

May Has Last Laugh in 'Frisco

By NICK PETERS

SAN FRANCISCO—Milt May, an object of scorn for his erratic throwing at the start of the season, is enjoying the last laugh. He's perhaps the most successful free agent of 1980.

When the Giants signed the veteran catcher (along with Rennie Stennett and Jim Wohlford) last December, they knew they were taking a gamble.

After all, the injury-riddled May had only sporadic success in four American League seasons and was coming off a 1979 campaign in which he was limited to 71 games with Detroit and the Chicago White Sox and a .266 average because of a shoulder injury.

Manager Dave Bristol and General Manager Spec Richardson realized May's arm wasn't among the best in the majors, but they wanted the 29-year-old backstop to provide leadership and hitting.

The Giants' brass was correct on all counts. May's throws were weak in the early games, as evidenced by 25 steals in the first 26 attempts against him. May had suffered a broken left collarbone last year.

But there was nothing the matter with May's handling of pitchers and, above all, his hitting. By late June, former regular catcher Marc Hill had been sold to Seattle and May firmly was established as the No. 1 catcher, given an occasional breather by scrappy Mike Sadek.

The latter, however, was placed on the disabled list with

a knee injury in mid-July and May was playing every day on a swing through Pittsburgh and St. Louis.

In a weekend series against the Cardinals July 18-20, May's bat matched the scorching heat. In the three games, he was 6-for-11, with four doubles and a grand-slam homer.

The streak enabled May to soar past Jack Clark for the team batting lead with a .295 average. Since June 2, he was batting .360.

May's grand slam came in the top of the ninth, erasing a 7-4 St. Louis lead and giving the Giants an 8-7 victory. It was his third career slam and gave him six game-winning RBIs this season.

"I was hitting around .290 when I was in the National League with Houston, so I know I can hit," said May. He batted .289 with the 1974 Astros and .241 with them in '75 before switching leagues.

"I wasn't getting discouraged early in the season because I knew there was a long way to go. I'd felt in the spring that we had a pretty good club, but we're just now starting to play like we're capable."

May was testy when asked about his early throwing problems.

"I didn't understand the criticism at the time, but it didn't bother me," he said. "I think you guys (reporters) overestimate the effect of what you write on me. I don't read what you guys write, so it doesn't bother me."

But the important thing isn't how May relates to sportswriters. The weak-armed catcher is deftly handling the

club's young pitchers and has their respect. Moreover, he is supplying much-needed punch for a team sorely lacking in the ability to hit with power.

"He's done a great job for us," said Bristol. "We didn't get much hitting out of our catchers in the past, but Milt has been a big plus for us offensively."

"The last time I saw him, he was playing for Pittsburgh and Houston and he was dangerous. Playing regularly has improved his throwing and hitting and has enabled him to learn the league and the hitters again."

"We knew his arm was only average," Bristol admitted, "but we've tried to compensate by having the pitchers do a better job holding the runners at first. A lot of those stolen bases in April weren't his fault."

May has staged a turnaround in that department. After his ghastly 1-for-26 start, the catcher has thrown out 20 of 53 runners, making him 21-for-79 overall.

After all, nobody's perfect.

GI-antics: Bob Knepper's record on the road slipped to 1-10 at St. Louis July 20, but the lefthander pitched brilliantly before the Cardinals scored twice in the eighth for a 2-1 victory. It was 140-plus degrees on the Cardinals' synthetic turf that day and the Giants attempted to combat the heat by gulping salt pills and ammonia water, placing their feet in buckets of ice in the dugout and using ice-soaked cabbage leaves under their caps. "I tried it for one inning, but I felt silly," said second baseman Joe Strain. "Besides, when I took the cabbage out after the first inning, it looked ready to eat—like sauerkraut."

Larry Herndon's two-run homer in the 15th at Chicago gave the Giants a 2-0 victory July 22. It was Herndon's first game-winning RBI of the season. The game was suspended because of darkness July 21 and was continued at the start of the 13th inning before the regularly-scheduled game. . . . Mike Ivie ripped two doubles in the 15-inning contest for his most productive game since his return. One of the two-baggers was off Bruce Sutter, who limited the Giants to one hit in 1979. "It felt good," said Ivie. "I'm just a little overanxious at the plate."

Righthander John Montefusco was placed on the 21-day disabled list because of a torn rib cage muscle.

Armas Belts Win Hand in Oakland

By KIT STIER

OAKLAND—Many in the small Oakland Coliseum crowd of 6,506 stood and applauded. Tony Armas was slowly making his way to the plate.

Armas, 27, is becoming a local hero. The A's suddenly have a power hitter and fans want to see the Venezuelan unload a tape-measure job every time he strolls to the plate. Opposing pitchers are gaining respect for the A's young right fielder.

As the applause subsided, Armas stepped into the box. After watching a couple of pitches from Cleveland's Rick Waits, Armas grounded out to second base.

Armas's production that day consisted of a run-scoring single to center in a three-run eighth inning. Final score: Oakland 3, Cleveland 0.

Armas' name was hardly mentioned in the Sunday papers because Rickey Henderson and Dwayne Murphy had literally stolen the show. Just before Armas' single, Henderson stole home and Murphy swiped second. It was the A's seventh steal of home and 10th double steal of the season.

What the fans wanted from Armas was a repeat of his performance of the previous evening, July 18. What a show:

In the fourth inning, Armas belted a solo homer that was still on the rise when it cleared the fence in left center.

In the fifth, with one aboard, Armas drove another ball to nearly the same spot. The only difference in the 400-foot shots was in trajectory. The two-run blast went up and out. The solo affair simply went out.

The home runs gave Armas 21 for the season, and seven in his last eight games. He also had 66 runs batted in.

In three previous major league seasons, Armas hit 26 home runs. But then Antonio Rafael Armas was always injured. Outfield walls and other obstacles kept getting in Armas' way. In 1979 he played in only 80 games. Knee and shoulder injuries forced him to miss most of the season.

"I think this year's gotta be my year," said Armas during his hot streak. "This year I have been more careful."

Playing every day has made the difference to Armas. "I have a chance because I have some power and I play every day," he said.

Armas is using a lighter bat, the result of advice from Felipe Alou. Tony also stands farther back in the batter's box.

"Because of injuries, this is the first time he's really had a chance to show what he can do," said Manager Billy Martin. "He's been getting the big hits all season. He's an aggressive batter, always goes up there swinging. I think Tony has convinced everyone he's for real."

Armas does more than carry a big stick. He also has eight assists and frequently opposing runners have contained themselves because of Tony's right arm.

Against Detroit recently, Armas dropped a routine fly. The batter headed for second only to find the ball awaiting him.

Armas, who has 10 brothers and three sisters, is currently earning \$34,000 annually. It's a cinch Owner Charlie Finley will be signing bigger paychecks next year.

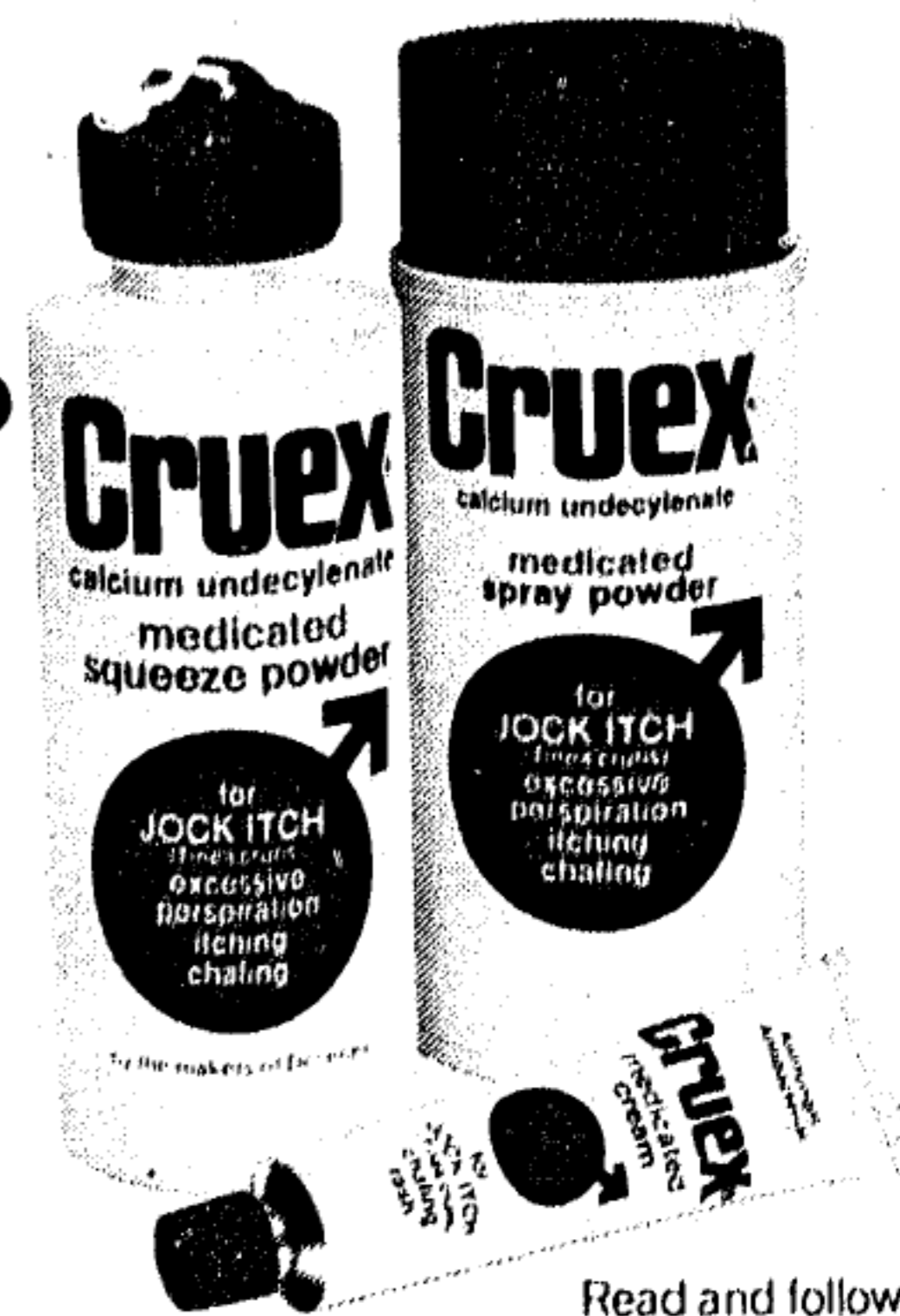
A's Acorns: When Rick Langford went 14 innings to beat Cleveland, 6-4, July 20, it marked his 12th consecutive complete game, a club record. Langford set the previous mark in 1979. . . . The A's have played five 14-inning games this

season and won four. Langford, Matt Keough and Mike Norris have gone the route for wins.

Martin may go to a four-man rotation after the A's complete a rash of doubleheaders. Steve McCatty may become the A's righthanded stopper in the bullpen. . . . On July 21, the A's drew 14,588 against Toronto, giving them 530,979 for the season, the most they have drawn at home in a season since they attracted 780,593 in 1976.

Jock Itch is a fungus.

Cruex® kills it.



Read and follow label directions.

It's a medical fact: the painful itching, chafing, burning rash of Jock Itch is caused by a fungus that can't be killed by non-medicated powders, creams, or salves.

You need Cruex antifungal medicine. Its active ingredient is medically proven to kill Jock Itch fungus. And Cruex soothes the itching, chafing and burning.

Get fast relief and kill Jock Itch fungus—with Cruex. From the makers of Desenex®

© PENNALT Corporation 1980.