

Thurman Munson: Fierce Competitor

By JIM OGLE

NEW YORK—What is **Thurman Munson** really like? Nothing like he appears to be at first meeting. The Yankee catcher is a paradoxical guy, who is directly opposite what he appears to be.

For instance, he seems to be a grouchy, grumpy guy and yet he can be a most delightful companion with a good, if a little odd, sense of humor.

He appears to be heavy and slow-footed, yet he can give anyone on the club a battle in a foot race and can certainly outrun any other catcher in the league.

With his pudgy body, **Munson** looks quite the non-athlete, yet he's probably the best all-round athlete on the Yankees. To which he says, "What do you mean, 'probably'?"

THE ONE WHO KNOWS him best, Diane Dominick, who used to follow him around while he was delivering papers back home in Canton, O., and wound up becoming Mrs. **Munson**, denies that he is, or ever was, a grouch.

"It's all just a put-on," Diane said. "He's a little tough to know and doesn't want people to get too close to him, except when he wants them to. Underneath it all, however, he's a real softie. He made believe he didn't want me following him on his paper route, but if I didn't show up with my potato chips, he would get upset."

Munson, who was the Yanks' No. 1 draft pick in 1968, played only 99 minor league games before taking over as the club's No. 1 catcher and winning Rookie of the Year honors in 1970, as the first receiver to win the award. Carlton Fisk, who is **Munson's** prime rival, did it the following year for the Red Sox.

THERE IS A continuing rivalry between the pair, rivalry enough to start a battle in Boston when **Munson** tried to bowl Fisk over at the plate on a missed squeeze-play situation. They are continually trying to outdo each other, which has led to some of **Munson's** misunderstandings with the press.

"I guess the press doesn't like me," **Munson** said. "In 1971, I made only one error all season, but didn't win the fielding award. I also threw out 38 of 53 guys trying to steal, but someone else always gets the headlines. I didn't feel like an All-Star this year when I finished second by a half-million votes."

Munson always has been very competitive and eager to accept any athletic challenge, even in a sport he never had tried before. He once entered a tennis tournament on a dare and almost upset the high school champion. On another occasion, a group of friends took him out to teach him how to bowl and he beat them.

Thurman, except for his second year with the Yankees, always had supreme confidence in himself. In his second year, however, he became a quivering wreck as he couldn't get a batting streak going. One year he thought he could hit anyone, the following year he was asking for batting help from everyone.

THROUGHOUT THE traumatic season, **Munson** never alibied or looked for an excuse. Later it was learned, however, that **Munson** had had a very tough year in his personal life. Diane had a very tough pregnancy and was ill most of the year. The couple was building a home in Canton and ran into many problems and there was a series of setbacks.

Perhaps a little story that reveals what **Munson** is happened the first time he played golf with Phil Rizzuto, who spends considerable time on the courses of the nation. A fellow would have to get up pretty early in the

morning to outsmart Phil, yet **Munson** did it.

"Phil invited me to play golf with him the first year I was up," **Munson** said. "When I got to the course, he offered to play even and I agreed, then I smoked him pretty good. I think I shot about a 73 that day."

"Yeah, and you should have heard Rizzuto talk about it on the air that night," Diane chipped in. "He couldn't understand how he was taken by that 'Huckleberry Munson.'"

ODDLY ENOUGH, **Munson** had no idea of being a catcher when he played in Little Leagues, etc., along with high school and college. He played shortstop on a Pony League team which won the title with a 45-0 record, which **Thurman** helped by leading in all offensive departments.

"In my senior year at high school, we had a pitcher who threw so hard that no one could catch him," **Munson** said. "Never mind his name, I wouldn't give him any publicity, but I volunteered to catch him although I had never caught. I caught him five or six times and that was all my high school catching."

"Look, I just loved baseball so much that I would play anywhere. I didn't care. I played every opportunity I had, right up until it got dark and I couldn't see any more. If there was no one else around, I'd go home and bounce the ball off the house and practice catching flies and grounders. When my dad got home, he used to play catch with me."

"DON'T FORGET I used to catch with you, too," Diane said. "I was the tomboy type and was pretty good. I had to be a tomboy or he wouldn't let me stay around."

"I played all sports in high school," **Munson** said, "but they wouldn't let me on the golf team because I just wanted to show up for the matches. In football, I played linebacker on defense and wingback in our single-wing offense. I was the wing because of my speed and ability to catch passes."

"Would you believe he used to catch passes one-handed?" Diane asked. "It seemed he would make a sensational one-handed catch every game and get a lot of

publicity."

"HIGH SCHOOL football around the Canton area is a tough league," **Munson** pointed out. "I made some of the All-teams, but I guess I was on the third team for All-State honors, which is great out there. I had many scholarship offers, including some from Big Ten teams, Syracuse and a lot of southern colleges."

"In basketball, I played guard, usually taking on the other team's top scorer. I averaged 20 points a game and made the All-County team, but it was baseball I really liked to play. I played everywhere I could. I was a second baseman in sandlot ball and I could really turn the double play. I made All-State in baseball, then got a baseball scholarship at Kent."

Munson turned 21 in 1968, which made him eligible for the free-agent draft following his junior year at college. Gene Woodling, who played with the Yankees and many other teams, was the scout who trailed him most of his junior year.

"Where the scouts really saw me," **Munson** revealed, "was in the Cape Cod League. I really had some kind of year and Harry Hesse, who has since died, talked to me there. He was the scout who really put the Yankees on my trail."

WHEN IT CAME time to sign their No. 1 pick, the Yankees found him a tough negotiator. After getting what he wanted, **Munson** was smart enough not to waste any of it. Most of it was invested immediately in real estate.

"I spend a lot of time handling my business in the winter," **Munson** said. "I'm always on the lookout for good investments in real estate, enjoy spending time probing into all the details of it. It keeps me busy most of the days, then I can go home at night and relax."

The one thing everyone notices first about **Munson** is the speed of his hands, the speed with which he can get rid of the ball on his throws. In fact, he'll agree that most of his athletic skills center around his quick hands.

"I enjoy playing handball in the winter. In

fact, I've won the County singles championship a couple of times."

Two of the **Munsons'** closest friends in the New York area are Nat Tarnopol, president of Brunswick Records, and his wife, June. That friendship has brought **Munson** into range of another sport, tennis, since the Tarnopols have a court at their home. **Thurman** is very anxious to try his hand at it and predicts he'll beat everyone.

THERE IS ANOTHER factor in **Munson's** high rating as an athlete—a high pain threshold. **Thurman**, like Mickey Mantle, rises above injury and continues to stay in the lineup.

This year, he had a string of foul tips hitting him on the left side of the chest . . . but he kept playing despite severe pain, finally being forced to take a day off.

"I really worried about his chest," Diane admitted. "You know how he loves his dog, but when she jumped on his chest, he almost hit her—it hurt so much. He picked up one of our little girls and tears came to his eyes. I know how much he was hurting."

The **Munsons** are a delightful couple and completely engrossed in each other, although they delight in shooting needles at each other. They have been together so long they are almost like a pair of bookends.

"I was about in the fifth grade when I first met **Thurman**," Diane said. "He was always two grades ahead of me, but somehow we were together a lot. He tried to teach me how to fold his newspapers, but I couldn't make it."

"How about the time when the seventh and eighth grades had a party and you couldn't come?" **Munson** needed. "Man were you ever teed off!"

"WHEN I WENT to college," **Munson** recalled, "we were separated for a couple of years. We both went with other people, yet would be together when I was home. After I signed and reported to Binghamton (Eastern), I called her and asked her to come and join me."

"She said her parents would never consent to anything like that, so I told her to bring her Mom, too. I was supposed to go into the Army in a couple of months, so one night we left Mom in the hotel room and went out for a drive. As we sat in the car just yakking about everything, I suddenly told her we'd go down and pick out an engagement ring in the morning."

"Wasn't that romantic?" Diane asked. "He didn't even ask, just assumed I would go with him. It was to be expected from him, however, and I'd been waiting since about the seventh grade."

The worry-wart of 1971 has changed. He plays it as it lies, stays loose and carefree and tries to enjoy life.

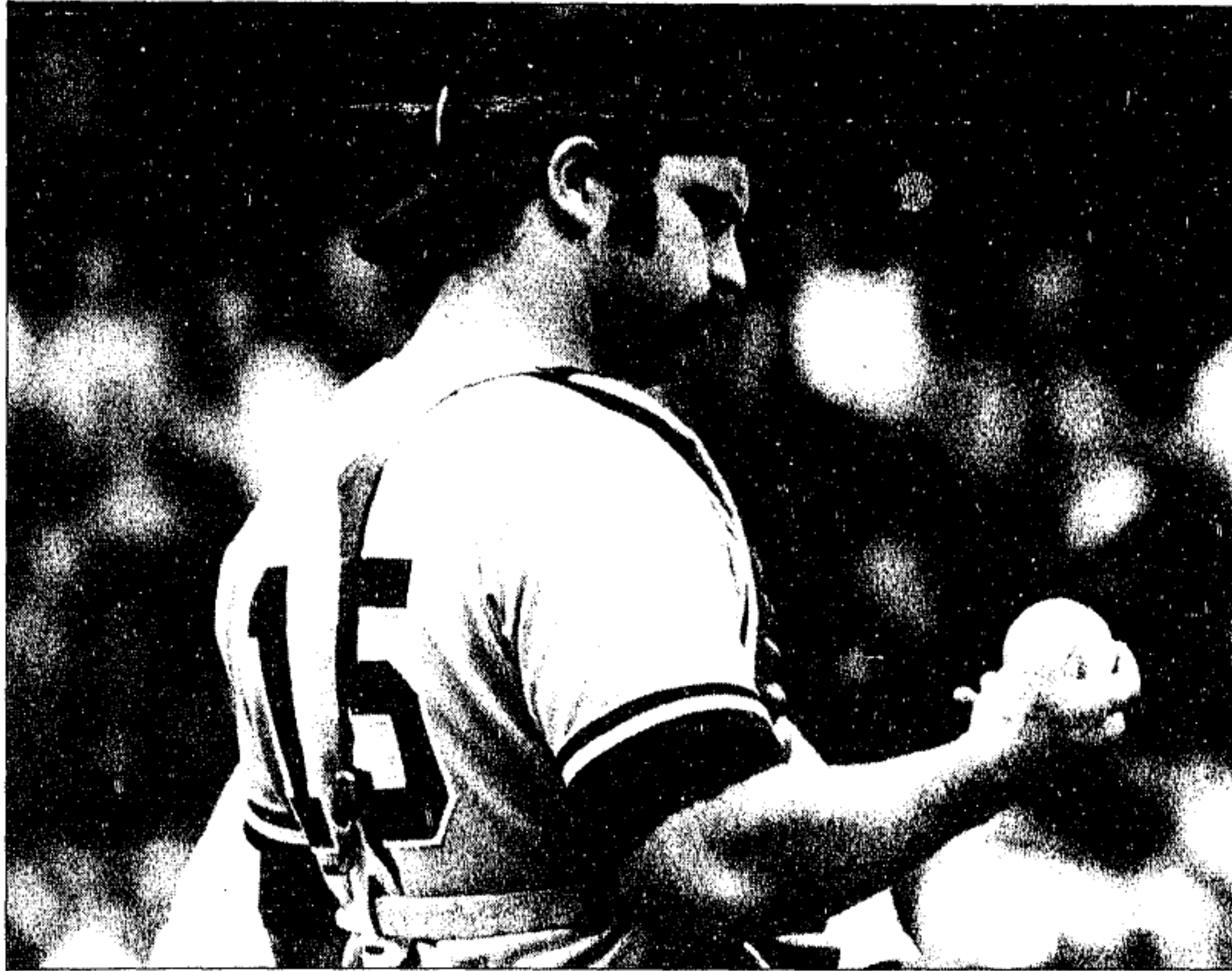
THE PARADOXICAL **Munson** never changes. He tries to make out he's grumpy, but isn't. He rants and storms with the press, then wonders why he doesn't get as much publicity as he should. Recently, after a game-winning hit, he was being interviewed.

"You seem more pleasant, more relaxed, answering our questions than you usually do," a writer said.

"No, I'm not," **Munson** replied with a big grin. "You guys are just getting to know me better."

"I don't know anyone who really knows **Thurman**, who doesn't like him," Diane noted. "I remember he could always get anything he wanted in school. He was the teacher's pet."

Thurman Munson . . . the teacher's pet? Oh, no!



Thurman Munson . . . 'A Little Tough to Know'

Ablaze at 37, Lindy Aims at Fireman Records

By JIM OGLE

NEW YORK—One of baseball's most interesting characters, 37-year-old Lindy McDaniel, won't be pitching 'way past 40 like Hoyt Wilhelm "because my family needs me at home." Yet, he has high hopes of erasing the North Carolinian's relief pitching records in appearances, saves and victories before he hangs them up.

"Physically, there's no reason for me even to think about stopping," McDaniel said, "but the separation from my growing family gets tougher every year. Our home is in Texas—and New York is

a long, long way from home. So I really don't know how long I will pitch."

Much of the Yankees' success this year is based on the brilliant bullpen trio of McDaniel, Fred Beene and Sparky Lyle. With the coming of the designated hitter, pitching patterns have changed and, as a result, McDaniel has been used much more as a long man.

"SOMEWHERE in the back of my mind," Lindy said, "I would like to finish my career as I started it, as a starter. My arm is stronger

and I have a better fast ball than I've had in more than 10 years. I notice it takes me longer to get ready, usually a hitter or two to adjust, but I get better as I go along."

"This is only a hope, perhaps a dream, and not a demand in any way. First, I am a team player and Ralph (Houk) believes I am more valuable as a reliever right now. Unfortunately, I know he's right, but who knows how the make-up of the team will change in a year or two?"

McDaniel's dream got some substance when he started for the first

time since 1967 on July 10 in Chicago. Lindy went the distance, yielded only three hits, but was beaten, 2-1. Not only that, but he fanned 11, the highest number by any member of the staff for the season.

McDaniel, who is a man of great faith and determination, is now in the midst of what he calls "my fourth major comeback." After a successful start as a member of the Cardinals' starting rotation, Lindy went back to the minors for a while in 1958. When he returned,

he switched from starting to relieving with great success.

LINDY LOST his magic in 1962 and was traded to the Cubs, where he once again regained his touch to become Fireman of the Year for the second time. In 1966, he was traded to San Francisco, had a couple of good years before falling back again in 1968, which led him to the Yankees.

"The only time I ever have been

(Continued on Page 4, Column 1)

A 'Very Tired' Munson Breaks Silence

By MURRAY CHASS

NEW YORK—Earlier this season, the day **Thurman Munson** was named baseball father of the year, Diane **Munson** was talking to a newspaper acquaintance in New York.

Was **Thurman** talking to anybody, wife Diane asked from the **Munson** home in Canton, O. She meant was the New York Yankee catcher talking to writers, whom he had sworn off (at?) since spring training.

He said, she was told, that he would talk about subjects other than baseball.

"What does he think they want to talk about," Diane asked, "changing diapers?"

RECENTLY, JUST as the Yankees reached the midway point in their disappointing season, **Thurman** emerged from his shell of silence and agreed to talk—about changing diapers if his listener preferred, but about baseball and the Yankees and himself and George Steinbrenner, too.

Munson and Steinbrenner, employe and employer, catcher and owner, once were so close that Steinbrenner made **Munson** captain of the Yankees, their first captain since Lou Gehrig. Today, **Munson** and Steinbrenner do not speak. They have not spoken to each other since spring training.

The next time they speak, **Munson** hopes it will be Steinbrenner telling him he has been traded to Cleveland or Detroit or Pittsburgh, almost anywhere that is closer to home than New York.

During the candid conversation, **Munson** made it clear that he still wants to play closer to Canton, a campaign he began—in vain—last season when he was in the middle of a heated dispute with Steinbrenner.

THE DESIRE TO BE closer to home was based on a need **Munson** felt to be with his family more often, particularly his son, Michael, who is hyperactive.

The dispute with Steinbrenner centered on the owner's alleged promise that no Yankee player, except Catfish Hunter, would be paid more than the catcher.

Munson, of course, is still playing in New York. He acknowledged that he and Steinbrenner had not long ago reached agreement on new terms for his contract that has this and three more seasons to run.

Munson declined to discuss details, but the contract presumably pulls him up to Reggie Jackson's Yankee income level, which is just short of \$3 million. **Munson** was asked if the new agreement was satisfactory.

"IT WAS SATISFACTORY," he said, "the way it should have been before I was disgraced for two years."

"In the respect that it satisfies me financially, yes, but it doesn't help my attitude. Are material things supposed to help a guy who's had these things eating at him for two years?"

"I don't think my attitude has affected my play. But if you have the competitive spirit taken out of you, it's a tough game to play. Competitive spirit is mental. I just go out and play, but it's made me tired."

"Maybe it's affected my play that way. It's made me very tired, and right now I'm very, very tired. Not only that, but I'm playing with an injured knee, a jammed thumb and bruises all over and I'm very tired."

In the first half of this season, the 31-year-old **Munson**

clearly was not as productive as in the first half of last season. In the first 81 games last year, he batted .315, hit 11 homers and drove in 59 runs. Through 81 games this season, he was batting .288, he had hit only four homers and had knocked in 37 runs.

THIS DECREASED production did not go unnoticed by Steinbrenner, who spoke critically of many of the Yankee veterans who weren't playing up to their capabilities.

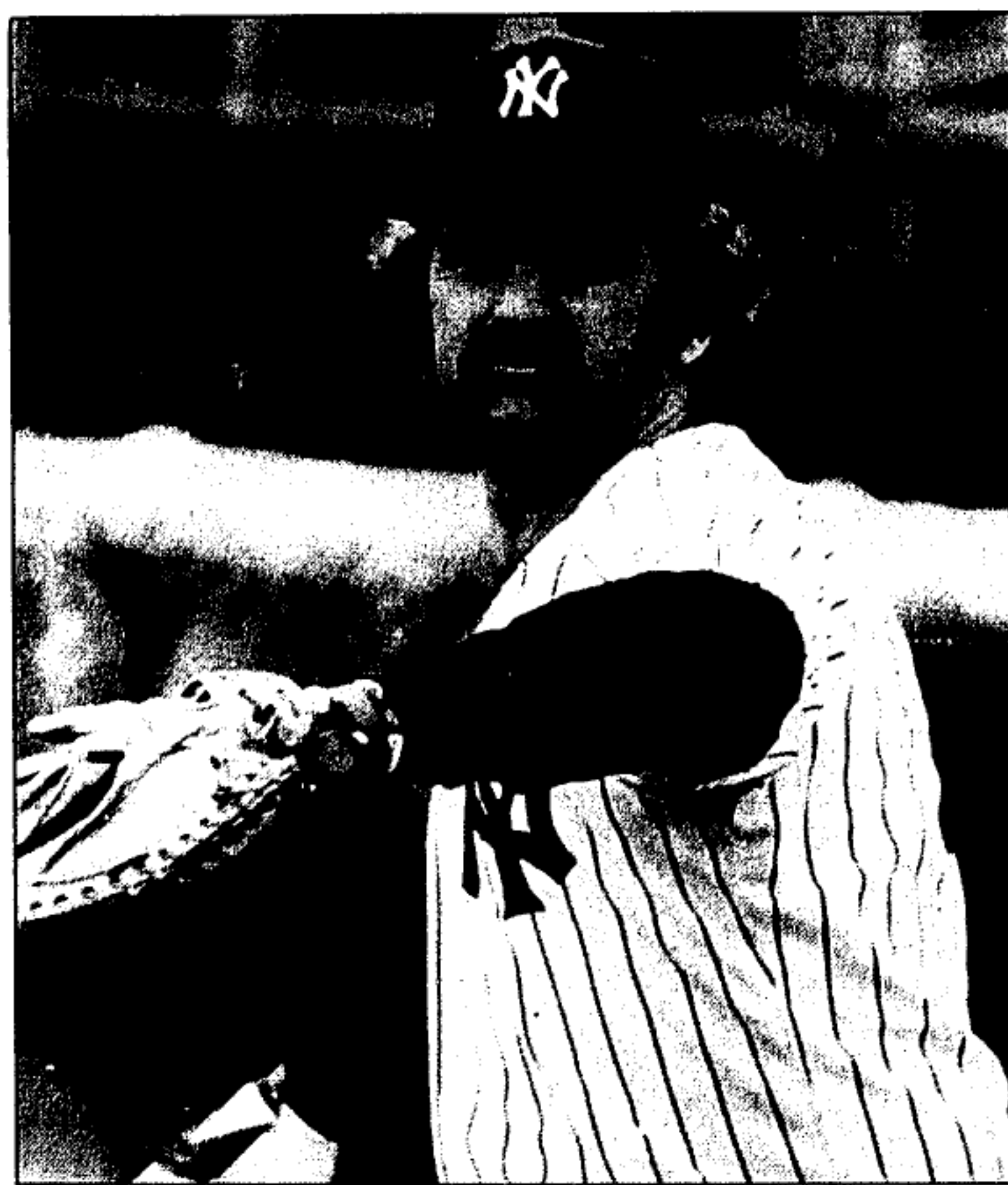
"I don't want to hear I'm not playing well," said **Munson**, who had been playing a fine defense. "It's tough. You think they care if I'm hurt? And I'm not talking about Billy (Martin)."

"One thing I don't think George understands when he says you're not doing well—he doesn't want to embarrass himself in his business and you don't want to go out on the field and embarrass yourself."

"You still have to be out there the same length of time. You're going to meet the same people asking you for your autograph who tell you that you stink or you're good. Why wouldn't you try hard?"

MUNSON, WHO NEXT winter may require knee surgery, tried hard last winter to be traded. He openly spoke of his desire to be traded and suggested that if he wasn't, he might retire from baseball before he would play in New York again. However, spring training came and so did **Thurman**.

A monk's vow of silence accompanied him. He had nothing



Thurman Munson . . . Ends Monk Silence

to say to reporters. He would answer no questions this year.

It was theorized that **Thurman** was embarrassed about what had transpired, that he had taken a stand and was forced to back down from it and he didn't want to have to talk about it.

"I was embarrassed," **Munson** acknowledged. "It was very difficult for me to come back. In the matter of self-respect, it was very difficult. I still don't feel good toward myself."

"But where could I go? What could I do? Could I talk to someone and tell him my side of it? I tried that for a year and a half; it didn't help."

HAD HE SERIOUSLY considered retiring rather than continuing to play for the Yankees?

"Had I not reached some agreements with the owner," he said, "I definitely think there was a good chance that I wouldn't continue."

Munson was asked if he has continued to serve as captain, a position he originally achieved in 1976.

"Am I the captain?" he replied. "I don't know. What am I supposed to do as captain? Talk to the owner? What should I talk to him about? Should I help straighten out the club?"

"The last time I tried it (last year during one of the many managerial crises), they said I tried to get the manager fired. Why should I talk to him again?"

"WHEN THEY NAMED me captain, they told me I was supposed to be the leader of this club. Apparently I'm not. We've got a lot of players who could be leaders—Catfish and Nettles and Sparky and Chambliss—but leaders are supposed to get credit for things."

"These people never get credit for anything, so why should they assume the role of leader?"

Has **Thurman** ever received credit for anything? No, he said.

"It used to be that people would say things, but the last two years, with the confrontations with the owner, this thing has been built up as my having a big ego instead of it being told the way it really is."

"If I don't have a good year, will I get part of the blame for losing? Why get blamed for losing if you don't get credit for winning? Who got credit for winning last year?" Jackson, it was suggested.

"WHO ELSE?" **MUNSON** asked, an answer obviously ready. "You think George took a lot of the credit for winning? Give me the blame for losing—if we lose."

Munson spoke that last sentence facetiously, but he was sincere when he talked about his future as a Yankee.

"I've got three more years on my contract after this one," he said. "I wouldn't count on my playing all three. I don't try to hide what I want. I want to be closer to home. But what sense does it make to talk to people about it? What does it achieve for me?"

Would he do anything to instigate a move closer to Canton?

"I don't know," he said, then paused for a moment before asking, "Do you foresee me doing anything to get myself closer to home?"

His listener didn't have an answer either. Perhaps in a few months, **Munson** will provide one.

'Try My Way,' George Tells Sinking Yanks

By JACK LANG

NEW YORK—The Yankees will do it his way, by George.

Billy Martin and the rest of the beleaguered Bronx Bombers learned that the day the second half of the season began.

Owner George Steinbrenner first offered Billy Martin a chance to "resign," with lucrative benefits. Then, when that was refused, the volatile owner decided to make out the lineup, and in a locker room speech, he implored the Yanks to "try it my way."

With the Yankees dawdling along, 11½ games behind the Red Sox as the second half got under way, Steinbrenner felt it was time for drastic action. Like himself taking over. Not in the dugout, but in the clubhouse.

DISSATISFIED WITH the lineups Martin was fielding in the first half, the owner made some changes of his own.

First he took lame-backed, gimp-kneed **Thurman Munson** and shifted the catcher from behind the plate to right field. To save his legs, George said, ignor-

ing the fact that he may weaken the outfield defenses. **Munson** will play right at home, left on the road.

In **Munson's** place, young Mike Heath was given the catching duties. The owner says they have to find out if the kid is ready to handle the job full time.

Also, Gary Thomasson was inserted in left field. Because they want to find out about Gary, too, as if all those scouting reports on him never existed.

FINALLY, REGGIE Jackson was told he would be the full-time designated hitter. Reggie was upset, annoyed and bitter when Martin assigned him that job three weeks ago. There was not much he could do about it when the owner told him that was his new role.

"They didn't tell me I'd be the DH the rest of the season," said the Candy Bar Kid. "They just told me to try it for a while."

"I'm going to do all I can. I got no demands. No bitches, no gripes. As to whether I'm going to be the DH the rest of my career, I'm not sure. I got more important things to do."

George is paying me a lot of money to tell me what to do."

These changes came 48 hours after the All-Star Game after Martin and Steinbrenner had their second big meeting of the season.

THE MEETING served a two-fold purpose. The owner flat out asked the manager if he wished to resign. He told Martin there had been continuing rumors that Billy's health was not the best and perhaps he would, for his own sake, like out.

Steinbrenner offered to extend Martin's contract another couple of years, keep him on in a consulting role and help him launch a boys' summer camp which Billy reportedly is interested in operating.

"What do you want to do? What will make you happy?" Steinbrenner asked.

"I want to stay and win another pennant and World Series for you," Martin replied. "I'll bust my gut for you."

Steinbrenner said okay, and then he suggested the lineup changes, which Martin agreed to.

Steinbrenner then held a clubhouse meeting and gave one of his

motivational speeches. It didn't help. The "new" Yanks looked miserable losing to the White Sox.

There were two other major changes, these involving non-playing personnel, with Cedric Tallis the winner and Al Rosen the loser.

Steinbrenner took the daily baseball operation out of the hands of Rosen, the rookie president, and turned it over to Tallis, the G. M. in name only.

"I want Cedric down there working with Billy," Steinbrenner said. "I don't want Al bogged down with every detail."

The real reason for the change, insiders say, was that George was unhappy with the job Rosen was doing as Gabe Paul's replacement. Tallis, who has operated other clubs, is more experienced than Al in baseball operations.

Yankee Doodles: Good news and bad news when the Yanks resumed play in the second half of the season. Shortstop Bucky Dent, hobbled with a hamstring pull, was sent home to Florida and placed on the disabled list. . . . Catfish Hunter and Willie Randolph were due off at the same time. . . . Hunter took

advantage of the All-Star break to pitch in batting practice for an American Legion team in his native North Carolina and was convinced his arm is sound again. . . . But Don Gullett was having his usual shoulder miseries and was a candidate for the disabled list again.

Prior to the All-Star break, Lou Piniella decried conditions with the club, lack of harmony, etc. He said the front office and manager had to stop bickering and Martin had to enforce more discipline. . . . Jackson was having eyesight problems just before the All-Star Game. He complained of blurred vision. He had his eyes examined in Oakland, then came back and hit a home run in his first game after the break. Reggie also faced a lawsuit from a 21-year-old woman who charged him with harassment in a Gotham movie theater. "All I did was grab her arms when she tried to hit my girlfriend," Reggie explained. Ms. Cassandra Small, the complainant, said Reggie slapped her, causing her to fall, after he refused an autograph she requested. Jackson filed a counter-suit.

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Mitt Prize **Munson** Making Believers of Yank Fans

By JIM OGLE

Thurman Munson, the New York Yankees' highly touted rookie catcher, made his major league debut earlier than expected and no unveiling created as much excitement since the first performance of Oh, Calcutta!

Munson, on a weekend pass from Fort Dix, made his bow against Oakland when Frank Fernandez had to leave for weekend military duty and Jake Gibbs was still recovering from an injury. The 22-year-old receiver caught three games . . . all victories . . . then stayed behind to help Syracuse out of an emergency while the Yankees hit the road.

Unless all indications are wrong, it will be the last time the Yankees will make a trip without **Munson** for some time to come . . . unless his two-week annual military duty comes at the same time. The only reservations anyone has about **Munson** is whether they can believe what they saw.

Three games don't make a career, but the young man has the look of a champion. When **Munson** started his third game, there was a by-product as Fernandez started the game in right field.

Houk Likely to Return

Ralph Houk, who is in the fourth year of a drouth, is reluctant to talk too much about next year's plans. In fact, Houk hasn't even been signed to a new contract and no one has talked to him about it. It would be a major upset, however, if Houk and CBS parted company at this point.

"There's no doubt he is a fine-looking prospect," Houk said. "He could be an outstanding young player, but let's not get too excited too soon. Let's watch a while longer and see what happens."

There's no hiding the look of anticipation in Houk's eyes, however, as he foresees his catching situation neatly wrapped up with another in the tradition of Bill Dickey, Yogi Berra and Ellie Howard.

Munson, who confessed to having knocking knees last summer when he caught a game for Manchester in Yankee Stadium, reports no qualms in his first start as a Yankee.

"I think going out on deck as a possible pinch-hitter in the first game helped me," **Munson** said. "I didn't get to bat, but stepping out onto the field for the first time in an actual game eliminated the

butterflies. When I went out to start the second game, I felt great."

Lack of confidence is not a **Munson** fault, although the likeable young man from Ohio is no braggart. He appears utterly sure of his abilities and goes out to prove he has reason for his confidence.

First Hit for **Thurman**

His first game was a pitching duel between Jim Hunter and Al Downing. It was scoreless when the Yanks came to bat in the seventh. Gene Michael opened the seventh with a single, bringing up **Munson**, still seeking his first major league hit, which he delivered to left-center. The hit put Michael on third, while the rookie alertly took second when the throw went to third.

"If there hadn't been anyone on base, my first hit may have excited me more," **Munson** said. "This time, I was just hoping it went someplace to get Gene to third. It was a scoreless game, so putting the lead run on third was the main thing to do."

The Yanks went on to score three runs in the inning and win the game, 5-0, with **Munson** driving in his first two runs in the eighth. Two days later, **Munson** caught another winning game and hit his first major league home run . . . which happened to be the middle one in a rare three-straight-homer explosion by the Yanks.

Campy Swipes a Base

"He struck me out on a high fast ball," **Thurman** said, "then he tried to get it past me again, but I hit it for the home run. I'm not a home-run hitter, but I'll get my share."

Munson was slightly irked because Bert Campaneris had easily stolen a base on him, but not too upset.

"My arm isn't in shape yet," **Munson** said. "I haven't been playing enough, but give me a couple of days and they won't get any easy steals."

The rookie's next outing came against the Twins and he showed his defensive prowess twice. In the third inning, Johnny Roseboro topped a ball down the third base line. It looked like an unplayable lie, but **Munson** fielded the ball, spun and threw a strike to first base to get Roseboro by a couple of strides.

Lemon Gave Murphy Key Tip

(Continued From Page 17)

Judith, several times suggested he ought to quit baseball and try another profession which would offer more chance for success. But Murphy was adamant. He told his wife he would pitch in Triple-A for two or three years. He would need that long to find out if he could become a major league pitcher.

"This was going to be my last year," said Murphy. "If I hadn't made it this year, I would have quit."

Murphy is 27 and now throws harder than ever before. His repertoire is simple: Slider and fast ball, with good control.

Murphy said the turning point of his minor league career came on a night this past June when he had a talk with Bob Lemon, manager of the Vancouver club. Lemon, a great pitcher, had a superb slider. He told Murphy that he liked his slider, but he would have to learn to throw it harder.

"You've got to rare back and

throw it as hard as you can," Lemon said.

"That's what I'm doing," Murphy replied. "That's as hard as I can throw."

Lemon said this wasn't so, that Murphy would have to forget about pitching to spots and fire with all he had.

Murphy has been firing away ever since.

Sox Yarns: First baseman Gail Hopkins has been showing much improvement in the field and has been turning in good plays with consistency. . . . Manager Don Gutteridge, disappointed in the over-all play of his men, has been holding morning workouts before night games in an effort to improve the club. "If they have to learn fundamentals from the beginning, then it's going to be teach, teach, teach," said Gutteridge. . . . The Sox are drawing poorly at home. A four-game weekend series with the Tigers drew only 26,723—and this series included a two-night double-header, a Saturday twilight game (with Denny McLain the attraction) and a single game Sunday.



Thurman Munson

Veteran press box observers and ex-catchers Houk, Howard and Jim Hegan were amazed by the young man's dexterity and quick release. It was, in fact, a defensive play to remember, but **Munson** took it in stride.

In the seventh, Roseboro tried to steal and **Munson** threw him out by a city block. In fact, Johnny had time to try to run around the bag while Horace Clarke chased him . . . he was out by seconds, in fact.

Munson figures to complete his six-month tour of Army duty by the end of August and he'll do a lot of catching in September. After that, he'll catch winter ball in Puerto Rico and that should compensate for the time he has missed this season.

Top Pick in '68 Draft

Munson was the Yankees' No. 1 draft choice in the June, 1968 free-agent draft. He went from Kent State to Binghamton in the Eastern League, where he hit .301 in 71 games. After training with the Yankees last spring, **Thurman** went into service at the end of April. Now he's back, and intends to stay.

Munson is a throwback to the old days since he talks baseball all the time. He always is thinking, planning and trying to learn more baseball. Despite his limited experience, **Munson** already shows amazing savvy behind the plate.

"Yes, I called the game," **Munson** said of his debut. "Al (Downing) shook me off a few times early, but after that we got along great."

Pep Misses Two Games; Houk Takes No Action

By JIM OGLE

Unpredictable Joe Pepitone of the Yankees joined the ranks of the disappearing ball players when he failed to report for the game with Minnesota on August 12, then missed the game of the following day.

"Joe has some personal problems and just couldn't make it," a patient Ralph Houk said. "I don't think I should say anything more until I talk with Pepi."

Pepitone, who was AWOL the first night and absent with leave the second, was on the plane carrying the Yanks to Chicago for the start of a trip. Pepitone and Houk held a conference upon arrival in the Windy City. A club bulletin stated:

"Ralph Houk and Joe Pepitone

"I pitched to him in Binghamton last year," Downing recalled. "He was a mature catcher then. He never has looked like a rookie, but he'll be a good one."

"Those Oakland guys came down to first base and asked me 'Where did you come up with that guy? He's not like a rookie. He talks to us when we come to bat,'" Joe Pepitone reported.

"Let me tell you a story about him," one Yankee pitcher replied to a query of what he thought about the rookie catcher. "In an exhibition game last spring, the other club had men on first and second with none out.

As Good as His Word

"**Munson** came out to the mound and told me to throw the ball as hard as possible on the next pitch because he was going to pick the man off first. I did and he did, but the first baseman of the moment fouled things up. When he said he was going to pick the guy off, not try to, he sold me. That's the kind of catcher he'll be."

It was only a week and only three games, but the highly successful unveiling of **Munson** started the adrenalin flowing through Yankee veins again. Many feel the Yanks are only two players short of being a contender . . . With **Munson** here, they're only one short.

Yankee Doodles: Horace Clarke continues to have his greatest major league season with career highs in RBIs, doubles, steals and probably bases on balls. Horace went into the final 45 games hitting .290, which is also his career high. . . . Since Gene Michael took over at short, the Yankee duo has been as productive as any keystone combination in the league with the shortstop also hovering around the .285 mark. . . . Al Downing turned in his first shutout in almost two years against the Athletics and hopes are high the little lefthander is over his arm miseries. . . . Fritz Peterson is a sure bet to hit a career high since he already has 12 victories for the third time. "If I don't make it this time, I should give up," Peterson said.

Proving that the Yanks will be going with youngsters again next year, the veteran Ken Johnson was peddled to the Cubs just after he turned in his best Yankee effort. "I really hate to leave," Johnson said, "because I think I regained my form while working here." . . . Ralph Houk celebrated his 50th birthday on Old-Timers' Day, beating coach Jim Hegan to the half century mark by 359 days. John Ellis, who turned 21 on August 21, is burning up the International League with eight homers in 30 games while hitting .340.

had a meeting in the manager's room at the hotel. They discussed Pepitone's personal matters and Houk understands the problems involved.

"While Houk understands it was impossible for Joe to make the two games, Pepitone will not be paid for the two games he missed. The manager adds that he doesn't believe it would be proper for him to discuss personal matters beyond this comment."

As far as Houk was concerned, the matter was over and finished with Pepitone returning to the lineup on August 14 against the White Sox. Houk did hold a club meeting, however, probably to clear up the air and let the rest of the team know the story.

Munson Makes Hit With Yankees Despite Slump

By JIM OGLE

NEW YORK, N. Y.—Sometimes it is the little things that separate the men from the boys. Baseball has a lot of players who cry when a questionable "hit" is called an error by an official scorer; some cry even when to call it a "hit" would be a case of charity or myopia. They are the boys.

In contrast, there is **Thurman Munson**. The Yankees' rookie catcher is a confident young man, but even he was beginning to wonder when he opened the season with a 1-for-30 batting record. On April 20 at Washington, **Munson** came to bat in the first inning with an 0-for-24 collar.

Munson hit a hot shot toward Ken McMullen at third, the ball caroming off Ken's glove. The official scorer could have called it either way, but **Munson** never glanced at the scoreboard. It

went as a hit, but it was first base coach Ellie Howard saying, "Okay, it's all over now. Relax a little."

"I wasn't going to look at the board," **Munson** said. "I wasn't about to beg for a hit. Two-for-31 isn't that much better. That hit wasn't going to help me much, but it was what I did after it."

Three-Hit Salvo

On his second at bat that night, **Munson** doubled and later added a line-drive single for a three-hit night. He raised his average from .033 to .118 in one night, but was amazed when he didn't catch the next game.

"That Houk is great," **Munson** said. "He never said a word when I was in that long slump except to 'hang in there.' Naturally, he kidded me a little when I finally

got the hit. It was the next night I found how great he really is.

"He called me into the office and told me he was giving me the night off to enjoy my three hits. Ralph said he had seen guys break out of slumps, then go 0-for-4 the next night and get into another one. That's why he gave me the next night off and let me settle down again."

Munson was the Yanks' No. 1 pick in the free-agent draft of June, 1968. He started off at Birmingham of the Double-A Eastern League, where he hit .301 in 71 games, then went to training with the Yankees the following spring.

Six months of active Army duty reduced his playing time in 1969, which gave him 125 games in professional baseball as his background to become the Yanks' No.

1 catcher this season. His progress has been remarkable, yet the speed of his climb left a few holes in his education at a catcher . . . which the opposition is filling in for him.

Sal Bando of the Oakland Athletics gave him a lesson April 25 at Yankee Stadium. With the bases loaded and one out, Dave Duncan flied to Bobby Murcer. Bando challenged Murcer's arm and came barreling home, but was an easy out . . . until he rammed into **Munson** and knocked the ball loose.

Tip From Houk

"That was one of my most embarrassing moments in baseball," **Munson** admitted. "The next day, Ralph (Houk) and Jim (Hegan) called me into the office and recalled they had never taught me how to avoid a collision at the plate on plays like that. After they explained the whole thing to me, I was ready any time it might happen again."

Munson, who became a father for the first time shortly after the season started, is mature at 23.

At times, however, he drops the facade and reveals he has some of the insecurities of youth . . . like when he suffered through his slump.

"I never had been in a slump before," **Thurman** said, "and I didn't know what was happening. It was tough going to my room at night and having that on my mind, but I didn't know whether to worry or not. After a while, I began to lose my confidence to a degree."

"I knew I had no pop in my bat and I didn't feel right at the plate."

"I usually have a good idea of the strike zone, but lost confidence to wait for my pitch."

Shadows Cause Trouble

"I don't want it to sound like an alibi, but those shadows in Yankee Stadium on our first home stand were awful. I couldn't even see the ball, then the pitcher would get ahead of me. That made me over-anxious, especially when I didn't hit, and I began lunging at the ball. Dean Chance struck me out three times in one game, but I'll bet he hasn't thrown me a strike yet."

"I found I had a few front-running friends back home, too," **Munson** said with a grin. "They would pass remarks to my wife and my family like this: 'It looks like he's met his match this time.' I didn't let the cracks bother me, but I'll remember them for the future."

"I got myself all psyched up be-

fore the season started. I'll admit I was emotionally wound up with the excitement of starting the season and all that sort of thing. I had to talk myself into settling down and I'm beginning to get into a groove."

"I know my throwing hasn't been too good, either," **Munson** said in a critical self-analysis. "I wish it would warm up a little and feel more like baseball weather. It's hard to get loose or to react as quickly as normal when you are cold."

Worried by Slump

"I knew, eventually, I would come out of the slump, but it was bothering me the way I was hurting the club. There were several games we could have won if I had gotten a hit or two, but maybe I'll make it up before the season is over. I'm feeling comfortable again, gaining confidence every day and really learning how to catch and bat."

There are many observers around the American League who rate **Munson** with the league's top catchers already. There isn't a club in the league which wouldn't grab him if he were available, but there's no chance of that.

"It took **Munson** a little time to get started," Houk said, "but he's improving every day in all departments. Don't forget, he hasn't played much baseball and here he is in the majors already. He'll be all right."

Since breaking his slump, **Munson** has been hitting at a .343 clip to increase his average from .033 to the .250 level. In addition to 23 hits in 67 trips from April 20 to May 20, **Munson** also drew 18 bases on balls.

Walks Are Frequent

"I need a few good days to get myself up near .300," **Munson** said.

"I haven't had many two or three-hit days, but I've been walking a lot. I guess the walks help, too, but I need a few big days."

Incidentally, **Munson** is almost a sure bet to gain the catching job, barring injury or another slump, on 1970's all-rookie team.

Yankee Doodles: Ellie Howard missed four days following an auto accident en route to his Jersey home from Yankee Stadium. Howard's car was rammed by another at an intersection, but the first base coach escaped with head lacerations and considerable loss of blood. . . . Three nights later, Joe Trimble of the New York Daily News escaped injury when he was involved in an accident en route to the park. . . . Danny Cater and Roy White are having a ding-dong battle for club RBI honors and were deadlocked at 29 with two games left on the home stand. . . . John Cumberland has become the hard-luck pitcher of the Yanks. . . . In each of his four starts, the Yanks scored one or fewer runs while he was on the mound. . . . Fritz Peterson turned in his first complete game on his ninth attempt while beating the Orioles. . . . Despite Curt Blefary and Jerry Kenney not helping on the attack, the Yanks were scoring at a much faster pace than a year ago. As of May 20, the New Yorkers were second only to the Orioles in runs. Blefary and Kenney are both under .200 and neither can figure it out. . . . In a surprise move, the Yanks got righthander Gary Waslewski on waivers from Montreal and optioned Joe Verbanic to Syracuse. Verbanic, who was out all last year with a bad arm, was optimistic about going. "If I can pitch down there, I'll be back before long," he said. "My arm feels okay, but I need work, plus 80 days to be eligible for the pension."

Murrell's Mouth Busy... So Is His Bat

By PAUL COUR

SAN DIEGO, Calif.—Ivan Murrell won't win any Teddy Roosevelt awards for speaking softly and carrying a big stick.

Recently, the Padre outfielder has been speaking loudly and carrying a big stick. The 25-year-old Panamanian took the occasion of one of his infrequent appearances in the starting lineup to sound off about his lack of pay and long periods on the bench.

"I'm not playing and I'm not getting paid," said Murrell, who claims to be the only minimum salary (\$10,000) on the second-year expansion club. "I don't know how much longer I can afford to play baseball. I've been on a major league roster for six years and I'm still making the minimum. My teammates couldn't believe it until I showed them the contract."

Ivan Lowered Sights

Murrell said he held out for \$12,000 this spring, then reduced his demand to \$11,000, but had to wind up signing for a "take-it-or-leave-it" offer of \$10,000.

"I think I did a pretty good job for San Diego last season," said Murrell, "when I got a chance to play. Other guys on the club got raises, but not me."

Murrell was used sparingly last

season until July when Manager Preston Gomez, who has shown some annoyance on occasion with the former amateur boxer, inserted him into the lineup. He went on a 15-game hitting streak, the Padres' longest of the season, and wound up hitting .255 in 247 at-bats with three home runs and 25 runs batted in.

The Fun Type

"Maybe they (management) don't like me," continued Murrell during his blast-leveling session. "I'm a guy who likes to kid around and have a lot of fun all the time and it isn't always appreciated."

There were times last season, like when the Padres won 16 and lost 65 from June 6 to September 3, that Murrell's happy-go-lucky attitude appeared to get him in the boss' doghouse.

Said Gomez, "I figure the only way to have fun in this game is to win."

Murrell wasn't just all talk in his free-speech movement early this month. He put his bat where his mouth was. He hit back-to-back homers to drive in three runs May 15 to lead the Padres over his former teammates, the Astros, 10-8. And on May 17, Ivan was 3-for-4 with three more RBIs

to hike his batting average to .283. He already had bettered his 1969 home-run output with four and drove in 14 runs in 60 at-bats.

After airing his complaints, Murrell was the target of some good-natured ribbing by his teammates. A "Clothes For Ivan Murrell" fund was started with a collection cup set out in the clubhouse.

"I saw a couple \$5 bills in there," said the mod-dressing Murrell, whose constant companion on trips is a large portable stereo record player that blares tunes of Dionne Warwick and other artists.

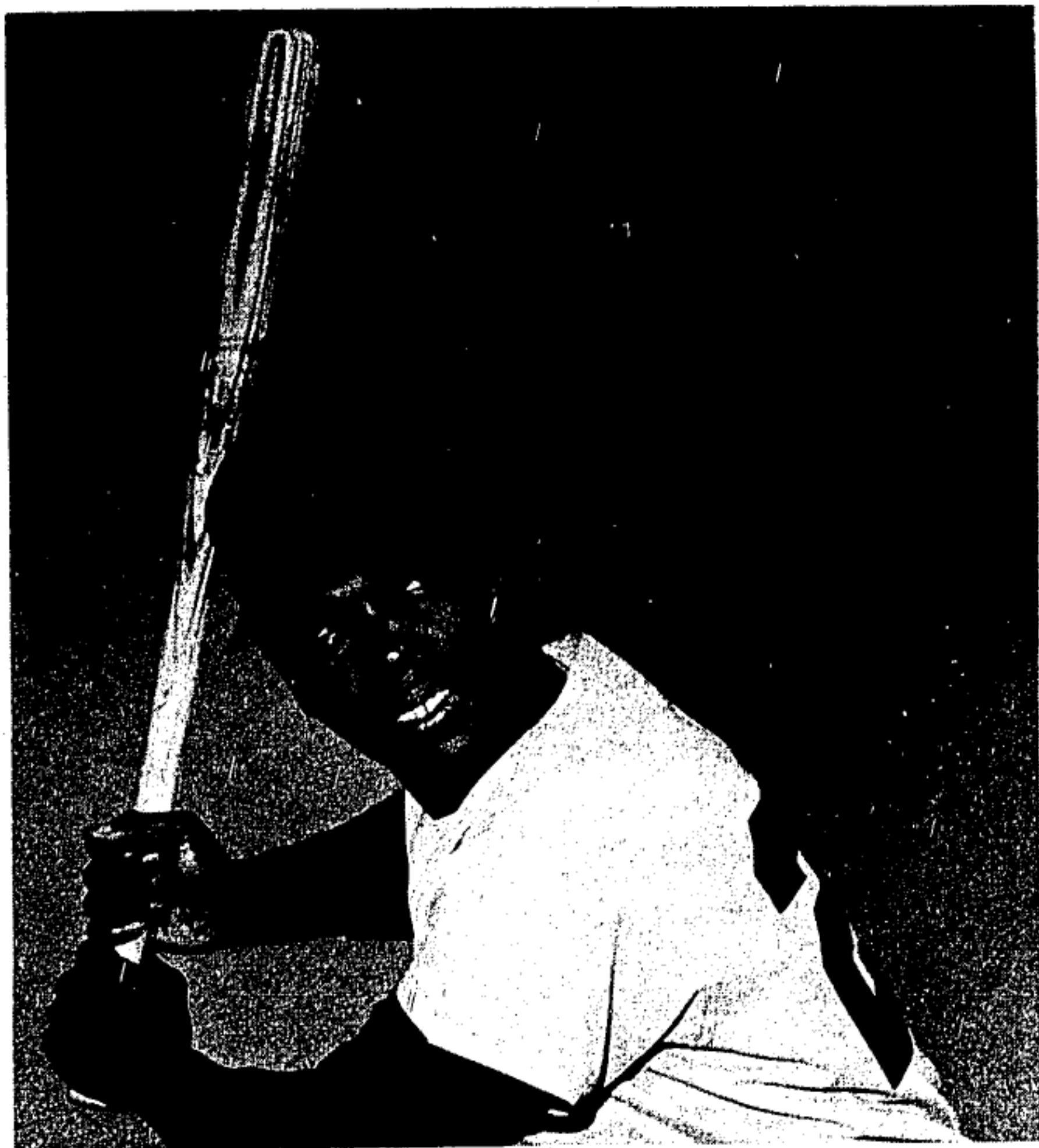
The Unbelievers

Had management torn up his contract and tendered him a new one?

"Nope," said Murrell, "I don't believe they think my hitting is for real yet, but I know it's for real. All I want is a chance to play and I'll do the job."

Padre Pickups: The injury-plagued Padre pitching staff allowed 65 runs in a span of 14 games (6-8). At one point, there were only five able-bodied pitchers available from a staff which had been reduced to nine with the loss of Dick Kelley. Suffering from assorted ailments were Al Santorini, Pat Dobson and Tom Dukes. Despite the handicap, the staff earned-run average was a respectable 3.59 through the first 40 games. . . . Reliever Ron Herbel had appeared in most games (18) with six saves, a 1-0 record and 3.25 ERA. . . . Attendance at San Diego Stadium continued to run behind last season when the official paid was 512,970. Through the first 19 home dates, the Padres had drawn 179,848 for an average of 9,465 compared with 226,347 for an average of 11,913 the same time last season.

The Padres' home record was 7-14, compared with 10-9 on the road. . . . One-run losses continued to plague them. They'd lost 11 and won only five of the squeakers. . . . The Padres may go for a pitcher as their No. 1 choice in the June free-agent draft. Their shortage of pitching in the minor league system was apparent from the last-place standings of the farm clubs at Salt Lake City (Pacific Coast) and Lodi (California). . . . With a 17-23 won-lost record, the Padres were running only slightly ahead of last year's pace (16-24), but the statistics showed them ahead of the opposition in runs scored (167-160), hits (327-319), doubles (53-49), home runs (43-32) and team batting (.240-.237). They also had fewer errors (35-39).



Ivan Murrell . . . Humor Not Always Appreciated.



Thurman Munson



Clyde Wright . . . Impossible Dream Becomes Reality.

A Lot of Wrongs Dot Wright's Leap to 20

By ROSS NEWHAN

ANAHEIM, Calif.—His is a boyish face and a drawl that sways with the rhythm of the Tennessee Waltz.

His name is Clyde Wright and those who talked about him were whistling Dixie.

It was in the spring of last year he was told by Bill Rigney that he was not strong enough to pitch as a starter every fourth day.

It was in August of last year that Lefty Phillips announced that the Angels would be looking for a southpaw pitcher because the one they now had wasn't doing the job.

It was in the spring of this year he learned that every American League club had rejected him, a situation that developed as the Angels attempted to trade Wright to the Dodgers in a waiver deal that was blocked when Jeff Torborg was claimed by two National League teams.

That is the way it was before the wrongs turned to Wright. He has now hurled a no-hitter, performed in the All-Star Game, hit two home runs and become the second pitcher in Angels' history to win 20 games.

The 26-year-old bachelor smiled and said: "The only thing left is for me to get married during the winter."

Wright reached the magic number on the night of September 16 as the Angels defeated Minnesota, 5-1.

It was accomplished on a three-hitter, and it happened in the same stadium in which Dean Chance, the Angels' only previous 20-game winner, registered his 20th on September 25, 1964.

For Wright, who was 1-8 last year, who won only 20 games in the four seasons prior to this one, his is the flip-flop of this or any summer.

He sat in the visitors' clubhouse at Metropolitan Stadium and was asked if winning the Comeback of the Year award would have any special meaning to him.

"No," he said, "because it would only remind me of how bad a year I had last year."

He said, in turn, that 1970 has been like a dream—an impossible dream turned to reality, perhaps, by Wright's own initiative.

Clyde Proves He's No Quitter

Manager Phillips shook the pitcher's hand and said: "You've made this happen and no one in baseball history deserved to win 20 more than you did. You've worked at your trade when others would have quit."

Only 48 hours before, he had started against the Twins and was trailing, 4-1, when rain postponed play after two innings.

That rain and the advantage Wright took of it was the highlight of a September swoon that was marked by frustration and fisticuffs, by an inner turmoil that accompanies collapses.

Utilityman Chico Ruiz and Alex Johnson exchanged words and punches in a brief skirmish at the batting cage before a game against the Brewers. This outburst followed a reported melee of the previous night that left the clubhouse in disarray. The principals in this one were not identified.

The Angels were hapless in September and it was left for Wright to provide a positive headline, winning his 20th in the same park where he had gained his first major league victory six years before.

Wright, indeed, took special delight in that No. 20 came against (a) the team that was leading the American League West and (b) the manager who doubted his strength.

"Yes," said Wright, "I like to beat Rigney at two things—baseball and golf. He's good at both."

It was in the spring of 1969, with Rigney still managing the Angels and Wright coming off a season in which he was 10-6, that the southpaw was thrust into the background and employed infrequently.

Those tough days are part of the persistence Wright displayed in coming back from the frustration of last summer. Indeed, the year of 1970 has been a real barn-burner.

Yanks Gloating Over Munson, Rookie of the Year Candidate

By JIM OGLE

NEW YORK, N. Y.—It seems only yesterday when Thurman Munson, the Yankees' fine young catcher, was struggling through the first nine games of the season with just one hit in 30 times at bat.

That might have been a break, since Munson proved himself a big leaguer in his hour of travail. He never swung blindly at bad pitches. The drouth ended on April 20 with a single off Ken McMullen's glove at Washington.

The hit which broke an 0-for-24 dive also proved Thurman a pro, too. Not once did he glance at the scoreboard to see if it had been ruled a hit or an error. That is the mark of a pro.

Munson seems destined for a smash finish. He is a strong candidate to capture Rookie of the Year honors. Even in the home cities of his top rivals, Roy Foster of Cleveland and Billy Conigliaro of Boston, some people are picking Munson as the top rookie in the American League.

It is quite possible Munson is the best young player the Yanks have unveiled since Mickey Mantle in 1951.

Munson never will be the power hitter Mantle was, but for all-round skills, he is the best the Yanks have shown since Mickey. His skills are recognized all over the league, and he gets better day by day in all departments.

Woodling a Believer

"I saw Thurman in five games," recalled Gene Woodling, who scouted him, "and that was all I needed. He didn't look like an athlete, yet quickly proved he was outstanding as soon as the game started. His speed, agility, throwing and catching were eye-catching."

"That was my first year as a scout and, quite naturally, it was a thrill to come up with the Yanks' No. 1 pick in the draft. I can't take credit for discovering Munson. He was scouted pretty well in the Cape Cod League the previous year. I was just lucky enough to have him in my territory and get a chance to look at him."

Oddly enough, Munson started out as an infielder and won all-state honors as a second baseman in Canton, O. He also won honors in both basketball and football, but baseball was always his first love.

"I started to catch only be-

cause we had a pitcher, Jerome Pruett, with a blazing fast ball and no one could hold him," Munson said. "I caught him in four games, but didn't really start catching until my sophomore year in college."

Blessed with natural ability and great hands, Munson quickly developed into a fine catcher and the Yanks signed him after his junior year at Kent State. He jumped right into Double-A ball at Binghamton (Eastern), where he was the club's only .300 hitter.

Six Months in Army

In the spring of 1969, Munson came to the Yankee camp as a non-roster player and almost won a job. In fact, he did sign a Yankee contract and was with them the first week. Then he got orders to report for six months of active duty in the Army.

Last spring, Munson moved in and took over the No. 1 catching job. He had a lot to learn, but is learning it rapidly.

Last winter, he played in Puerto Rico, where he hit .333 and attracted the attention of the Orioles' Frank Robinson, who was managing Santurce. The veteran outfielder came to camp last spring and told Earl Weaver that the Yankees had a young catcher who was going to be outstanding.

Munson is blessed with a quiet confidence which makes him almost unflappable when things are going wrong.

In a needling mood during spring training, this sideline asked Munson if he thought he could hit .250 in his rookie year.

"You wouldn't want to bet .285, would you?" Munson quipped. "In fact, I figure I might even hit .300 if things break right."

Dad Built Up Confidence

Perhaps a lot of Munson's confidence was instilled into him by his dad, who also believes Thurman can do anything. In fact, at the actual signing in which Lee MacPhail, Yankee general manager, participated, Munson's father said:

"You don't know how good this kid is. He'll be in the majors in his second year."

"That's expecting a little too much," MacPhail said with a smile.

"I reminded Mr. MacPhail of that when I got my incentive bonus this year," Thurman said, "and he remembered it."

Ralph Houk had planned to use Munson in the No. 2 slot in the batting order, but after starting him off in that spot, Houk had to move him around quite a bit because of the failure of other spots to deliver.

He is back in the No. 2 slot, however, and doing the job he is designated to do.

He's Fast and Agile

"I like to have Munson hitting second for several reasons," Houk said. "He can hit to the opposite field, bunt and is hard to double up. He is also good at moving runners or getting runners in from third."

Despite his pudgy build, Munson is fast on the bases and quick behind the plate. He has made remarkable plays on bunts, and he gets rid of the ball so fast that he's one of the toughest catchers in the league to steal on. Many runners can't believe it when he guns them out.

Since it is impossible to put an old head on young shoulders, Munson is still learning how to handle pitchers, call the game and confound the hitters. But Thurman is improving all the time.

Since that 1-for-30 start, Munson had hit .318 to mid-September.

Yankee Doodles: The Yanks hit their longest losing skein of the year at Baltimore and Cleveland with five in a row, but got some of their finest pitching of the year at the same time. They gave up only 13 runs in the five games, of which four were one-run losses.

Lindy McDaniel's string of nine saves in nine appearances was broken in Cleveland when Graig Nettles' pinch-homer enabled the Tribe to tie the score off Lindy. . . . Jack Aker recovered from his back trouble and is fit for full-time duty again. . . . Mike Kekich and Steve Kline continue their impressive pitching to give an aura of hope to next season.

Rob Gardner, who has had an outstanding year at Syracuse (International), will get a full shot next spring. . . . Gary Jones and Alan Closter also figure to get a chance to fill Steve Hamilton's spot in the bullpen. . . . All the Yankees' minor league managers and scouts had a three-day meeting in the Stadium. . . . With 14 games left, the Yanks already had won three more than in 1969 and were sure of a plus-500 finish for the second time since the last pennant in 1964.

Johnson Near Kaycee Whiff Record

By JOE MCGUFF

KANSAS CITY, Mo.—The Royals have been in operation only two years and it is still too early for them to get much help from their farm system. But Cedric Tallis, executive vice-president and general manager, is showing a talent for strengthening the club with trades.

Last year, the Royals acquired Lou Piniella from Seattle in exchange for Steve Whitaker and John Gelnar. Piniella had an outstanding season and was named Rookie of the Year by the baseball writers.

Last winter, Tallis traded Joe Foy to the Mets for Amos Otis and Bob Johnson. Otis has had an outstanding season and, in Johnson, the Royals have another Rookie of the Year candidate.

With 15 games to play, Johnson's won-lost record was a modest 7-11,

but it would have been better had he not spent virtually the first two months of the season in the bullpen. Like other Kansas City pitchers, Johnson also has suffered from the lack of offensive support.

Among ERA Leaders

Johnson has an earned-run average of 3.12, putting him among the top 15 starters in the American League in this category. But the figure that truly sets him apart is his strikeout total of 186. He ranks third in the American League behind Sam McDowell and Mickey Lolich and is almost certain to break the Kansas City strikeout record of 196 set by Catfish Hunter in 1967.

Even though he was not a regular

starter until early June, Johnson has a chance to record the second-highest number of strikeouts ever by a rookie pitcher in the American League.

The modern major league record is held by Herb Score, the Cleveland lefty whose career was cut short by an injury. Score struck out 245 in 1955. He pitched 227 innings. The only rookie to record more strikeouts was Larry Corcoran of the Chicago Cubs in 1880. Corcoran's ratio of strikeouts to innings pitched was modest, but he was able to log 286 strikeouts by pitching 536 innings.

Grover Cleveland Alexander is the modern National League leader. He broke in with the Philadel-

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Yanks' Munson Sets Goals: More Hits, Fewer Mistakes

By JIM OGLE

NEW YORK, N. Y.—**Thurman Munson** is an unusual sort of guy, which explains in part his lack of ink during the baseball season. There are many who think he's unapproachable, but actually he is talkative and can converse about many things.

Having talked with **Munson** at odd times and in strange places, I was not surprised to answer the phone one night and find **Thurman** on the other end. He was calling from his home in Canton, O., for no special reason, just to shoot the breeze and catch up on what was new.

SINCE THE CALL came shortly after Lee MacPhail had mailed the Yankee contracts, I expected to hear something like a beef about terms offered. Not **Munson**. He handles his own business and keeps it between the club and himself.

"I'm not worried about contract," **Munson** said. "MacPhail is always understanding and I can talk to him. We discuss things back and forth and have always come to an amicable agreement. I don't think it will be any different this time. I hope not, since I'm planning to be in camp on time."

Munson, who has to be rated the best No. 1 pick the Yanks have made since the free-agent draft started, will be moving into his fourth full season as the regular catcher. In 1971, **Munson** committed only one error all year, dropping the ball when knocked unconscious after a plate collision.

LAST SEASON, believe it or not, **Munson** tied Carlton Fisk for most errors in the league at 15. Many of the errors came on throws, although throwing is actually **Thurman's** biggest asset. It is just another of the strange twists in his career.

Munson probably is the "fastest gun in the land" as far as getting rid of the ball. Ralph Houk, Jim Hegan and Ellie Howard, catchers all, agree they never have seen a catcher get rid of the ball faster than **Munson**. Because of that, all three also tell him he doesn't have to hurry his throws.

Thurman, who takes great pride in his throwing, fell into a trap wherein many have been caught before: trying to do too much too fast. Fully aware of his speed at throwing the ball, **Munson** tries to keep getting faster and it costs him accuracy.

"I guess I just don't realize I'm doing it," **Munson** admitted. "I know last year I threw a lot of times off balance. I'll have to listen to advice this season and try to take a little more time and get set."

MUNSON'S QUICK release is not an accident, but a gift that he has improved and developed.

"Anything done with the hands always has come easy to me," **Munson** said. "As a kid, I always was using my hands in some sort of sport and I did it from morning to night. I played anything that came along, always using my hands, and I guess that helped my quickness."

"I remember as a kid playing some 40 games of ping pong many nights, which certainly helped develop dexterity. I would play with my brother, catch with my dad when he came home from work or play by myself if no one was around."

"Naturally, I didn't like committing all those errors last year," **Munson** said. "I won't do it again this year. It was more or less a fluke, just like making only one error the year before. I feel that somewhere in between is normal."

"THIS YEAR I'M not going to let anything bother my hitting either," **Munson** said. "I'm going to do the best I can and let the base hits fall where they may. I know I can hit, so I'm not going to worry about it."

Thurman didn't worry, but got overly relaxed at times last season. Now he has to find the happy medium.

"This is the year I'm going out to prove the fans were wrong in their voting for the All-Star catcher last year," **Munson** said. "It was almost as if they didn't know I was around, but it's time to change that. We're going to battle for the pennant this year, which will help, but I'm going to hit more and make less mistakes."

"I've taken things pretty easy all winter, but I weigh only 195 and that's about normal for me. I've been playing a lot of handball to keep in shape, but I've found time to get involved in some business deals that I'm very happy about."

"ACTUALLY, MY biggest kicks have come just from being here in my new home with my wife and kids," **Munson** added. "This is really the first chance I have had to enjoy the house, which is my pride and joy next to my family. I have

stuck close to home all winter and enjoyed it."

"I'm due in Fort Lauderdale about a week early to do some work in Fred Ferreira's baseball school. If I'm signed, I'll be there, but I'll have to miss it if I don't sign my contract. Really, I think I'll be all set and I'm really looking forward to the season. This is going to be our year."

Yankee Doodles: Houk got his first shock of the year with the news that lefthanded relief ace Sparky Lyle had torn some ligaments in his right ankle playing basketball. Lyle's personal physician says he'll be ready for spring training, but the injury would lay him up for a month. . . . The Yanks open their 29-game exhibition season on March 7. They play the Orioles and Mets six games each. Two with the Birds are slated for Puerto Rico and four with the Mets will be on the way north with a two-day stop in New Orleans. . . . Houk will spend a week in New York participating in the annual Yankee caravan, which figures to be mighty interesting this year. . . . Pete Ward, who finished his major league career with the Yanks, will return to manage Fort Lauderdale (Florida State) for the second successive year.



Thurman Munson . . . 'Fans Were Wrong.'

Track Coach Tutors Card Slowpokes

By NEAL RUSSO

ST. LOUIS, Mo.—Some of the current Cardinals hardly resemble St. Louis Swifty, the cartoon character invented by Willard Mullin to symbolize the exceptional team speed of a Redbird era long gone.

However, General Manager Bing Devine, who can remember Swifty as a young man in St. Louis, is doing something extra to try to improve the speed of a couple of infielders, third base hopeful Ken Reitz and three-position man Ed Crosby.

Devine hired Jim Bush, highly regarded track coach at UCLA, to bring Reitz and Crosby under his wing. Both infielders live in California. Bush spent several hours one day analyzing each player's running shortcomings. Then he devised a special running and conditioning program for each.

REITZ AND CROSBY do most of the program on their own, on a golf course just across from their shared apartment in Long Beach,

but they check in with Bush at intervals to make sure they still are going in the right direction.

The practice running is divided mostly between uphill work and flat work on the golf course. The idea in the early weeks is to add stress gradually.

Bush said he "guaranteed" that he would improve the quickness of both, insofar as lateral movement is concerned. He is trying to help the infielders speed up their ability to get away from the plate after batting, running the bases and covering ground on the infield.

"It takes about two weeks to get over the soreness," Bush said. "I'll bring out whatever speed they have. I'll have them running to the best of their ability."

BUSH WARNED against athletes trying some version of his program on their own.

"This kind of program has to be done under strict supervision to do any good," he said. "In fact, it can hurt if it's not done properly. A Long Beach State team went under a similar program on its own and half the team was ruined."

Bush stressed that the program had to be varied with almost any athlete; even Reitz and Crosby have to follow slightly different programs.

"There was a lot of tightness at first in the calves and thighs, but I can see already where it's a good program," Crosby said. "If it works, I know I'll like it."

Coach Bush has plenty of excellent credentials. Some of the Lakers, including Jerry West, Gail Goodrich and Keith Erickson, swear by his techniques. He has helped ex-Dodger Jim Lefebvre, the Rams' Lance Rentzel, the Kings' Terry Harper and UCLA quarterback Mark Harmon, among others.

"HARMON'S DAD, Tom, asked me to work with him," said Bush, beaming. "Mark's legs were as good when the football season ended as they were at the start. My running program really paid off for Mark."

The Crosby-Reitz effort recalls a similar effort years ago when Sonny Randle, then a fleet wide receiver for the football Cardinals, was hired to try to speed up some of the slowfooted baseball Birds.

After a few days under Randle, slowpoke Hal Smith was asked if there was any difference in his running speed.

"Sure," said the Arkansas philosopher, "I'm a half a step slower."

Smith, incidentally, will be a tutor again at spring training. Now a scouting supervisor, Smith will try to impart more of his skills to the Cardinals' catching corps, which now consists of Ted Simmons, Tim McCarver, Marc Hill and Gene Dusan.

ONLY THREE non-roster players are scheduled to work with the varsity in St. Petersburg. They are pitchers John Andrews and Greg Terlecky and catcher Dan Radison.

For the third straight year, the varsity will spend the first two weeks at the four-diamond complex at Busch Field in St. Pete.

In just a five-day span, the Redbirds announced that virtually half of the 40-man roster had signed contracts or agreed to terms. Lou Brock, as usual, was hardly a problem. He settled for about \$130,000.

Brock, incidentally, received another huge trophy from the Greyhound Bus firm's Joe Black for leading the majors again in steals. Lou turned over the accompanying \$500 check to the Herman Davis Fund. Davis is a St. Louis high school football player who was paralyzed as a result of a game injury last season.

Young Davis is a cousin of James (Cool Papa) Bell, who was a speedster and excellent hitter in the old Negro leagues and a prospect for the Hall of Fame.

BROCK AND BELL received awards at the St. Louis baseball scribes' annual dinner at which Bing Devine and his Cardinals

were subjected to a lot of friendly needles.

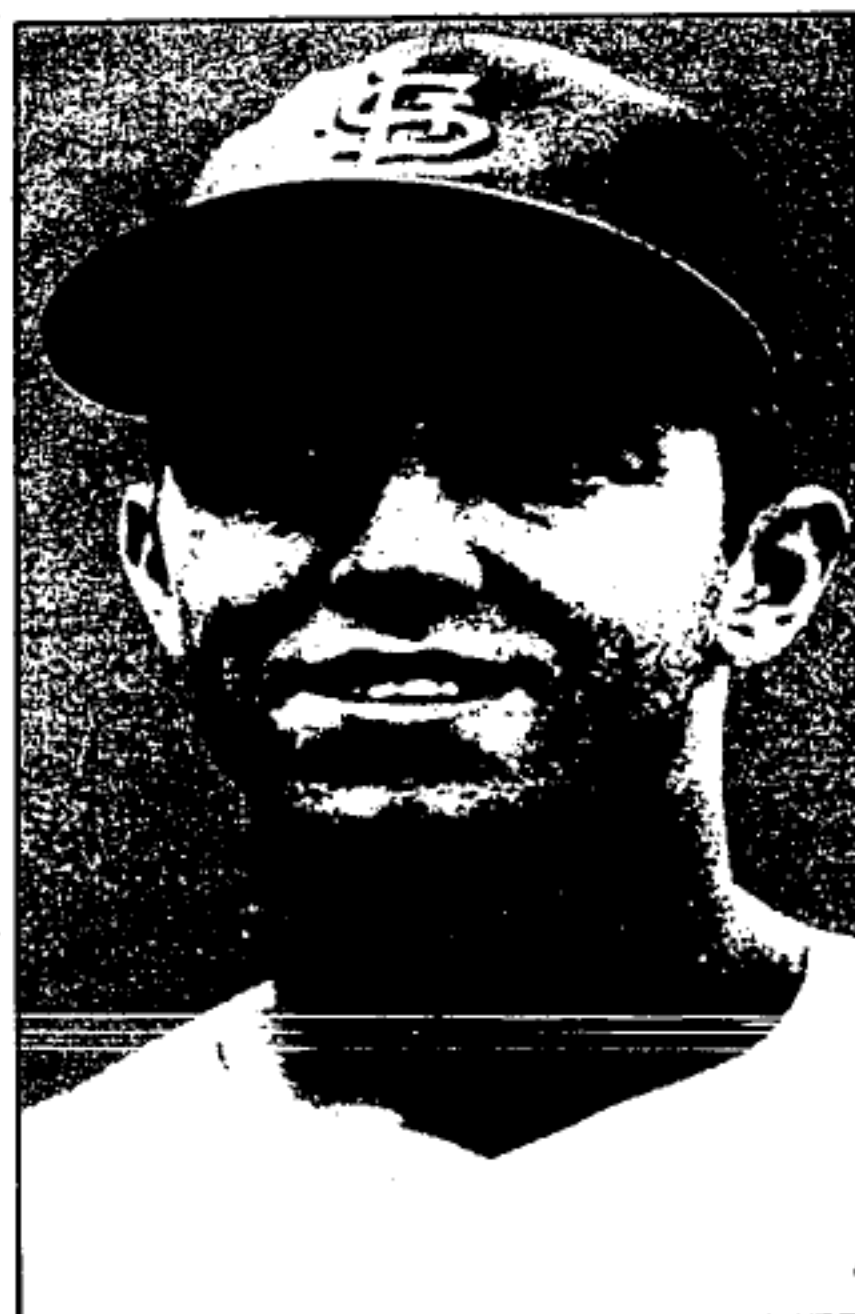
Emcee Jack Buck, in a reference to the Steve Carlton trade, cracked, "Bing Devine has just arrived from Philadelphia where he received the 'Man of the Year' Award."

An imaginary news bulletin read: "Steve Carlton, modest young pitcher, was asked why he won more games in 1972 than he had ever done before. 'That's easy,' said Steve. 'I never had a chance to pitch against the Cardinals before.'"

Carlton was 4-0 against the Birds.

However, A's Owner Charlie Finley, the Cubs' Billy Williams and Buck himself praised Devine and the Cardinals. Those were Devine teams that won pennants in St. Louis in 1964, 1967 and 1968.

Williams, saluting Devine for such deals as the one that took Brock from the Cubs, said, "If we (the Cubs) had Brock's 565 stolen bases, we'd have won three or four pennants" (instead of none in Billy's time—or since 1945).



Ed Crosby

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