

Howard Picks Home Over Homers; Buzz Alone by Telephone

By BOB HUNTER

VERO BEACH, Fla.

The big talk in Dodgertown is about the big man—the big man who isn't even here.

His name is Frank Howard and he's sitting at his home in Green Bay, Wis., where he has informed the club he intends to spend this summer, next summer and all the summers to come.

Somehow, there seems to be a feeling that Howard's formal notice to the Dodgers that he's quitting baseball is subject to change and Bavasi is doing his best, via long-distance phone, to bring this about as quickly as possible.

It all started just after the World Series when Howard visited Bavasi's office and told him he wanted to play regularly. At the winter meetings in San Diego, Buzzie and Manager Smokey Alston told the press that, starting with the 1964 season, big Frank was to be the regular right fielder. Period.

Howard spent seven weeks during the winter in a Dodger night-club act in Las Vegas and Sparks, Nev., along with Ron Perranoski, Don Drysdale, Bill Skowron and the remainder of the Dodgers' outfield—Tommy and Willie Davis.

Big Frank, who led the team with 27 homers, was third with 64 runs batted in and hit .273 in 123 games, then wrote a letter asking permission to report late to Vero Beach.

There was indication that Howard's wife, Carol, wanted him to give up the game, after his long summer and winter employment on the road, and settle down in her home town of Green Bay.

Two-Week Moratorium

Howard wrote that he was certain he could work out his "personal problems" if given a two-week moratorium, which was granted.

Then, on March 12, Bavasi received another letter from Howard at Vero Beach, a handwritten message that read, in part:

"I don't know quite where to begin, but this is not a spur-of-the-moment decision. I have been thinking about it since last fall and have decided to quit baseball.

"Physically and mentally, I do not feel like playing. I would be no good to the team or to myself. It is with deep regret I am quitting baseball, but I have made up my mind.

"I have denied all queries here and will leave it to you to handle with the press as you see fit. You've always been fair with me, both salary and in relations with the press. For this I thank you very much.

"I am sorry I waited so long to make known my decision, but I wanted to be sure in my own mind."

Another portion of Howard's letter read:

"I know I will not make as much money out of baseball, but then money is not the cure for all evils."

Reiser Talked to Howard

Oddly, on the night before Bavasi received this letter, which was some 24 hours after Howard had written it, Pete Reiser had talked with Frank at length via phone from Vero Beach.

Reiser managed the boy giant in his first season at Green Bay and is considered Howard's closest friend and confidant.

"I couldn't get through to him," said Reiser. "I pointed out that he should never use the word 'quit,' even if he did intend to give up the game permanently. What would he tell his boys when they decided to quit college some day, I asked him."

Reiser stated that Howard made no mention of the letter he wrote 24 hours earlier to Bavasi.

Almost as soon as the Dodger executive vice-president and general manager made known the contents of Howard's letter, Frank was quoted by Green Bay newsmen as saying he was "surprised."

Then he was further quoted: "I'm very disappointed my letter leaked to the press. It was my intention to go to Vero Beach and talk



Frank Howard

with Bavasi to get some guidance and advice.

"Now, I don't know what I'm going to do. I may just quit and not even see Bavasi.

"I really want to play. That's the sad part of it. I love to play baseball. The Dodgers have been very fair to me."

John McHale of Milwaukee was the first "outsider" to jump into the weird diamond drama, telling the news services he "definitely is interested in Howard," and he placed a call immediately to Bavasi at the Vero Beach camp.

The Dodger executive was unavailable, then he later talked with McHale, who apologized for the story, which could have been construed as tampering.

Buzzie Would Be Interested

"It didn't upset me," said Bavasi. "If someone asked me if I'd be interested in Hank Aaron, I'd have to say 'yes' or be lying.

"However, I won't trade Howard because it would be impossible and I'll tell you why. I'd want more than he's worth."

There had been a feeling that Frank would report to either Milwaukee or Chicago, so he could spend more time in Green Bay with Carol and their four children.

Howard was signed out of Ohio State University, where he was a prominent basketball player, for a bonus reported at \$108,000, a Dodger record. Last season, he received about \$25,000 in salary and would have been offered a contract of about \$30,000 this season.

Salary never did enter into the most unique story of the spring.

"Right now, I'd say we would open the season without Frank," was Bavasi's last quote before press time.

Walter Alston seemed unconcerned, mentioning half a dozen candidates for the right field spot, and adding, "We'll play ball and we'll have nine men on the field and 16 more on the bench."

Line Drives: Maury Wills reported while the team was in Mexico City. . . . He was delayed because of the

Vikings to Build New Stands For Football-Baseball Moves

By DICK GORDON

TWIN CITIES, Minn.

The original Vikings, Norse variety, took to the sea for their famous conquests which made inroads on civilization more than a thousand years ago.

The modern Vikings, Minnesota football variety and vintage 1964, will go "underground" in an attempt to conquer attendance problems and make new inroads on grid fan interest in the Upper Midwest.

The Vikings' recently-announced seating plan has baseball overtones, too, since it will increase Metropolitan Stadium capacity during the American League season by some 5,400 seats—that is, up to 44,915 by the 1965 completion date. Football capacity, on the other hand, will be upped only some 1,300 to 42,500.

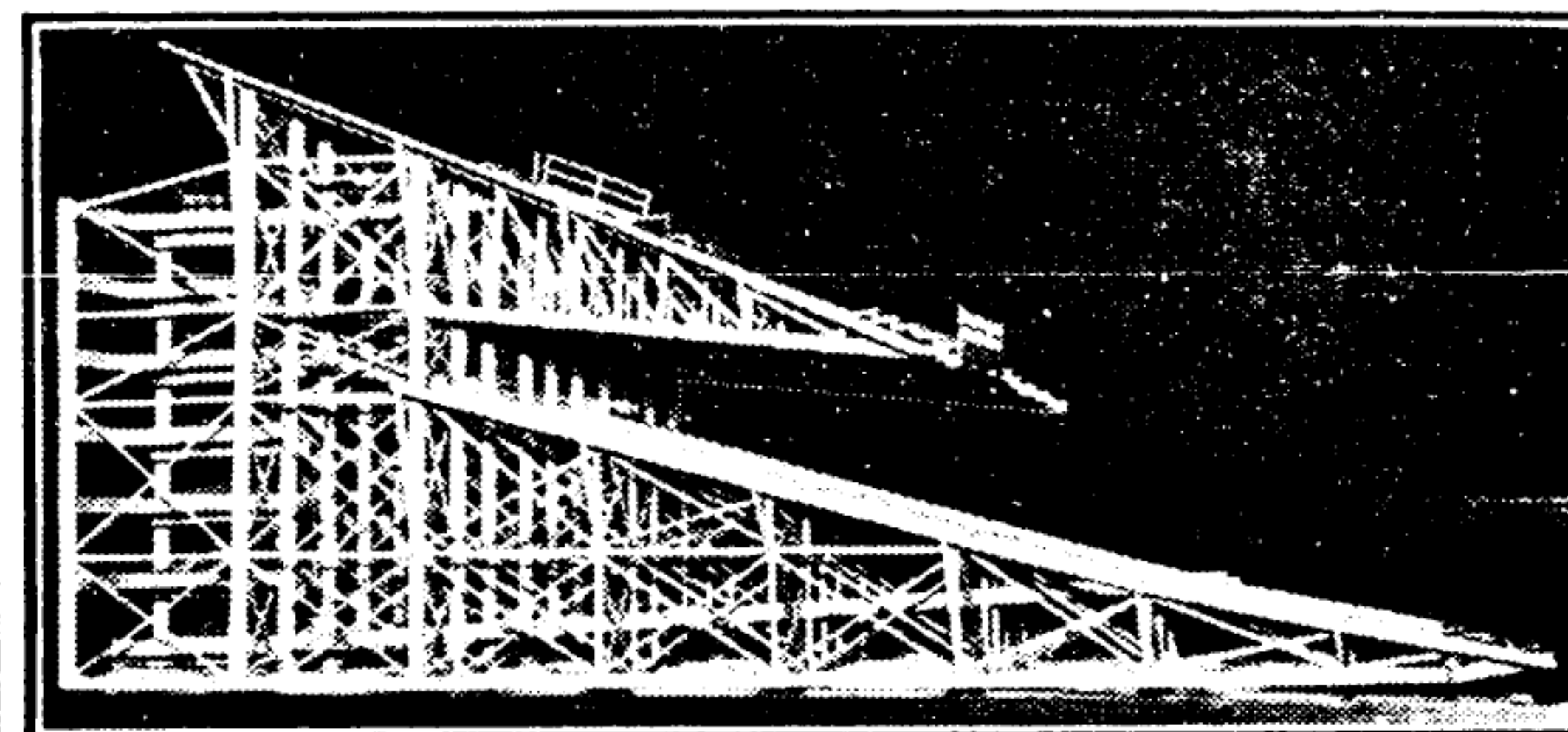
Yet the Vikings, with the youngest franchise in the National Football League, are underwriting the entire cost of \$1,300,000 in belief that the improved autumn seating on the east sidelines, where Harmon Killebrew, Jimmie Hall, etc., hold forth in the summer, will make it a highly sound investment.

Seats Move on Rails

That, indirectly, is why the underground idea will play such an important role. The new portable seats will be moved on below-surface rails, permitting a switch from baseball to football (and vice versa) in an estimated 24 hours, as is done in Washington's D. C. Stadium for one.

Such a quick transformation will correct one of the big disadvantages of the present setup which forced Viking fans, including season-ticket holders, to watch their favorites from undesirable "baseball" locations during exhibition and early NFL games—that is, until baseball had completely bowed out.

Owing at least partially to such in-



THE MINNESOTA TWINS will be able to cram 5,400 more spectators into Metropolitan Stadium in 1965 as a result of the installation of new, movable seats by the football Vikings. This is a plywood model, drawn to scale, of the seats which will be constructed following the 1964 National Football League season.

conveniences, Viking season ticket sales dropped off from 26,000 in 1961 to 20,000 last fall.

The new arrangement, which had its first target date for the 1964 football season and was then postponed for fear of damage to the Twins' diamond under a crash construction program, has been widely acclaimed.

The bigwigs concerned are Bert Rose, general manager of the Vikings; Billy Robertson, the Twins' stadium operation boss, and Gerald Moore, chairman of the Metropolitan Stadium Commission, which had to give final approval to the project.

"Nowhere in the National Football League will there be a higher percentage of sideline seats located as close to the playing field with the possible exception of Green Bay," said Rose.

"These stands will make Metropolitan Stadium second to none."

The new all-steel stands will have approximately 7,000 seats on the lower decks, 5,000 on the upper deck

and will be enclosed similar to those on the west side of the stadium where the regular baseball stands are used, as is, for both the football and baseball seasons.

Total Weight 1,600 Tons

They will be goal-line to goal-line in length, 83 feet high with a weight of 1,600 tons. They will be moved from football to baseball position at the rate of three feet per minute on wheels powered by electric motors and mounted on ten underground tracks.

The cost, financed by the Vikings, will be regained in part through the Stadium Commission's paying the football club the annual amount of money (about \$54,000) currently spent on dismantling the present bleachers twice a year (before and after the baseball season).

Construction will begin after the final 1964 home football game and the new seats will definitely be ready for Viking use for their 1965 campaign and perhaps in time for the Twins' 1965 summer enjoyment.

TWINS

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Smokey Sees N. Y. Writer, Fire Lights Up in His Eyes

VERO BEACH, Fla.—Manager Walt (Smokey) Alston of the Dodgers is long on talent as well as memory.

Last season, Maury Allen of the New York Post wrote an article about Alston that hardly went down in Smokey's book as Story of the Year.

The two didn't see each other again until March 17. Alston took one look at Allen, a bell started to ring and he denounced the writer's piece as the "worst article ever written about me."

Alston and Allen then went into the clubhouse and the elocution contest continued. Alston invited Allen to punch him and Allen nobly declined.

"Me punch Alston?" Allen inquired. "I'm no hero."

death of his father, a preacher, in Washington, D. C. . . . The speedy shortstop said he could have stolen twice his 40 bases last year had he not been injured in the season's opener. . . . His 1964 goal: To play in 162 games. . . . John Roseboro jammed a knee, but X-rays were negative. . . . Al Ferrara was ready to make a bid for the right field job after missing work until after the Mexico City trip because of a jammed thumb. . . . Nate Oliver spent a week in the Vero Beach Hospital and then the Dodgertown infirmary with a groin injury and a reaction from the vaccination he didn't need—because he was scratched from the trip south of the border. . . . Johnny Werhas has made an impression at first base and is hitting the ball well, along with Tommy Davis, Wally Moon and Ron Fairly, usually a dismal spring hitter. . . . Bavasi intends to point out to Frank Howard that he will be sacrificing four years towards his pension if he sticks with his decision to quit.

field grounders on it. My biggest problem last year was fielding ground balls."

Jack McKeon, Dallas manager last year and an extra coach in the Twins' training camp, said Oliva had trouble fielding only when he was in a batting slump early in the year.

"Once he started going good with the bat, he had no more troubles of any kind," said McKeon.

Oliva reported to the Twins' camp after only a 15-day vacation from baseball.

He batted .365 in the Puerto Rican League and then went to the Dominican Republic, where he hit about .350 in 20 games.

But Tony figures 15 days is enough time off for a player who cannot return to his native Cuba. He has had two three-month vacations in St. Petersburg, Fla., since coming to the United States in 1961. But he says that's too long.

Castro Blocks Return Home

"When the season ends and the other players go home, I want to go home, too," said Oliva. "But I can't go home because of Castro. I call home and tell my mother I will come home if I am needed, but she tells me to stay here where I have an opportunity in baseball."

So Tony has stayed and he has played almost constantly. Four suitcases and a record player make up his belongings and he takes them with him wherever he goes.

"For the first time," said Oliva, "I think I am ready."

Twins' Tracks: Jimmie Hall, American League rookie of the year last season, whacked a triple to right and 420-foot homer to dead center with two runners on base during the Twins' first exhibition victory. . . . The Twins played their first two exhibitions the way they played all last season—losing by one run in

Killebrew Scratched, Allison Takes Over at Initial Sack

ORLANDO, Fla.—Harmon Killebrew has been scratched from the Twins' first base derby, but Bob Allison started two intra-squad games at that position and then played the entire second exhibition there.

During the intra-squad games, Allison handled 15 chances cleanly. He continued his errorless streak in the 9-6 victory over Detroit, making ten putouts and two assists.

In addition, Allison singled to right field and doubled down the right field line with the bases loaded against Detroit. Both hits were large factors in the Twins' scoring. The double scored two runners in a bases-loaded situation and tied the score at 5-5.

"Allison looks good enough at first base so far," said Manager Sam Mele. "He hasn't made a bad play yet and he stretched out real well to take a long, low throw from third base on a close play."

the ninth inning of the opener and then exploding for six runs in the seventh inning to erase a 5-0 Detroit lead in the second game. . . . Rookie Dave Boswell and veteran Jim Kaat both pitched three innings of scoreless ball in the first game. Bill Pleis duplicated this feat the next day and Jim Perry allowed only one run. . . . Lee Stange gave the Tigers five runs in the third inning. . . . Manager Sam Mele said Pleis "is throwing harder than I have ever seen him throw." . . . Harmon Killebrew and Earl Battey both sat out the first week-end of exhibition action. Mele said he wanted to give both time to strengthen their knees, which were operated on last winter. Neither had any trouble with his knee during the first two weeks of spring training.