

On-the-Go Oliver Back in Left—and Happy

By RANDY GALLOWAY

ARLINGTON—It seemed like a move that would require only a minor adjustment on the part of Al Oliver. He was being shifted from left field to right field for the 1980 season and it was not surprising when Texas Rangers Manager Pat Corrales explained why.

"We're better defensively with Al in right," he said last winter.

Before spring training, however, Oliver vetoed the move. Then, arriving at Pompano Beach, Fla., he agreed to the move and remained in right field through the first three weeks of the season.

But, after a late-April series in Cleveland, Corrales suddenly moved Oliver back to left and said he would remain there the remainder of the season.

"Al was just not himself around the clubhouse," said Corrales. "It wasn't the way he was playing, but the way he was acting. It wasn't Al. We all knew something was on his mind. So I called him in and asked him what was the problem."

"He brought up the right field move again. He said he'd play it, but that he didn't feel right out there. Mentally, the position was affecting him. So I decided that he'd go back to left."

Corrales conceded that the first shift was "a mistake."

He added, "I'm big enough to admit a mistake. To be totally productive, Al has to be happy. If he's not happy, and can't accept the move, then it doesn't contribute to the strength of the team."

When Oliver went to the Rangers from Pittsburgh in 1978, one of his first concerns was where he'd play. The Pirates had moved him from first base to left field to center field. With the Rangers, he wanted to settle in left field.

That's also where Manager Billy Hunter wanted Oliver to play during the '78 season—Al was a productive player. However, when Juan Beniquez was traded away the next winter, Oliver was moved to center field for 1979. He did so grudgingly at first but then anchored in at the position.

In late July, however, Mickey Rivers was acquired by the Rangers and Oliver was returned to left. He finished the season there, then was told he'd play right field in 1980.

And that was the one outfield position where he'd had the least experience.

"I just haven't been able to accept it," said Oliver.

"All these years of moving around have taken a toll on me and it just kind of came to a head with this latest one."

"I believe I've earned the right to be put in one position and left there. I've paid my dues in this game and I've done my job. What I want to do is go to left field and stay there the rest of my career. And I appreciate Pat recognizing that and making this move."

Asked how he would answer critics who called him selfish about not playing right field when he was the best the team had for that spot, Oliver answered:

"I don't think anyone will call me that unless you guys (the press) write it that way. Anybody who has followed my career, and knows all the moves I've made, could not think of me as a selfish person."

Rangers Roundup: With Brad Corbett officially gone as the chairman of the board, there was a major

shuffle in the team's board of directors. The one person who improved his position was Eddie Robinson, who was given a title boost from executive vice-president to president and chief operational officer in charge of all baseball related business. Meanwhile, the new chairman of the board, Eddie Chiles, went to great lengths to wipe out the infamous "Fort Worth Braintrust" Corbett had established. In announcing a new six-man board of directors, Chiles named three directors from Fort Worth, including himself, and three from Dallas, including Mack Rankin, who bought in for an estimated \$750,000 to \$1 million. Chiles, Dee Kelly and Amon Carter Jr. are the holdovers from Corbett's old regime while Bill Seay, Charles Sharp and Rankin are the Dallas members on the board. "Now this is truly a Metroplex team," said Chiles. Seay had served on the board of directors for five years before resigning last year because of his continuing disagreement

with Corbett.

Instead of waiting on a late-night flight, the Rangers' players voted to bus from Cleveland to Detroit. Two buses were chartered and the first departed Cleveland Stadium some 15 minutes ahead of the second and arrived in Detroit 3½ hours later. However, the woman driver of the second bus headed for Cincinnati instead of Detroit. Some 30 miles outside of Columbus, Jim Kern noticed the mistake and spent five minutes explaining to the driver that she couldn't get to Detroit going south. The bus made a U-turn two hours out of Cleveland and arrived in Detroit 7½ hours after departure. . . . Nelson Norman was playing shortstop on a regular basis until errors and mistakes forced Corrales to go with veteran Pepe Frias. Corrales' new plan was to work Frias and Norman in and out of the starting lineup.

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