

Aguirre, Lolich, Egan Give Tigers Strong Lefty Tinge



HANK AGUIRRE



MICKEY LOLICH



DICK EGAN

By WATSON SPOELSTRA
LAKELAND, Fla.

It is clear that the Tigers are heading north for the American League season with strong lefty pitching.

Hank Aguirre has had a good spring and seems equipped to try for 20 victories. Mickey Lolich has earned a place in the starting rotation. Dick Egan did the best relief pitching for Manager Charlie Dressen in the Florida action.

These three lefthanders occupy important places in Dressen's pitching strategy.

Aguirre, 32, has proved since 1961 that he belongs with the league's foremost pitchers when his arm is sound. Lolich, 23, seems to be coming into his own. Egan, 27, is backed by six years of minor league apprenticeship.

Fritz Fisher, first-year man from the University of Michigan, may make lesser contributions to the southpaw skill.

Pitching is what the Tigers need most in 1964. Detroit scored 700 runs last season for the third spot in the league to Minnesota (767) and the Yankees (714).

Detroit found it unprofitable to give up 703 runs on uncertain pitching and unsteady defense.

Lumpe Tightens Inner Defense

The fielding has improved with Jerry Lumpe pairing at second base with Dick McAuliffe. Don Demeter doesn't hurt the Tigers in center field. Don Wert is a smoothie at third base.

Lolich and Aguirre particularly took advantage of the men behind them. Lolich posted a 1.20 ERA for his first 15 innings in Florida. Aguirre was right behind him with 1.69 for 16 innings.

Frank Lary, Phil Regan, Dave Wickersham and Ed Rakow are the righthanders in Dressen's six-man rotation.

Rakow missed a turn when his arm tightened up, but the setback was not serious. Lary has been loose and has no pain in his right shoulder, the trouble spot that has bothered him for two years.

Terry Fox' sore shoulder changed the strategy in lining up the bull pen. In previous years, Terry had elbow trouble. Dressen reached the point where he didn't count Fox in his plans. If the shoulder comes around and Fox can regain his effectiveness, so much the better.

Al Koch, scholarly righthander from Auburn University, is the new hope of the bull pen. The 26-year-old Koch has parts of four years in the farm system to back him up.

"If he gets the curve over, I know he can do it," said the manager.

Unless there is a last-minute trade

Horton Eager to Correct Weaknesses

LAKELAND, Fla.—Willie Horton is a perfectionist as a new power hitter for the Tigers.

Willie had his first look at Don Drysdale in a game at Lakeland and struck out the first two times on outside pitches. The next time, Horton lined a double to the opposite field, into the right field corner. "He did that on his own," said Manager Charlie Dressen.

The following day, Horton arrived an hour early at the ball park. He asked Coach Bob Swift to throw him outside pitches in extra batting practice.

In his next game, Horton hit an outside pitch by John Buzhardt of the White Sox over the right field wall at Henley Field.

His second home run on Easter Sunday was far over the center field fence at the 420-foot mark.

"That was a Babe Ruth home run, high and far," observed Dressen.

The big thing is that Willie works on his weak points as hard as anybody in Florida.

Dressen will open the season with Egan, Koch, Fred Gladding and Jack Hamilton as his relief pitchers.

"Nobody ever says they have enough pitching," Dressen declared, "but I like what I got."

Willie Horton continued to be the big story of the spring for the Tigers. On Easter Sunday, Willie hit a two-run home run in the ninth inning while swinging as a pinch-hitter. It beat the White Sox in the first game of a double-header. Willie hit another home run for the winning margin in the second game.

Hit by Horlen Delivery

In between home runs, Horton was thumped on the shoulder by Joel Horlen's pitch.

"I don't think he did it on purpose," said Willie. "But it seems funny that I got hit more by hurlers on White Sox clubs in the minors and winter ball than anybody else."

"They won't scare Willie by throwing at him," said Dressen.

Tiger Tales: Owner John Fetzer gave a gay press-radio party at the Holiday Inn after the double victory over the White Sox on Easter Sunday. . . . Al Kaline felt "a little tired" and dropped out of one game with the Dodgers. Al's average had slithered to just above .100 at the time. . . . Dressen calls Bill Roman "maybe our next first baseman, who knows?" Roman has impressed the manager with his fielding and good swing. He'll play at Syracuse (International). . . . After Willie Horton's two Easter home runs, traveling secretary Charley Creedon said to Willie in the clubhouse: "Let's sing a couple of choruses of 'Red and Gray.'" He added: "Willie and I are both from Detroit Northwestern High." . . . Chief scout Ed Katalinas is a hard-working guy, but he found time for a memorable round of golf. He sank his tee shot on the 190-yard second hole at the Carpenter's course in Lakeland.

McAULIFFE

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had to drop out of school for a year to help his family. His father, William, is a house painter. Dick's mother died several years ago.

"I was so eager to get a chance in baseball that I probably would have signed for a new cap," he said.

Scout Lew Cassell signed Dick shortly after his class graduated. McAuliffe returned to school following his early minor league seasons and ultimately got his diploma by mail.

In his return to Unionville one winter, he met pretty Joanne Lee Cromack. They were married before the 1962 season and have a daughter, Beth, 15 months old. Dick calls his wife "Jo."

Served Air Force Hitch

McAuliffe did a six-month hitch in the Air Force and now serves one month of active duty each October through 1967. Some players have promoted business interests in the off season, but McAuliffe returns to Unionville.

"We're from a small town and that is where I like to live," he said.

When he first reached Detroit, some thought a Scotsman had joined the club.

"I'm Irish-Italian," he said with a grin. "My dad is Irish and my mother was Italian."

McAuliffe is pleased that he does so well against the Red Sox and Yankees, the two clubs nearest home. Last year, he hit .328 against Boston and .313 against New York.

"I guess you bear down just a little more against the Yankees," he said. "I think New York's pitching is the best as far as that goes. So it's nice to do well against them."

McAuliffe never lets up against anybody.

His competitive flair makes Detroit both dangerous and exciting.

STENGEL

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good stuff, maybe we won't hit as well as we expect. We think we're a strong team. We have larger men, younger men and older men. And with their experience, this club here is not easy to beat.

"We're probably five or ten men away from having 25 men on a lineup that you'd be satisfied with. We're gonna keep some of them, five or six ball players that haven't played but one year and have a chance to get on a major league club in their first year. It's been done before.

"The other men that are left over from the ball club, they're very good. You take four or five pitchers that lasted two years with us—they must be major league players.

"Well, that's the story. Before I go, they wanna pay me too much money now and I'll get robbed on the street or get hit on the head."

12:45 p. m. — Girl reporter approaches Casey. He begs off from others with: "Okay, boys, I gotta go interview this lady." Girl reporter, from Miami paper, wants to know about "those old fans you have in St. Petersburg."

Casey Jogs His Memory

"Why yeah, that's true," Casey replies. "But I can remember when there were only three or four training places here in Florida, back in 1919 when I came down, why we had to travel by boat and train and there wuz only one train to Key West."

1 p. m. — Other reporters demand lineup of that day's game. Stengel digs into back pocket of trousers, comes up with official lineup cards. Reads off names of players, watching one reporter in particular scribble the name down in his scorebook.

Finding it hard to read what the reporter is writing, Casey blurts out: "You write Stengelese."

1:10 p. m. — Another taped interview, this time a short one.

1:20 p. m. — More photos.

1:30 p. m. — Game begins. Casey paces up and down dugout. Stands on steps as critical situations arise. Shouts at own players. Shouts at rival players. Shouts at umpires.

4 p. m. — Game ends. Casey hops back into car for return drive to Stengel-Huggins Field.

4:10 p. m. — Showers. Dresses. Finds reporters in office. They want to know what he said to Ron Swoboda when the rookie hit his homer.

"I'll tell yuh," Casey answers. "I ran out to him, shook his hand and said, 'What's your name?'"

5 p. m. — Arrives in Soreno Hotel in downtown St. Petersburg, where Mets have their post-game pressroom. Partakes of hors d'oeuvres as well as some liquid libation.

Answers all questions.

Bearnarth Has a Job

"Larry Bearnarth worried about a job? No reason for it. He'll be a spot starter as well as my bull-pen man."

"Third base is undecided."
"Al Jackson is my No. 1 pitcher. Willey is No. 2."

"Ron Hunt is my second baseman."
"I don't know yet about shortstop. Samuel or Moran."

7 p. m. — Returns to Colonial Inn to take wife Edna to dinner. But not at Colonial Inn.

8:15 p. m. — Arrives with Edna at area's swank night club. Also in party are Bill and Mrs. Dickey, Gus and Mrs. Mauch and a few other friends.

Dinner for Casey—shrimp cocktail, steak, apple pie, coffee. Warns waiter steak must be well done. Very well done.

10 p. m. — Dances with Mrs. Stengel.

10:10 p. m. — Dances with Mrs. Mauch.

10:20 p. m. — Dances with Mrs. Dickey.

10:30 p. m. — Watches show. Midnight—Homeward bound.

12:15 a. m. — Back in Colonial Inn. Takes look at cocktail lounge and finds some friends. Lingers awhile.

1 a. m. — Off to sleep.

That's Stengel's day. Try it sometime.

'First-Year Player' Can Mean Greenpea Never in O. B. Tilt

ST. LOUIS, Mo. — The term "first-year player" as used in the major leagues is misleading. Generally it refers to a player who is in the second year of professional baseball, but it also can involve a performer who is playing his first season in O. B. or one who has never appeared in a professional game.

A player brought up from the minors at the end of his first campaign becomes a first-year player the next season.

If a free agent signs a minor league contract before August 1 for the succeeding season, he is regarded as a first-year player and is eligible to be drafted.

Last winter, the Pirates' organization lost three players that way. The Mets claimed pitcher Jerry Hinsley, the Red Sox took pitcher Bill Rohr and the Angels selected outfielder Vic Antonetty, although none of the trio had any O. B. experience.

ROOKIES

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spur in his elbow. Ratliff, who needs more hitting experience, will go back to the minors.

ORIOLES — Wally Bunker, \$70,000 bonus righthander, will be carried as the tenth pitcher. Infielder Mark Belanger, back from the Army, will be the designated optionee. Second baseman Dave Johnson, who was out on option last year, is regarded as the top infield prospect in the Orioles' system and will get further work at Kocnester (International).

INDIANS — Pitcher Tom Kelley and injured infielder Vern Fuller are remaining with the club and outfielder Paul Dicken has been sent out as the permissible optionee.

TIGERS — Three first-year pitchers — Fritz Fisher, Joe Sparma and Pete Craig — are with the club. The Tigers plan to ask waivers on one and keep two, letting the pair split the year in the minors. Pitchers Bill Faul and Tom Fletcher were the club's first-year players in 1963. Faul may go to the minors this season. Fletcher was on the disabled list last season because of a circulatory ailment in his pitching arm and still comes under the first-year rule. The Tigers were able to get waiver clearance on him and sent him to Syracuse (International). However, he will have to go through the draft next winter before the club can reacquire him.

RED SOX — Outfielder Tony Conigliaro, first baseman Tony Horton and pitchers Dave Gray and Pete Charton are on the club's roster. All will be retained, with Horton probably going out as the designated optionee. Last year, the Red Sox had outfielder Gage Naudain in the minors and kept outfielder Jim Gosger with the major league club. Gosger has been sent to Seattle (Coast) this season and Naudain likely will be optioned, too, for more experience.

ATHLETICS — Catcher Dave Duncan will remain with the club and outfielder Tom Reynolds will be the designated optionee. The A's had two first-year kids, pitchers Pete Lovrich and Ron Tompkins, in 1963. Lovrich, who spent the season with the A's, is headed for the Army this year and Tompkins will return to the minors.

ANGELS — The exception voted for the expansion clubs removed all of the Angels' problems with first-year players. None will remain with the club. Ed Kirkpatrick, who was carried as a utility player last year, will stick again this season. The Angels' only other first-year man in 1963, pitcher Bobby Darwin, was claimed by the Orioles last May.

SENATORS — Manager Gil Hodges will have no first-year players on his roster, four of them having been sent out under the special provision for the expansion clubs. First baseman-outfielder Tom Brown, the only first-year player last season, spent the campaign in the minors and may be optioned out again.