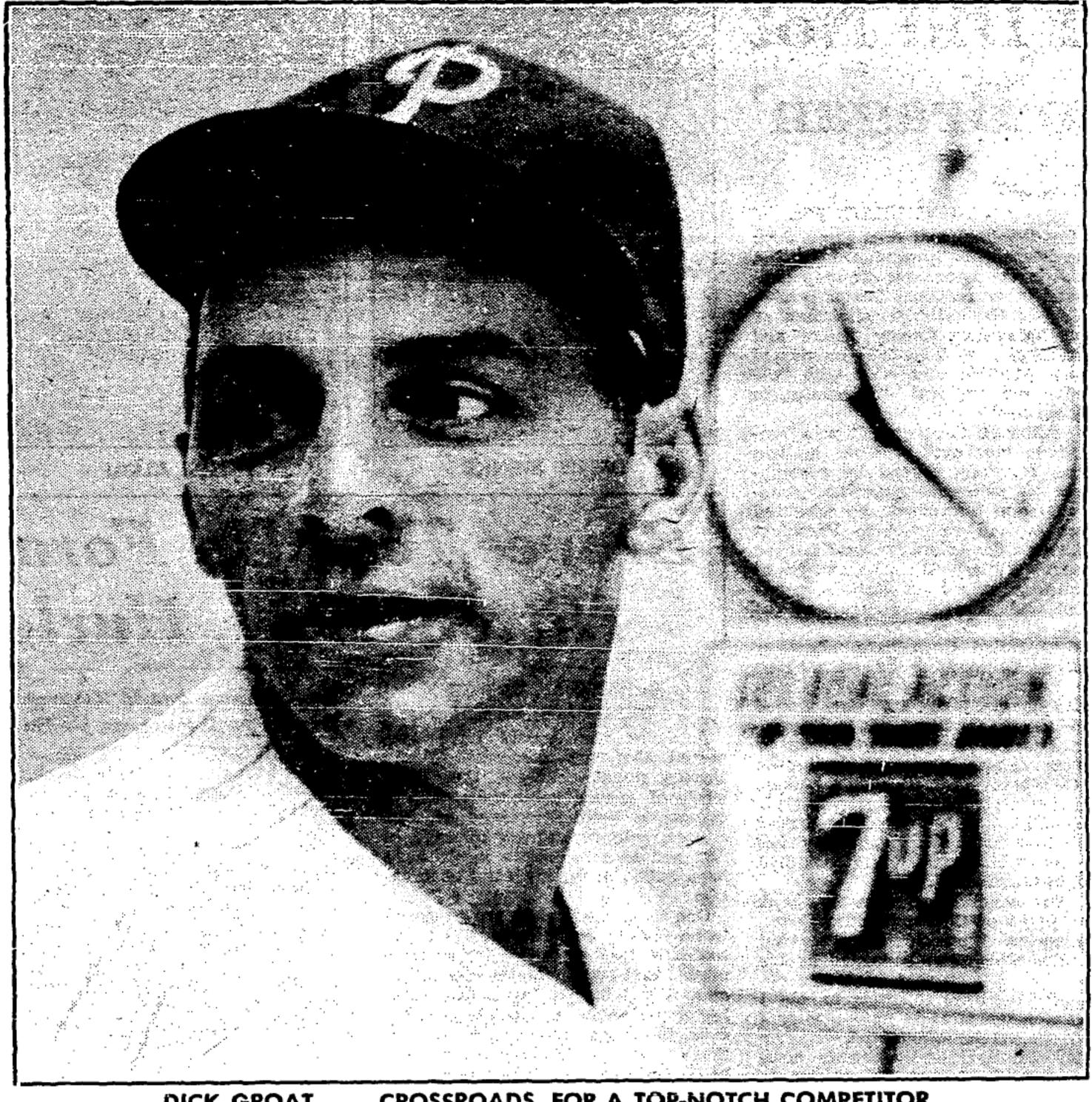
Take it from Groat, his predicament could have been a lot less favorable. "There are two places for a veteran to go when he's tradedup or down. I get a break going with the Phillies. It's a good ball club with a chance to win the money. I could have gone the other way (he must have passed a thought about Ken Boyer with the Mets)."

Inspired by Trade

There is something else. The last time Groat was traded, it did him a world of good. He left the Pirates in 1962 with a .294 average and zoomed to .319 for the Cardinals the next season. That was when Mauch first called Dick "a hitting machine," In 1964, his .292 average was more robust than it appeared while the Redbirds were winning the National League pennant in a rip-roaring finish.

In spite of his success with the bat, nobody in baseball frets as much about hitting as Groat and it doesn't make any difference if he's averaging .350 or .220. Dick worries, which is probably part of the reason he's lost most of his hair. What he didn't pull out when somebody caught a line drive fell out from tossing through sleepless

nights. "I can't help it," he explained. It does seem a little silly, considering that Groat is a past National League batting champion, a winner of the coveted Most Valuable Play-



CROSSROADS FOR A TOP-NOTCH COMPETITOR. DICK GROAT . .

er Award and owner of a lifetime average of .290. How can he become distressed?

It all goes back to his teens. "I never had real confidence in my baseball ability," he recalled. "It was different in basketball (he was All-America at Duke). I was quick and I knew I could put the ball in the hoop (1,783 points in 77 games).

"Nobody ever said I couldn't do this, that or the other thing on a basketball court. I didn't have the faults they emphasized in baseball -the slow-poke running, the scrambling in the field, the throwing."

Passed Up by Brown

It was something Groat had to live with. In fact, he was still in college when Mace Brown, a Red Sox scout, said publicly there were six players on the Duke baseball team he'd rather sign before Groat. He also mentioned that Groat could not run or throw or hit with power.

This certainly did not help Groat's confidence.

Happily, the Pirates and the late Branch Rickey had a better appreciation of the collegian's ability. In fact, it was Rickey who was involved in Groat's great temptation. Let Dick tell about it:

"It was June in 1951 when Mr. Rickey asked my father and me to drop into his office at Forbes Field (Pittsburgh). We got there in the afternoon and Mr. Rickey pulled out a document and said: 'If you sign this contract, you can play shortstop against the Phillies tonight.""

Groat said it took him a full 60 seconds to catch his breath.

"My father never said a word. But I said: 'Mr. Rickey, it is almost unfair for you to do this to me. I've still got another year to go at Duke.'

"Mr. Rickey said, 'You can com-

Dick, Partner Lynch Eager To Open Their Golf Course

CLEARWATER, Fla.-Nobody pays more attention to the eastern weather reports than Dick Groat, the veteran shortstop of the Phillies. With good reason.

Groat and Jerry Lynch of the Pirates are co-owners of a new golf course in Ligonier, Pa., and the sooner the weather breaks, the sooner they'll have the course ready for the golf season.

"It's really going to be beautiful," Groat said.

plete your education during the off season.'.

"I told him: 'Mr. Rickey, I'm arship. I feel obligated to play the full four years. But I'll tell you this much-if you make the same offer to me next June, I'll sign.'

"You know," Groat remembered, "after I told Mr. Rickey about the basketball scholarship, he never mentioned money, either."

Long on Integrity

P. S.: In June, 1952, Groat signed his first professional contract with the Pirates on a Monday. Tuesday he joined the Pirates in New York. Dick showed he had integrity. And he still has it.

Instead of resenting being traded off by the Cardinals, along with other established stars like first baseman Bill White (also with the Phil-

lies) and Boyer, Groat shies away from controversy. "I want you to know that I've never been treated better in my life

than I was by the Cardinals." Dick also brushed off the "high grass" hassle.

It was common knowledge around

the National League last season that the Cardinal players thought their general manager, Bob Howsam, did the team a dis-service by prettying up Busch Stadium and allowing the infield grass to become too lush.

The complaint stemmed from the fact that the Cardinals had won the world championship the previous season because they got a lot of hits and runs through a hard, grass-thin infield to compensate for the lack of power.

No Problem for Vet

"Let's face it," Groat said. "Wouldn't it be kind of stupid for a 14-year veteran to worry about an infield? And don't forget, Curt Flood and Lou Brock did some pretty good hitting in that park."

Those who know Groat claim it could have had an adverse effect down at Duke on a basketball schol- on his hitting. Mental approach is a key factor in hitting in any league.

"I'll go along with that," Dick said. "I know my thinking can help or hinder my own hitting. And it all depends on how my mind is working."

He's also swinging a lot better than he did a season ago. He isn't getting many hits with the Phillies in the exhibition games, but the "old snap" is getting into the wrists. Dick is pulling the ball just to get in the habit of putting some sting at impact. Later on, he'll start moving the ball around and the hit-and-run in his accustomed style.

"Back in 1960, I think Groat got his first hit of the spring against us in Atlanta two days before the season opened," said Gene Mauch, "and that was the year he won the batting title."

Meanwhile, Dick Groat will keep right on worrying because he's that kind of a ball player.

Dick Expected to Be Busy As Master of Hit-and-Run

CLEARWATER, Fla. - Dick Groat ought to be right at home with the Phillies this season, They'll be doing a lot of hitand-running.

Manager Gene Mauch points out that the Phillies are loaded with "guys who can handle the bat"-meaning, besides Groat, the slick Cookie Rojas, Bill White, Johnny Callison and Richie Allen

The Phillies plan to be a team on the go this season and Groat will be in the thick of the hitand-run doings.

Clemens Hopes To Muscle Into Phils' Outfield

By ALLEN LEWIS

CLEARWATER, Fla.

The Phillies may be a little short of pitching this season, but one thing they have in abundance is left fielders. They have so many that Manager Gene Mauch may still be trying to figure out which ones to play there well after the season starts.

One of the candidates is a newcomer to the Phillies, who made a favorable impression almost from the start of spring training. Doug Clemens would like to claim the left field job on a full-time basis, but he realizes his task is difficult. He also knows he flubbed such an opportunity last year when he was with the Cubs.

That failure hasn't lessened his determination to prove he has the ability, however, and he's hopeful he'll get a second chance with the Phillies. He tried to do something in the off season to prepare himself

better if opportunity knocks again. Doug Holds Master's Degree

The blond, handsome, 26-year-old Clemens is a rarity, for he's a ball player with a master's degree. He completed his work on it this winter in physical education at Syracuse University.

While there last fall and winter, Clemens did some special exercising in hopes of increasing his strength and possibly his power hitting, for one of his problems is the fact that he is not a long-ball slugger.

"I feel strong this spring," said Clemens, who has been hitting the ball hard in training, "and that may be because I used isometric and isotonic weights all winter."

Clemens worked out with another big leaguer from Syracuse, Astro pitcher Dave Giusti.

"We used what's called an exergenie," Clemens explained. "It's a one-apparatus type of thing which employs the isometric and isotonic principles. The whole Syracuse basketball team uses it.

"I don't know how much it will increase my power, but it can't hurt

Hot Spring Last Year

When it was mentioned that he was hitting the ball well here in camp, Clemens recalled that he had a great spring with the Cubs last year.

"I hit .406 in the spring last year," said Clemens, who led the Bruins in batting during the exhibition season. "Then I played regularly for the first 50 games straight when the season began. On opening day, I hit the ball hard although I got only one hit-a double off Bob Gibson-and scored the first run of the season. but then we ran into Curt Simmons

(Continued on Page 10, Column 4)

Astro Muscle Men Slow to Nail Down Wide-Open Berths

By JOHN WILSON

COCOA. Fla.

The Houston Astros finished 32 games behind the first-place Dodgers in 1965.

Manager Grady Hatton's goal this year is to cut down that deficit to, say, about 20 games.

Last year, Houston would have had to win 12 more games to finish 20

lengths off the pace. Would you believe Houston can win 12 more this time?

Would you believe ten? Eight? Six?

As spring training moved into its meaningful stage, there was the usual feeling that the team has to be improved this time around. What second-

division club ever felt differently? The conditioning and teaching phase of the spring ritual is past. Now comes the time to make those necessary decisions about players.

Manager Hatton still was waiting for an assertive push by some of the potential muscle men about whom he must make judgments.

"I'm still waiting for Jim Gentile, Chuck Harrison, John Bateman and Dave Nicholson to come forward," Hatton said.

None of the four has been a bust this spring. But none has taken over a spot on the field and said, figuratively, "This is mine."

Dave's situation seems to leave him suspended between alternatives. He might be sent to Oklahoma City (Coast) to see if he could get off to a good start. Or he might be kept as a utility outfielder. Unless Dave gets hot in the final stages of the spring schedule or goes into a slump, other roster factors might determine his fate.

Bond at Gateway Again?

Gentile and Harrison have done little to settle the first base question. This might open the way for Walt Bond to come back and take it away from both of them. But Walt's hitting fits in with that of the other two. Rookie Nate Colbert, with one year's Class A experience behind him, has done as well as the rest.

It's up to someone to do something to give Hatton a basis for making a decision.

Bateman hasn't taken over from Ron Brand as a solid No. 1 catcher. They would have to share the job on the basis of half a spring.

But the hitting of catcher Bill Heath poses another possibility. The Astros weren't interested in trading Brand last winter because the management felt it couldn't start the season without protection for the position. Three clubs were interested in Brand at the winter meeting.

Heath, acquired in the winter from the White Sox system for minor league pitcher Ray Cordiero, has stroked the ball impressively this spring. The 27-year-old Heath already had proved he was a good Triple-A hitter.

Swap Still Probable

If Bateman made just a little stronger showing, might not the Astros go back toward a Brand trade and keep Heath instead?

Whether a trade is made behind the plate or not, it is probable the Astros will make at least one deal to strengthen the bench before the season opens.

But with the lack of any dramatic surge on the part of muscle men Bateman, Harrison, Gentile and Nicholson, the team still appeared more solid than a year ago.

It's highly possible the Astros can cut down that 32-game deficit. Here are some of the reasons:

Sonny Jackson gives every indication he will stay at short. This adds speed in the field and speed on the bases. Hatton isn't expecting Jackson to set the league on fire his first year (although he wouldn't object to a small blaze).

Bob Aspromonte is one of the solid

10



Dave Nicholson

spots at third base. And if you had to pick somebody to have a quality year, Joe Morgan at second base would be your best bet.

In the outfield, Lee Maye is almost a cinch to do the opposition more damage with his bat this year. There is no reason to see a backslide from center fielder Jim Wynn, despite a slow spring start, and Rusty Staub figures to wield a supporting bat in right field if he can discard nettling leg hurts.

But most encouraging to Hatton during the first phase of spring training and the early games were the looks of his pitching staff.

Depth on Mound Staff

"It is not only that the veterans have looked good," said Grady, "but it's the depth that is a little surprising."

However, when the Astros went back to Houston and played the Dodgers on the synthetic carpet, the pitching suddenly didn't look all that good. The Dodgers banged 22 hits in two days.

The Dodgers won both games in the Astrodome, 8-3 and 4-1.

Astronotes: Joe Morgan and Lee Maye were the top Houston hitters through the first ten exhibition games. Both were hitting well over .300. . . . Manager Grady Hatton has confidence Rusty Staub will do a good job in right field this year if he can shake off injuries. A plaguing groin injury is similar to a disability that hobbled Rusty for several weeks last season. . . . Catcher Ron Brand still was in a Houston hospital when the team came home for the Dodger exhibition series. Ron was hopeful a persistent back pain would go away without surgery. . . . At a press conference in Houston, Robin Roberts and Manager Hatton were interrogated by more than 100 writers and broadcasters at a breakfast press conference. Roberts told the writers he favored a four-man pitching rotation, and pointed to Minnesota and Los Angeles, last year's pennant winners, as examples of success.

Astros Entertain Writers, Unveil New Synthetic Turf

HOUSTON, Tex .- The Houston Astros played host to 189 sports writers and broadcasters for the March 19-20 exhibitions against the Dodgers when the new Astroturf infield was unveiled. Thirty-one of the guests were from out of state.

The visitors stayed at the plush

Warwick Hotel.

The writers got the first look at the grass three hours before the March 19 game and questions were answered by Chemstrand officials, Astro President Roy Hofheinz and National League President Warren Giles.

The Houston Sports Association was host after the Saturday night game for cocktails, a floor show, and midnight breakfast at the Continental Club in the Shamrock-Hilton.

Pitcher Robin Roberts and Manager Grady Hatton answered questions at a breakfast press conference the following morning at the Warwick.

Astroturf

(Continued From Page 9)

tion, roughly 4,393,318 people attended events in the Astrodome," he said. "Using a conservative estimate, probably two million of them came from outside the Houston metropolitan area."

The Houston Sports Association recently sent a questionnaire to over 50,000 people who attended various events at the Astrodome. After running the results through a computer, they discovered that the average fans spends about \$40 during his visit to Houston.

"That's how we get our \$80 million figure," he said. "Chances are that it's higher than that."

Other results of the tabulation were:

(1) The average out-of-town fan sees five baseball games a year in the Dome, which represents a large increase from the days when the Houston Colts played outdoors at Colt Stadium.

(2) The average fan spends two nights and three days in Houston on a trip to the Astrodome.

Ten Per Cent From Far Off

(3) Ten per cent of the fans were from states other than Texas and Louisiana.

(4) Some 32 per cent of the fans took the guided tour of the Astrodome at \$1 a head.

"There's no reason for the number of people taking the tours to decline," said Hofheinz. "The total will hit 500,000 for the first year of operation, which ends in April. Why, Astroturf alone will add about 20,000 to the figure next year."

As a tourist attraction, the Astrodome may be in for an even bigger summer this year.

"We are getting an average of 50 letters a day from people all over the country, asking for information on the Astrodome," said Chamber of Commerce office manager Tom Archer.

And then there were some cynics who insisted that the Astrodome could never be built. When it was, they said the place would go broke. Next?

Bob Carpenter Nixes Bid To Join Grid Syndrcate

CLEARWATER, Fla. - Reports that Bob Carpenter was a member of a syndicate dickering to purchase the San Diego Chargers of the American Football League were denied by the Phillies' owner.

"I was contacted recently by a mutual friend and asked if I'd be interested," Carpenter said. "I told him I wouldn't and that's all there was to it."



Doug Clemens

Phillies

(Continued From Page 7)

and Ray Sadecki and I started having troubles.

"I got up to about .265 at one point near the end of July, but then I didn't play for about a month. They were trying different combinations and I couldn't blame them because we weren't winning.

"Then, I did a lot of pinch-hitting and went in on defense for (Harvey) Kuenn and (George) Altman and my average fell," added Clemens, who wound up with a .221 mark with four homers and 26 runs batted in for 340 at-bats in 128 games.

Not Surprised by Trade

"The Cubs gave me a good opportunity," he said, "and I was real disappointed, especially after the spring I had."

Clemens wasn't too surprised when the Cubs traded him, but coming to the Phillies was something of a shock because of all the lefthanded hitters on the squad.

Clemens is determined, however, possibly because, as he says, "I know this is it-probably my last chance to make it."

If he fails, however, Clemens has a future all planned. He wants to follow in his father's footsteps as a coach. His dad, Lloyd (Scoop) Clemens, was Doug's coach at Muhlenberg (Pa.) Township High School, and he is currently on leave.

Doug would like to be a small-college coach when his baseball days are over.

A native of Leesport, Pa., the softspoken Clemens was a star athlete in high school, so outstanding a halfback that he went to Syracuse on a football scholarship.

Knee trouble ended his football career—he had to have two operations on his right knee—and says he was fortunate that Syracuse switched him to a baseball scholarship.

First Sacker in College

"In high school and college, was a first baseman, but I moved to the outfield and have stayed there ever since," he said.

Clemens was a high average hitter as a youngster and was signed by the Cardinals after his junior year in college in 1960 for what he calls a moderate bonus. It was a \$40,000 deal in bonus and salary spread over four years.

"I signed then because scouts from other clubs told me I might not get as much in another year and because I never knew how my knee would stand up playing every day," Clemens said.

Phillie Fodder: The Phillies were a little concerned when their relief ace, Gary Wagner, walked seven Tigers in one inning and surrendered a grand-slam home run. The hardthrowing youngster has been having a little trouble with a stiff shoulder. . Shortstop Dick Groat was having his usual spring doldrums at the plate. At one stage he went 0-for-15 before getting a hit. . . . John Herrnstein was the Phillies' lustiest hitter through the early exhibition games, playing both first base and the outfield. . . . Bill White slammed three homers in a game with the Red Sox, one of which traveled an estimated 450 feet. . . . Catcher Bob Uecker was sidelined for a while with a severely-bruised right calf and a wrenched back, sustaining both injuries in a game with the Tigers.

A 15-Inning Tie Continues Met-Phil Marathon Series

CLEARWATER, Fla. - When the Mets and the Phillies get together, decisions come hard.

The two clubs recently played a 15-inning tie here and that continued a pattern established in their last series of the regular season when they played an 18-inning, scoreless tie in the second game of a four-game series and a 13-inning contest in the finale last October.

In all, the two clubs have now played 64 innings to reach their last three decisions, the equivalent of more than seven games.

Oklahoma No. 1 Talent Hotbed For Big Timers

By NEAL RUSSO

ST. LOUIS, Mo.

California continues to hold a huge lead in the number of favorite sons on winter rosters of the major · leagues, but Oklahoma is the leader for the second straight year on the basis of population.

In fact, Alabama, Missouri and Nebraska hold the next three places behind Oklahoma, and California rates fifth on a per-capita basis.

Oklahoma boasts 21 big-timers on the winter lists. That's one per 111,000 people in the state, based on the last official census.

Alabama listed 28 roster members, or one per 117,000 population to give the Sooner State a good run. Show money went to the Show-Me State, Missouri, with 31 players, or one per 140,000.

Then came California with no fewer than 110 big-timers—one per 143,000 persons. Nevada with two players tied California for sixth spot.

Last winter, Alabama and Missouri held the same positions, second and third, respectively.

New York Lists 53

The highest totals after California belong to New York. 53: Pennsylvania, 42; Illinois, 36; Ohio, Texas, and Michigan, 34 each. Michigan ranks No. 17.

While New York shot up to 14 in one year, five states were shut out: Alaska, Vermont, New Hampshire, Hawaii and Rhode Island.

Foreign countries increased the size of their slice of the big league pie-climbing from 72 to 78, or close to ten per cent of the grand total.

Cuba, where a former baseball player named Castro holds sway, is tops with 26. On the Cuban heels are Puerto Rico with 13, the Dominican Republic with 11, Canada with

There are Californians everywhere—at least three on each club except for the Yankees, who have only two. The Dodgers carried the most Californians with 11, but the Astros weren't far behind, with ten.

The Red Sox listed nine from. California, the Angels eight.

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