

# Braves Go High for O'Connell; Give Bucs Six Players and Cash

## Danny to Play Second and Hit in Cleanup Slot

### Cholly Didn't Want to Yield Gordon, Needs Seasoned Flyhawk to Replace Him

By RED THISTED  
MILWAUKEE, Wis.

The second-place Braves took a long step in the direction of another solid pennant contender by acquiring Infielder **Danny O'Connell** from Pittsburgh for three veteran big leaguers and three untested rookie pitchers, plus cash.

This was the first major transaction the Tribe had made since the franchise transfer from Boston and it was the biggest National League deal of the fall and winter, at this writing, at least.

**O'Connell**, equally adept defensively at second, short or third, was purchased to add skill and power at second base and the job is his until, if and when, Jack Dittmer, the 1953 incumbent, can take it away from him.

Although **O'Connell** is a year older than Dittmer, Manager Charlie Grimm will still trot out one of the youngest, yet well experienced, inner quartettes in the circuit and one destined for long and capable performances. Shortstop Johnny Logan and First Baseman Joe Adcock are the "seniors" at the age of 26, **O'Connell** will be 25 on January 21 and Eddie Mathews, third sacker, has just reached the ripe old age of 22.

Not only does the addition of **O'Connell** give the Braves a good all-round second baseman but also as good a utility infielder as the league boasts, plus a fellow who, in an emergency, could do a whirl in the outfield without weakening the club.

**Surkont Fanned Eight Reds in Row**  
To get the square-jawed Irishman from the Bucs, the Tribe gave up Righthander Max Surkont (11-5), Outfielder Sid Gordon (.274), Outfielder Sam Jethroe of the Toledo affiliate, Pitchers Larry Lassalle and Curtis Raydon of Jacksonville, and Fred Waters of Lincoln.

Surkont is most notable for fanning eight Redlegs in a row here last summer for a new strikeout record, as well as getting the Braves off to a fast start with nine wins in his first ten decisions. He sloughed off in mid-season and saw little service the last six weeks. Gordon, of course, was a long-time star for the Giants and the Boston Braves and a fine clutch performer in Milwaukee.

"I didn't want to give up Sid," Grimm explained from his Missouri home, "but Branch Rickey insisted Gordon had to be included or the deal was off. He wants him to replace **O'Connell** at third. "Getting **O'Connell** was a great deal for us," Jolly Cholly went on. "He is a winning type player; adds speed, gives us extra infield insurance and swings a potent bat. He is my second baseman unless Dittmer proves otherwise."

**Danny to Hit Back of Mathews**  
**O'Connell** is tentatively counted on as the cleanup hitter in back of Mathews, although he is not the best solution to that problem off his record with Pittsburgh. With **Danny** in the lineup, the Tribe will now be top-heavy with righthanded swingers—all but Mathews and Outfielder Bill Bruton. That will mean that Mathews, the home run king of the majors, possibly will look at few southpaws this year and that should be a direct assist to his batting average, although he actually had a higher average in '53 against lefthanders than he did against righthanders.

As a second baseman last year, **O'Connell** was in 47 games, figured in 27 double plays and had a fielding average of .970, five points higher than Dittmer. At third, **O'Connell** was second best defensively among the regulars at that position, although fielding only .958, or 19 points higher than Mathews. **Danny** participated in 16 twin killings, against 24 for Mathews, 36 for Willie Jones of the Phils, and 39, the league high, for Bobby Adams of the Redlegs.

In his six seasons as a professional, and excluding his two years in the military service, **O'Connell** has never hit

## Change Uniforms



Danny O'Connell



Max Surkont



Sam Jethroe



Sid Gordon

less than .292 (his first season with the Bucs). He upped his average to .294 last summer. His safeties included seven homers, eight triples and 26 doubles. He drove over 55 runs and scored 88 times himself. Batting behind Bruton, Logan and Mathews, he figures to do much better in the RBI column.

Perfectly sound now in pitching and the infield, and with one of the better catchers in baseball in Del Crandall, the Braves will continue to explore the possibility of adding an experienced outfielder to replace Gordon and will keep their eyes open for a good second-string receiver.

"Jim Pendleton or Henry Aaron could solve whatever question mark there may be in left, but if we can buy or trade for the fellow we think will help, we are still in the market," said John Quinn, general manager, who swung the big deal. "We are sincere in our efforts to give Milwaukee a championship at the earliest possible date."

All of Braveland hailed the transaction as a step in the right direction and season ticket sales for 1954 were due to take a spurt. Certainly the Irishmen hereabouts are going to go for **O'Connell** in a big way.

### Dan O'Connell Says 'Trade Was Real Break for Me'

MILWAUKEE, Wis.—"This is a real break for me, moving from a last-place club to a pennant contender," **Danny O'Connell** exclaimed when reached at his home in Paterson, N. J., by the Milwaukee Sentinel an hour or so after the deal was made, December 26.

**O'Connell** was an Army buddy of Johnny Antonelli, Braves' southpaw, at Fort Myer, Va., in 1951-52 and they played together on the baseball team which won the national semi-pro meet at Wichita in '52. They also went to Japan for an all-star game.

## B. R. Says He Was 'Looking to the Future'

### Pirates' Boss Wouldn't Deal Unless Hurlers Lassalle, Raydon Were Included

By JACK HERNON  
PITTSBURGH, Pa.

General Manager Branch Rickey traded off another Buc favorite the day after Christmas when he sent **Danny O'Connell** to Milwaukee for six players and cash estimated at between \$50,000 and \$100,000.

In trading **O'Connell**, who batted .294 last season after returning from the service, Rickey said:

"I was looking to the future in this deal. I know the fans will not be pleased at **O'Connell** going to Milwaukee, but I have never lost out on a long range transaction such as this one.

"Sid Gordon will be a regular third baseman for us, and I believe he can play there for at least two more seasons. He is a good third baseman and has power that we need so much."

The Bucs also obtained Pitcher Max Surkont and Outfielder Sam Jethroe, along with the unknown quantity to the layman, Lefthanded Pitchers Fred Waters and Larry Lassalle, while the contract of Righthander Curtis Raydon was assigned to the Bucs' New Orleans club in the Southern Association.

Rickey said there might be further deals involving the Pirates, now that he has made this initial one.

**Insisted on Lassalle, Raydon**  
"Lassalle and Raydon were the players who made it possible for the Braves to obtain **O'Connell**. There would have been no trade without those two players."

"When we talked about **O'Connell** during the baseball meeting earlier in December, the Braves didn't want to release these two players. When they refused, I just said there would be no deal.

"**O'Connell** is a fine player. Not a great one in my estimation, but a good one. The Pittsburgh fans liked his play, and that had to enter my thoughts before trading him.

"But Gordon has a splendid arm for third base and is a power hitter. Even at 35, I think he can play two more seasons with our club.

"I don't figure we will use Jethroe, but things can always change."

Three of the players involved in the seven-man exchange were original Rickey proteges. They are **O'Connell**, Surkont and Jethroe. He sold Jethroe to Boston and **O'Connell** came to the Pirates back in 1950 for \$70,000 and Infielder Jack Cassini when The Top Branch was with Brooklyn.

Rickey said that one player didn't make the difference in the Pirates of today and he was looking to the future in the deal.

**Gets Vet Starter in Surkont**  
He has again left himself open to the buffeting of the local fans in trading off a player of **O'Connell's** caliber.

With the acquisitions from Milwaukee, the Pirates, besides obtaining Gordon for a "stop-gap" period, may have picked up a fine pitcher in Surkont, if he stays here.

The big righthander won 11 games for the Braves last season and copped his first six in a row. The Bucs are short of veteran hurlers and Surkont could fill the bill as a starter.

As Rickey has often figured, when an athlete reaches the 30 mark in his age, he "is just learning how to pitch" in many cases.

The two youngsters obtained, Lassalle and Raydon, were thoroughly scouted by the Rickey staff and The Mahatma thought highly of both. They will be given every opportunity to win berths with the Pirates.

Each has had minor league experience and that is more than some of the young Buc hurlers of the past couple of years could boast of.

Rickey felt he could swing the deal with Milwaukee, even after he told the Braves' brass in New York, "No deal unless those two pitchers are involved."

It seems evident that the Braves wanted **O'Connell** badly, and Rickey made them pay his price this time.

# Player Speakers' Bureau Proposed to Aid Good Will

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

## Stars Expect Freshmen to Add Sparkle

### Hollywood Champs High on Outfielder Frank Rice

By JOHN B. OLD  
HOLLYWOOD, Calif.



Roger Bowman

The 1953 Pacific Coast League pennant safely tucked away among rapidly growing honors, officials of the champion Hollywood Stars have been keeping the winter phone wires hot in an attempt to pump new blood into the already potent Twinks.

With the proverbial saying about "never breaking up a winner" in mind, Star officials plan to go with much the same squad which Bobby Bragan piloted to the '53 title.

Only two men—valuable ones, however—have departed from last season's squad. Hard-hitting Dale Long and Pitcher George O'Donnell have been sold to the Pittsburgh Pirates in exchange for two other top performers, Catcher Joe Rossi and Pitcher Roger Bowman, former Oakland twirler.

Hollywood brass, however, is counting on a trio of rookies out of which might come another Carlos Bernier, who, in 1952, rocketed from an unknown to the talk of the league, and last season's Dale Long, who led the circuit in home runs with 35 and in runs batted in with 116.

Top one of the three is hard-bludgeoning Outfielder Frank Rice, who performed briefly for the Stars last year before being optioned to Denver.

**Could Be a Bernier—With Power**  
The two others who will come in for close scrutiny on the part of Skipper Bobby Bragan, President Bob Cobb and Veep Bob Clements are First Sacker Jack O'Keefe and Pitcher Richard Ray Smith.

Rice, however, is the prize package—a quiet, modest lad who easily could turn into a Bernier, with power.

The righthanded speedster turned in a strong performance while with the Western League Bears, thumping the pellet at a .287 clip in 147 games. Out of his 155 hits, 26 were for the round trip, five were triples and 20 were doubles, which indicates that the 25-year-old Nebraskan can really roll.

He undoubtedly will alternate in left field with Incumbents Lee Walls and Frankie Kelleher, with Tom Saffell and Ted Beard ticketed for center and right fields, respectively.

The departure of Long leaves the Stars with a huge deficit in this department, which the addition of Rice may help alleviate. If it doesn't, however, a small, lefthanded first baseman—O'Keefe—might turn the trick. One of Hollywood's original bonus babies, O'Keefe has been in the Stars' organization for three years.

**O'Keefe Can Hit the Fences**  
Recalled from Visalia of the California loop at season's end, O'Keefe broke into the Hollywood lineup the last week of the PCL schedule for four games, and came up with a .333 average.

At Visalia, O'Keefe did almost as well—and over a longer period. The porky slugger, appearing in 138 games, came up with a hefty .328 average, including 33 homers, 37 doubles, four triples and 137 runs driven in.

Smith, last of the trio, could well be the "sleeper" of the year. In two games while with Hollywood last year, Smith ran up a 1-0 record, having one complete game and being well on the way to another triumph and a full game when Manager Bragan yanked him to allow his ace, George O'Donnell, to rack up his twentieth victory.

During the year, Smith performed with Phoenix of the Class C Arizona-Texas League and compiled a 5-5 record.

Although they can't be classified as rookies, Newcomers Bowman and Rossi figure quite prominently in Hollywood's '54 flag hopes. Bowman, a lefthander, figures to help a desperate situation as far as portersiders were concerned.

Other regulars of last season's championship club will be back.

To what does it all add up? Twink officials hope it will be "one more in '54"—pennant, that is.

ceived a letter from Mary L. Buxbaum, director of Sports Parade Program of Brookline, Mass., in which she wrote:

"How would you like to have one of the New York Yankee players as your speaker for a sports night this fall or winter season? Act now."

Her list of players included Gene Woodling, outfielder; Joe Collins, first baseman, and Gil McDougald, third baseman.

"The fee is only \$100 plus minimum expenses," she wrote.

"Would you like to have Jimmy Piersall, the sensational Red Sox outfielder?" she continued. "I can arrange for Piersall's appearance."

"Jimmy's fee is \$150 for an evening performance and \$75 for an appearance at a luncheon or breakfast meeting," she said.

Woodling, Collins, McDougald and Piersall are not in the same price range as Harvey Kuenn, Detroit shortstop, and Roy Campanella, the Brooklyn catcher who recently was voted the most valuable player in the National League for 1953. At least Harry Rudolph, president of the Wilkes-Barre (Eastern) club, says they're not.

**"Day of Free Celebrities Over"**

Rudolph is arranging for a big baseball night in Wilkes-Barre, January 13, when **Danny Carnevale**, new manager, will be formally introduced to the fans. Commissioner Ford Frick is to be one of the guests.

When Rudolph announced Frick was to visit Wilkes-Barre, he was asked, "Who else will you have?"

"The day of free celebrities, especially ball players, at banquets is over," Rudolph replied. "They're all asking and getting the top dollar. I'd like Harvey Kuenn, but he's asking \$350 and even at this price isn't sure if he can make it. Roy Campanella's price is \$1,000 and he is booked solid."

With baseball needing all the publicity it can get now, it seems the major leagues would have players available for appearances at sports fetes during the winter months at reasonable costs. It would be good promotion and make for better relations.

Tom McCaffrey, Albany (Eastern) club owner, has brought his managers to Albany for personal appearances at his expense and at no cost to the organization, even though some were desirous of paying the freight.

Big league clubs could afford to pay their athletes for the appearances they make because they help sell baseball.

**Some Clubs "Highly Co-operative"**  
Some of the major clubs are highly co-operative and do supply speakers.

When George Trautman, now president of the National Association, was general manager of the Detroit club, he was asked if it wasn't possible to have a Detroit player come to Albany for the annual Albany Lodge of Elks and Albany Eastern League club's Hot Stove League session conducted for the Albany Sports Infantile Paralysis Fund, which is raised by the sports department of the Knickerbocker News.

Trautman arranged with Hal Newhouser, Dizzy Trout and Hal White, pitchers, to visit Albany and the Detroit club met all their expenses.

When Eddie Sawyer was manager of the Philadelphia National League team, he was a Hot Stove League guest along with Del Ennis, one of his outfielders, one year. Neither would accept a penny, saying the Phillies would take care of them.

Joe DiMaggio came to Albany one year and refused even train fare from New York.

There were others, too. Eddie Waitkus, Phillies' first baseman, who is making his home in Loudonville, has made many appearances for free, too.

Of course, ball players cannot be criticized for collecting what money they can in the off-season. To accept some engagements, those who have winter employment lose one or two days' pay and are entitled to be reimbursed.

At that, some of the players' asking prices are small compared to what some football coaches and United States senators and others demand for personal appearances.

But we here in Albany feel that baseball could make more friends if it had its own speakers' bureau.

## The Sporting News

Trade Mark Registered  
Published Weekly by THE SPORTING NEWS,  
J. G. T. Spink, President, 2012-18 Washington  
Avenue, St. Louis 3, Mo. Entered as second  
class matter February 13, 1904, at Post Office,  
St. Louis, Mo., under the Act of March 3,  
1879. Subscription price \$10 one year; \$5.50  
six months; \$3.00 three months.