

Hassey Leads Band Without Any Bugles

By BOB SUDYK

TUCSON, Ariz.—Catcher Ron Hassey is the Cleveland Indians' version of Rodney Dangerfield. He gets no respect. When Hassey arrived in camp and unloaded his bats, they were inscribed "Hessey."

He merely shrugged, laughed, and put on his gear.

Quick now, what regular catcher led both leagues in hitting last season? It wasn't "Hessey." It was Hassey, in his first season as a big league regular. Yet anywhere other than hometown Tucson or Cleveland the question is a guaranteed stumper.

"I'm not a household name," he conceded. "You've got to be on a contender or play in New York to be known. But I don't care. If I can put together back-to-back seasons like last year, I'll be recognized. And we're on the verge of having a very good team."

Last year he batted .318 in 130 games with eight home runs and 65 runs batted in. Rick Cerone's .277, with 14 homers and 85 RBIs for New York was more productive.

Cerone's name surfaces because he went to arbitration and won a \$440,000 contract for his first good season in the majors. Hassey skipped arbitration.

He signed a three-year guaranteed contract for \$150,000 this year, \$250,000 in 1982 and \$350,000 in 1983.

"I made no mistake in not going to arbitration," Hassey insists. "I got a good contract. I have security. I don't need a whole lot of money to make me happy. If I improve like I expect, I'll get the big money."

He pointed out that the Yankees' huge payroll probably was a factor in the arbitrator's decision. "There are still many players making more than Cerone on his club. If I got what he got I'd be the highest paid player on the Indians," said Hassey, who didn't believe he qualified for such a sum.

But \$150,000 in today's market? Hassey earned \$45,000 last summer, after occasional play the previous two years.

"For the Indians to even consider giving me a three-year guarantee shows they believe in me," Hassey said. "I might have made more money in arbitration or playing somewhere else, but I don't want these salary problems every year."

"I'm more interested in becoming the best defensive catcher in the league. Last year, Larry Cox of Seattle nosed me out. Cox committed just three errors in 104 games to four in 113 games by Hassey."

By sheer hard work, Hassey has improved offensively and defensively. Scouting reports once reported Hassey as "no prospect." Proving people wrong provides more in-

centive than U.S. currency.

Baseball's lone Lebanese catcher batted .317 against righthanders and .327 against lefties. .333 as a pinch-hitter and .400 as a designated hitter. His .371 mark with runners in scoring position was best on the team.

An injury to Andre Thornton, in an exhibition game against the Hanshin Tigers March 8, dimmed some of the enthusiasm in the Indians' training camp.

Thornton, being counted on to provide needed righthanded power, suffered a broken little finger on his right hand when he was struck by a pitched ball. He is expected to be out four to six weeks.

The Cleveland first baseman suffered a knee injury here last year; underwent two operations and missed the season.

Smoke Signals: Miguel Dilone was the last to report to camp, on March 4, after being held up by authorities in the Dominican Republic. . . . There are rumors that the Tribe may put Diaz in a trade for a pitcher. . . . Garcia was impressed with the movement of Andre Thornton and Duane Kuiper, both returning from knee surgery. Kuiper must wear a leg brace. . . . Batting coach Tom McCraw is raving about the natural batting strokes of rookies Chris Bando and Von Hayes.



Ron Hassey . . . No household name.

'Start Running or We Sink,' Herzog Tells His Cardinals

By RICK HUMMEL

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla.—The St. Louis Cardinals' baserunning last year was (a) abominable, (b) atrocious, (c) a joke. Manager Whitey Herzog is inclined to believe it was all of the above.

Off-season research revealed, Herzog said, that the 1980 Cardinals played 79 games in which they scored three or fewer runs despite having the league's top hitting team, and that in 17 games they had 10 or more hits while scoring two or fewer runs. So Herzog laid down the law.

On the first day the whole squad was together, Herzog sat his troops down on the infield of one of the practice diamonds and told them they'd be no better than last year unless they ran the bases with more verve and intelligence.

"You don't bust your rears going to first base. You don't break up double plays. You don't hustle going from first to third. You stand out there shooting the bull."

"You'd better learn how to run the bases. If you're going to be deadheads, if you don't pay attention and learn some of this, we're going to be where we were last year."

Where the Cardinals were last year was a stumbling fourth in the National League East.

Herzog said, "It was a joke last year. We didn't even score with the infield back sometimes. I remember two games when Ken Reitz got thrown out trying to score from third with the infield back."

"I'm going to stay on their butts. If it's worth five games a year, I think it's a helluva thing."

During the early workouts, Herzog stationed himself at the third base coaching box and coordinated various baserunning maneuvers. He threatened to take away swings in the batting cage if hitters failed to move runners over.

"It was nothing personal," said Herzog of his meeting. "It isn't like the old days where a manager could just yell at his players. But they got the message."

There can be no mistaking that Herzog has the leverage to get across any points he wants here. No longer can players run to the general manager if they don't like what the manager is doing, nor can they beseech the manager if they don't like the G. M.'s policies. If they try, they run into Herzog on both counts.

The players agreed that something had to be done about baserunning and other staples of the game. "We were demoralized when Whitey got here last year because we had lost so many leads in the late innings," said Keith Hernandez. "We've got to do better on fundamentals."

Redbird Chirps: Herzog brought in Steve Braun, who formerly played for him in Kansas City, as pinch-hitting insurance. The 32-year-old Braun, who signed a minor league contract, is a .272 lifetime hitter while playing third base and the outfield, but he hit just .205 last year with Kansas City and Toronto. . . . Larry Sorensen, one of the pitchers acquired from Milwaukee, said there was no reason why he shouldn't win at least 15 games, with Bruce Sutter available in the bullpen. . . . Outfielder Sixto Lezcano, also acquired from the Brewers, reported that his wrist, broken when he was hit by a pitch last August 31, was causing him no problems. Lezcano, who also injured his arm throwing from the outfield, hit .229 last year as opposed to his .321 of 1979.

Righthander John Fulgham, 24, once considered one of the Cardinals' brightest pitching prospects, was scheduled to undergo surgery to repair a torn rotator cuff March 12 in Los Angeles. Dr. Frank Jobe is to perform the surgery. Fulgham, "disappointed and frustrated" when he left St. Petersburg, broke in with the Redbirds in 1979 with a 10-6 record but slipped to 4-6 last year when he was beset by injury. He had the distinction of having completed every game he won in the major leagues. . . . Shortstop Garry Templeton showed up weighing 200 pounds, 19 more than last year, but part of that increase was in added upper body muscle.

'80 Collapse Spurs Parrott

By TRACY RINGOLSBY

TEMPE, Ariz.—A writer might try to describe what Mike Parrott suffered through in 1980 as a disaster or a nightmare. Parrott puts the season into a much simpler category.

"It was," said the Seattle Mariners righthanded pitcher, "the worst year in my life. A lot of things happened off the field that kept me from giving 100 percent on the field."

And the results on the field weren't even close to 10 percent of what Parrott had hoped for after a 1979 season in which he was 14-12 and set Mariners records with a 3.77 earned-run average and 127 strikeouts.

The misery of 1980 began even before spring training. A bit self-assured after the success of 1979, Parrott is the first to admit he wasn't in a very good frame of mind when he arrived in Arizona last February.

And by the time he left, things hadn't improved. He had pitched only nine innings and given up 13 hits and five runs. Just the same, based on what he had done the previous year, then Manager Darrell Johnson selected Parrott to pitch opening night for the Mariners. Even though he gave up three runs in 6½ innings against the Toronto Blue Jays, Parrott got the victory—his only one to go with 16 losses in 1980.

"I'm coming into camp with a lot better attitude this year," said Parrott. "It didn't seem I was as dedicated to getting in shape as I should have been. I have always been a slow starter, so I can't come to camp waiting for my physical ability to get rolling. I have to get mentally up and be ready in that way, and let my physical ability catch up."

He's also coming into camp this year in better physical condition than he has before. Last October he aggravated an injury to his left knee (first suffered in 1976) during a pickup basketball game. The doctors told him he had two choices—surgery, which would have meant missing a year, or going on a strenuous weight program.

It was an easy decision.

"After last season, I knew I couldn't afford to miss a year and expect to bounce back in the groove," said Parrott. "A lot of people would have written me off the board, with the year I had in 1980 and then major surgery. I've had this injury for a while, but it never bothers me when I'm pitching. It just seemed like I did something stupid every once in a while and hurt it."

Parrott was sidelined for nearly a month last season after being struck in the groin by a line drive off the bat of Minnesota's Roy Smalley.

"Things just started snowballing against me," said the 26-year-old Parrott. "I let a lot of little thoughts play on my mind. It seemed no matter what I did, I knew I was going to lose. I went out expecting to lose, instead of 1979 when I expected to win."

As humiliating as it may have been, Parrott actually views his return trip to Spokane (Pacific Coast) last August as the best thing to happen to him.

"By late July, I knew I wasn't going to snap out of it unless something dramatic happened," he said. "At the time they sent me down, that was rock bottom. I knew it was as low as I could be."

He also knew the blister had popped. The pressure had been relieved. He was only 1-2 in four games for the Indians, but in 22 innings he gave up only 13 hits and three earned runs. He returned to the M's on September 1 and made three straight starts in which he lasted at least seven innings. Then he was put in the bullpen, where he earned three saves in his first four appearances, and the confidence started growing.

Mariners Log: The major league record for consecutive losses is 19. Parrott is only three short of that mark, but has no plans for setting a record. "I'd just as soon start the 1981 season with a win," he said. "I don't want my grandchildren to look in the record book and see my name." . . . The Mariners will have a new look in 1981. Their uniforms have been redesigned, including a new emblem on the cap.