

Cubs Shaken by Catcher Hundley's New Knee Injury

By JEROME HOLTZMAN



Randy Hundley

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — It's his other knee—the good one. That's all that can be said at this time about Cub catcher Randy Hundley's latest injury, which could be serious. It occurred when he took a bad tumble near third base during a rundown play.

Hundley was chasing the runner, Roger Repoz of the Angels, to third base.

They were about 12 feet from the bag, too close for Hundley to make another throw. Then Hundley made a lunging tag.

At the instant of contact, everything seemed to be normal. But then, in the next step or two, Hundley's right knee gave out. He tumbled into the dirt and lay sprawled in front of the bag and immediately shouted, "Time out!"

Then, seconds later, Hundley yelled again. This time it was a cry of anguish: "Oh, my knee! It's my knee!"

This was on March 12, in an exhibition here against the Angels, and there still is no precise word on the extent of Hundley's injury. His right leg, from mid-thigh to just above the ankle, was placed in a plaster splint

and he has had to walk with crutches.

"I'm just thankful it was the right knee, not the left," said Cub Manager Leo Durocher.

Dr. Jake Suker, the Cubs' team physician, said there was no evidence of torn ligaments. However, Dr. Suker admitted that a lateral cartilage popped out of the knee, but assumed it had worked its way back into the proper place.

Two Mishaps in 1970

"Right now I'd describe the injury as a severe sprain," said Dr. Suker. "But we'll have to wait and see."

Hundley, until recently a veritable iron-man catcher, had two bad injuries last season. He suffered a bone chip of his left hand during spring training, which forced him to miss the first six games of the Cubs' regular National League schedule.

He returned in mid-April, played in six games, and then had his left knee ripped up in an April 21 collision at the plate with Carl Taylor. A badly torn cartilage was the result and, when the knee failed to respond to treatment, surgery was required.

It was July 10 before Hundley was taken off the disabled list and almost the middle of August before he was back in the groove. In all, it was virtually a lost season. He had only 250 official times at bat, seven homers, 36 runs batted in and a .244 average.

It is a matter of record that when Hundley was in the lineup, the Wrighleys had a .612 winning percentage. There are many experts who contend that Hundley is the most valuable Cub and that if he had been healthy all last season, the Bruins, and not the Pirates, would have won in the National League East.

If Hundley's latest injury is not serious, it shouldn't have any effect on the Cubs' chances. But if it is a repeat of last year, it could prove a heavy blow. Only time will tell.

The most disturbing aspect, however, is that, even if it is just a sprain, this indicates a weakness in Hundley's right knee, which is supposed to be the good one. What has caused this weakness? Did he favor the right knee while the left knee was injured? Is the cartilage likely to pop out again?

It is a tribute to Hundley and to

the Cubs' stress of fundamentals, that the injury might not have occurred if he hadn't been alert and remembered what the Cubs had been practicing—that in such a rundown it's important to prevent the batter-runner from taking an extra base.

The injury occurred with one out in the seventh inning, Cubs trailing, 4-3, Repoz at third and Ray Oyler the batter. Phil Regan was the pitcher and threw a soft one. Oyler hit it back to the mound, a routine one-bouncer.

A Lump and a Fall

Repoz had started toward the plate and was halfway down. Regan then ran toward the base line, faking throws and keeping Repoz in check. Suddenly, Repoz dashed for the plate. Regan threw to Hundley, with Repoz still sandwiched in between them.

Hundley then chased Repoz almost all the way back to the bag. At the last instant, to make the tag, Hundley lunged. Hundley put the ball on Repoz, then turned for the look and throw to second base — to prevent Oyler from taking an extra base. That's when Randy went down.

During Hundley's absence, Manager Leo Durocher will take a good look at two of his young catchers, Ken Rudolph and Danny Breeden. He'll also catch the veteran J. C. Martin, acquired from the Mets last spring when Hundley was injured.

Bruin Briefs: It's beginning to appear that rookie pitcher Jim Dunegan is going to need more work on his knuckleball. Dunegan was ineffective in his first two Cactus appearances—mostly because his knuckler wasn't knuckling. . . . Though Dunegan was an early disappointment, Bill Bonham, another rookie righthander, was looking good—almost too good to be true. Bonham, who was signed out of UCLA last June, appears to have good speed, better than average control and an excellent slider, which he learned from a magazine article about Ryne Duren. . . . Jim Hickman has had a bruise on the bottom of his foot and hasn't been playing too much. . . . Don Kessinger, the All-Star shortstop, missed more than a week because of a bone chip on the middle finger of his right hand. . . . Ernie Banks made his first start on March 10 and hit safely in his first two times at bat. . . . Pitcher Milt Pappas is already throwing at full speed and has had wonderful stuff, but still needs some work on his control.

Sain Could Map White Sox Route Back to the Top

By EDGAR MUNZEL

SARASOTA, Fla. — The most important man in the rebuilding program of the White Sox this year? That would have to be veteran pitching coach Johnny Sain. And this is not downgrading Manager Chuck Tanner in the slightest.

Tanner still carries the authority and the responsibility for overall leadership. However, at this particular point in the drive to get the White Sox turned around and headed back toward contendership, the key to success is Sain.

He holds the key because it is the pitching department that will determine how far the comeback of the White Sox will go in 1971. Pitching, indeed, is always important, but seldom does it take on as decisive a role as in this case.

It's so critical because there are so many young pitchers involved. And that's where Sain comes in. The only solid veterans on the staff are Tommy John, Joe Horlen and Wilbur Wood.

If he can correct the flaws of the youngsters, sharpen their skills and con them enough to build up their confidence to major league levels, then the White Sox will create a lot of trouble in the American League's West Division.

Four-Man Starting Crew

All winter long, Tanner asserted that he was planning on a "Big Four" starting staff of John, Horlen, Bart Johnson and Tom Bradley with Wood as the captain of his bullpen, barring any emergency that might force him into a starting role.

In other words, there were five positions open on the 10-man staff. At the halfway mark in spring training, those five spots still are wide open.

And this isn't because there's a lack of talent in camp. Quite the contrary. The five jobs are still up for grabs because there are so many good, strong arms on the squad that it's a wild free-for-all.

In the first nine exhibition games played by the White Sox, Sain unveiled no fewer than 23 different pitchers, including 18 on the regular roster and five farmhands invited to camp. A 24th pitcher, Jim Geddes, worked in the All-Star lineup against the Royals.

In the first five games, this assortment of flingers had a staff earned-run average that was almost down to an irreducible minimum. The figure was 0.60 on a yield of only three

earned runs out of a total of eight.

It was still good through the next three contests, though not as sensational. The roof really didn't cave in until the White Sox encountered a 25-m.p.h. wind blowing at Pompano Beach and finally subdued the Senators, 14-12, in 12 innings.

Other Hill Hopes

Aside from the starting foursome and Wood, those who got a whirl on the mound were Denny Deck, Don Eddy, Ken Frailing, Steve Hamilton, Pat Jacquez, Dave Lemonds, Jim Magnuson, Alfredo Mariscal, Rich Mooney, Don O'Riley, Denny O'Toole, Stan Perzanowski and Johnny Purdin from the regular roster.

Then there also were unrostered

pitchers Mike Baldwin, Floyd Weaver, Rich Hinton, Hal McClain and Terry Forster.

"Right now, I couldn't honestly say who is going to stay," said Sain. "I'm just going to let them eliminate themselves."

"I'm getting them all in there as much as I can. But that's the sad part of a spring camp. There just aren't enough innings for them all to get as much of a chance as you would like them to have."

"But I know one thing. This camp has as many good arms as I've ever seen in one camp in my life. And that includes some pretty good clubs like the Yankees, Twins and Tigers, all of whom have won pennants while I was with them as a coach."

Pale Hose Opener Set Forth to Good Friday

By EDGAR MUNZEL

SARASOTA, Fla. — With the start of the 1971 campaign still weeks away, the White Sox already suffered their first setback when American League President Joe Cronin ordered a change in the date of their home opener.

The game with Minnesota, originally scheduled Thursday April 8, was moved forward to the next day, which is Good Friday, because of a double-header the White Sox are playing in Oakland Wednesday, April 7.

In a telegram to Vice-President Stu Holcomb of the White Sox, Cronin explained that the game of April 8 "may involve a violation of the basic agreement with the Players Association as interpreted to mean both clubs must have an open date following a double-header where a one-day stand is involved."

The 1971 schedule was drawn up at the time of the All-Star Game and submitted to Marvin Miller, executive director of the Players Association, August 15. It was approved by the Association at the World Series.

However, when the White Sox players began realizing they wouldn't return from Oakland until 2 a.m. and wouldn't be in bed before 3:30 a.m. for the Chicago opener at 1:15 p.m., player representative Joe Horlen submitted the matter to the Players Association meeting in Miami recently.

Finley Absolved of Blame

Offhand, it would appear that Owner Charles Finley of the A's is the villain for scheduling the twin bill opener. However, Holcomb completely absolved Finley.

"Finley really was the good guy in this thing," said Stu. "The A's open on the road in Washington April 5 and have an open date next day. Then, in the original schedule, the A's had single games with us in Oakland April 7 and 8."

"However, that meant we'd be opening on Good Friday, which we preferred not to do. Therefore, Finley said he'd play two on Wednesday in order to give us the Thursday (April 8) opening."

"The players want to commend the ball club for its action," said Horlen. "It shows a welcome change in direction by the White Sox officials from the sort of relations there were with the players last year."

"All but one or two of these fellows have major league stuff. Not all of them are ready and not all of them will make it, because there are other circumstances that eventually enter into the making of a big league pitcher—heart and mind."

"There are a lot of them that are real young and inexperienced, like 18-year-old McClain and 19-year-old Forster."

"But age won't be a factor when we make the final decision. The only thing that will determine the final selections is which of them are doing the best job."

Teen-Age Whiz

"After all, the Reds wouldn't have won the pennant last season if it hadn't been for a 19-year-old kid named Don Gullett."

Whoever does make it on the White Sox staff will learn very early that Sain doesn't believe in babying pitchers. He wants his starters working every fourth day.


"Three days' rest is enough," said Sain. "And if his arm is sound, he can work with only two days' rest occasionally, should the situation demand it."

As a matter of fact, when the White Sox officials learned that Johnson had worked four times in the last eight days in the Venezuelan Winter League as his club attempted to make the playoffs, Sain was the only one who wasn't disturbed.

"I once pitched nine complete games in 29 days in the pennant stretch drive of the Braves in 1948," said Sain. "And it didn't hurt me."


Sox Yarns: Rick Reichardt suffered a pulled groin muscle and was out of action for several days. . . . Mike Andrews developed a sore shoulder evidently in trying to hurry his conditioning after reporting late. However, he didn't regard it as serious. He was 4-for-6 in the second game he started. . . . Rollie Hemond, personnel director, was scheduled to make the Venezuelan two-day trip with the White Sox and will lay the groundwork for sending players there next winter to speed up their development. . . . Coach Luke Appling stayed behind to handle the group of players remaining at Sarasota. . . . Rich McKinney, Bill Melton and Carlos May were the hitting leaders of the early games. Melton has been plagued by a bad back and plays with it heavily wrapped.

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