

Red Sox' Lynn First Rookie to Land MVP Prize

By JACK LANG

NEW YORK—What worlds are left for Fred Lynn to conquer?

Considering all that happened to Lynn in 1975, his rookie season has to rate right up there on a par with Babe Ruth hitting 60 home runs, Roger Maris hitting 61, Ted Williams batting .400, Nolan Ryan or Sandy Koufax pitching a pair of no-hitters.

The frosting on the cake for the 23-year-old Red Sox rookie came November 26. The Baseball Writers Association of America, in an announcement by President Dick Dozer of the Chicago Tribune, named Lynn the first rookie ever to win the Most Valuable Player Award.

In capturing the American League honors for 1975, Lynn not only became the first freshman in

either league to gain that distinction, he also won by the greatest margin ever accorded an MVP.

CINCINNATI'S Joe Morgan, earlier established a record when he won out by 163 points over Greg Luzinski in this year's National League MVP voting. One week later, Lynn came along and captured the honors by 169 points, over runner-up John Mayberry, Kansas City's big slugger.

The honors Lynn piled up this year amount to a small mountain. The BBWAA earlier had named him Rookie of the Year and THE SPORTING NEWS selected Lynn as both No. 1 rookie and Player of the Year. In addition, he was named to THE SPORTING NEWS Gold Glove team as the league's finest defensive center fielder.

Only one other rookie ever came close to winning the MVP. He, too, was a center fielder, who burst on the major league scene in 1941 and led the Brooklyn Dodgers to their first National League pennant in 21 years. His name: Pistol Pete Reiser.

In the MVP voting that year, Dolph Camilli, the slugging Dodger first baseman, was the winner, with Reiser the runner-up. No other rookie ever finished that high until Lynn came along and won it all this year.

For his brilliant .331 season that

was second in the batting race to Rod Carew's .359, Lynn gained 22 of the 24 first-place votes from the select BBWAA committee charged with naming the MVP. He was named second on the remaining two ballots and thus became the only player of the 31 named to be placed on all 24 ballots.

THIS GAVE Lynn a total of 326 points to 157 for Mayberry, who was on 22 of the 24 ballots, including eight second-place mentions.

The remaining two first-place votes went to Oakland relief ace Rollie Fingers, who came in fourth behind Lynn, Mayberry and Lynn's rookie running mate at Boston, Jim Rice.

Lynn led the league in runs scored (103) and doubles (47) and was third in runs batted in (105). He is the first Red Sox player to win the MVP since Carl Yastrzemski walked off with the honors in 1967, which coincidentally was also the last time the Sox won the pennant.

Yaz, the old pro of the Sox, drew

one 10th place vote this year and finished in a 30th place tie with New York's Bobby Bonds.

Lynn's victory continued the domination of outfielders in the American League MVP voting. The award has gone to flychasers the last three years. Reggie Jackson won in 1973 and Jeff Burroughs in 1974. Jackson, the league's home-run leader, finished fifth this year but Burroughs did not draw a single mention.

FINGERS AND Cy Young Award winner Jim Palmer of Baltimore were the only pitchers to finish in the top 10. Palmer wound up in sixth place, with Thurman Munson of New York, George Scott of Milwaukee, Rod Carew of Minnesota and Ken Singleton of Baltimore rounding out the top 10.

In all, 31 players received votes. Every team had at least one representative among the 31 except Detroit and California. Boston and Oakland, the two division champs, claimed four of the first five places.

Results in Landslide by Lynn

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Pts.
Fred Lynn	22	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	326
John Mayberry	—	8	4	4	3	—	—	2	—	1	157
Jim Rice	—	4	6	4	3	1	4	1	—	—	154
Rollie Fingers	2	4	4	2	—	1	2	2	—	—	129
Reggie Jackson	—	2	3	3	2	5	2	2	2	—	118
Jim Palmer	—	2	—	1	5	3	2	1	—	1	82
Thurman Munson	—	—	3	1	1	3	1	2	3	1	69
George Scott	—	1	1	1	1	1	5	4	2 1/2	—	64 1/2
Rod Carew	—	—	—	2	2	1	1	3	2	6 1/2	54 1/2
Ken Singleton	—	1	1	1	1	1	2	—	—	1	44
George Brett	—	—	1	—	1	3	1	1	1 1/2	—	37 1/2
Jim Hunter	—	—	1	1	—	1	—	2	2	1	31
Rick Burleson	—	—	—	—	1	2	1	1	2	1	28
Claudell Wash'ton	—	—	—	2	1	—	—	—	1	—	22
Toby Harrah	—	—	—	—	—	1	2	—	1	1	16
Mike Torrez	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	12
Rich Gossage	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	2	1	11
Paul Lindblad	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	7
Gene Tenace	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	1	7
Boog Powell	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	1 1/2	6 1/2
Don Baylor	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	6
Bert Campaneris	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	6
Bill Lee	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	5
Jim Todd	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	5
Denny Doyle	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	5
Rick Wise	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	4
Joe Rudi	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	3
Jim Kaat	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	2
Lee May	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	2
Bobby Bonds	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
Carl Yastrzemski	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1

Each City Is Represented In Balloting for the MVP

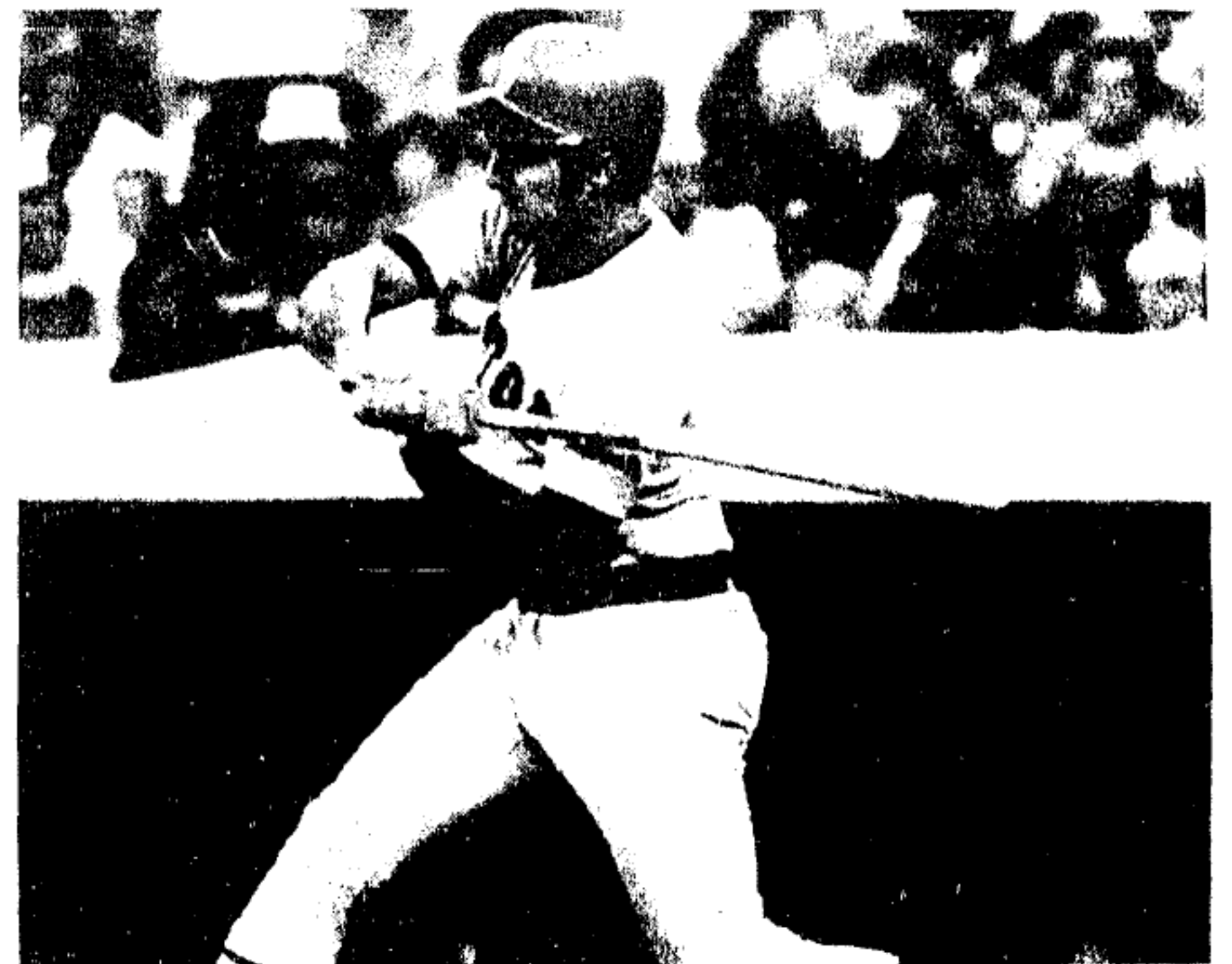
NEW YORK—Committees for the selection of the Most Valuable Players are named by the president of the Baseball Writers Association of America. He selects two writers from each league city to participate. The committees responsible for the voting this year included the following baseball writers:

AMERICAN LEAGUE

Jim Henneman and Ken Nigro, Baltimore; Peter Gammons and George Bankert, Boston; Dick Miller and Don Merry, California; Jerome Holtzman and Bob Verdi, Chicago; Russ Schneider and Bob Sudyk, Cleveland; Jim Hawkins and Dan Ewald, Detroit; Sid Bordman and Steve Cameron, Kansas City; Lou Chapman and Mike Conring, Milwaukee; Pat Reusse and Bob Fowler, Minnesota; Murray Chass and Phil Pepe, New York; Ron Bergman and Glenn Schwarz, Oakland; Randy Galloway and Mike Shropshire, Texas.

NATIONAL LEAGUE

Wayne Minshew and Frank Hyland, Atlanta; Dick Dozer and Joe Goddard, Chicago; Bob Hertz and Earl Lawson, Cincinnati; Harry Shattuck and John Hollis, Houston; Gordon Verrell and Bob Hunter, Los Angeles; Red Foley and Jack Lang, New York; Allen Lewis and Ray Kelly, Philadelphia; Bob Smizik and Luke Quay, Pittsburgh; Jack Herman and Neal Russo, St. Louis; Phil Collier and Bill Weurding, San Diego; Pat Frizzell and Bucky Walter, San Francisco.



Fred Lynn . . . A Clean Sweep

Astros Eye Slugger Johnson as No. 1 Catcher

By HARRY SHATTUCK

HOUSTON—Cliff Johnson was standing behind the batting cage one evening during the final week of the 1975 season.

The muscular Houston first baseman-catcher had played almost every day for six weeks, his first lengthy stretch of starting duty in four big league seasons. He was asked if this opportunity had altered an oft-expressed wish that the Astros trade him unless they planned to play him full time.

"I feel even more strongly now than ever before about wanting to play or go somewhere else," Johnson said. "I think I've proven I can hit and be an asset in the lineup every day. If this club will play me, I want to stay here. I'm not going to sit on the bench again."

"THEY DIDN'T put me in the lineup until the season was over for us, until we were 30 games out of first place. Don't you think I could have helped us win some games earlier?"

The problem with Johnson is that he should be a first baseman. And Bob Watson, Houston's best hitter (.324 this season), holds that position and performed well there in 1975.

So that leaves catching, and when Bill Virton replaced Preston Gomez August 19 as Houston manager, Virton determined he needed to find out if Johnson has the ability to catch daily in the major leagues. More often than not, Johnson was behind the plate under Virton.

The jury still is out.

"HE IS A major league hitter," Virton says, "and when we go to spring training, Cliff will be the No. 1 catcher. One of my main jobs will be to convince Cliff that he should want to catch. He isn't an avid fan of catching and hasn't applied himself to becoming a good catcher as well as he should. But he has good hands, agility and a good arm."

"Now I'm saying that is the way we are going to start (in the spring)," Virton says. "It is possible we will have to change, but I hope not."

Johnson is playing winter ball in the Dominican Republic in hopes of improving his catching. Houston General Manager Tal Smith recently watched him perform for almost a week.

"He was hitting the ball well

down there," Smith said. "But it's hard to tell about his catching because his knee (injured slightly near the end of the season) is bothering him defensively."

JOHNSON SAYS he thinks he could be more valuable as a first baseman because "I could concen-



Cliff Johnson

trate more on my hitting. But I like catching, I've always liked catching. My arm is good. And most of our pitchers like to work with me."

Larry Dierker, Houston's biggest winner (14-16), complimented Johnson during the recent season. "Cliff calls a good game because he is such a good hitter that he thinks like a hitter when he is catching," Dierker said.

Indeed, nobody questions Johnson's hitting prowess. His 20 home runs led the Astros even though he started only about half the games. If he can make the grade as a regular catcher, where does that leave Milt May, Houston's No. 1 catcher for two seasons but a disappointment offensively and defensively in 1975?

"HE'S A MAJOR league catcher," Virton said of May, whom he managed previously at Pittsburgh. "He has not progressed as far as I had expected from the time I had him at Pittsburgh. We will have to wait and see how things turn out."

Also not to be forgotten is Skip Jutze. The scrappy Jutze is much like Johnson in that for three Astro

seasons he has never been provided an honest opportunity to prove his worth. He batted .300-plus in Class AAA and when he gets into the Houston lineup for more than a day or two, he hits for average. But those "more than a day or two" chances are rarities.

Jutze's defense is exceptional. "The pitchers love to throw to him because he is always in the game, always keeping them on their toes," ex-manager Gomez said. "One thing you can be certain about Skip is that he will give you everything he's got."

Astronotes: Manager Virton says he believes his team has the ability to win half its games without making any personnel changes. Houston was 64-97 last year. . . . The Astros lost 42 one-run verdicts in 1975 and Virton says that is an indication a team does not make the key late-inning defensive play or get the one big hit when needed. . . . General Manager Smith says the club is reviewing and assessing the broadcast situation but no decision has been made.