

# Patek Primed for Base-Bandit Role

By JOE MCGUFF

FORT MYERS, Fla. — Fred Patek has become the Royals' leadoff hitter this spring, with Amos Otis moving into the No. 2 position. It is a combination that could make stealing a profitable and popular undertaking in Kansas City this season.

Otis stole 33 bases last year in his first full season in the majors. Patek is capable of stealing 30 bases or more. If both Patek and Otis get on base frequently, their potential for harassing opposing pitchers is great.

Patek, at 5-4 and 140, is the smallest player in the majors, but he leaves no doubt that he intends to use his speed.

"I don't know how many bases I can steal," Patek said, "but I'm going to be running. A lot will depend on how well I hit and how many walks I draw. I don't want to be the type of runner who steals 50 bases and gets thrown out 20 times.

"I'd rather steal fewer bases and get thrown out less.

"It was difficult to run at Pittsburgh because they had a lot of power on the club and you didn't want to run the risk of taking them out of a big inning. I was always undecided about running over there. You can't steal that way.

## A Dangerous Duo

"I think having Otis and me together will help. If I can get on and steal, maybe he can move me around. If I don't get on, maybe he can pick me up. We have some good hitters coming up behind us and that will make us more dangerous.

"I don't think we're the sort of team that will have many five-run innings," Patek said, "but we can peck away at anybody."

Patek says that studying catchers is an important part of his base-stealing technique.

"For example, I like to see how a catcher handles the low pitch," Patek said. "If you have a sinkerball pitcher working and the catcher doesn't throw good from down there, you've got a good chance."

Patek has been having a good spring for the Royals both at bat and in the field and, even though he left a contending team, he is

happy that he was traded to Kansas City.

"I was really a happy guy when I found out I had been traded," Patek said. "At Pittsburgh, I never had a job. If Gene Alley was all right physically, I knew I would be on the bench.

"The first year I came up, they gave me a real good shot at the job, but I wasn't ready. I didn't have the experience or the confidence. Then they dropped me from first to eighth in the batting order. That bothered me.

## Swinging Heavier Bat

"I had a good year hitting in the winter leagues and I just want to be able to pick up where I left off when the season opens. I'm using a heavier bat and a longer bat. I'm trying to hit more line drives and ground balls. One of my problems has been that I've been hitting too many balls in the air.

"Manny Sanguillen was a big help to me at Pittsburgh. He told me not to worry so much about hitting and not to panic if I went for a game or two without getting a hit. When I'd have a bad day, right away I'd be saying to myself, 'What's wrong?' Confidence means an awful lot to a hitter.

"I've learned a lot from Charlie Lau since I've been over here. If I have a good year hitting, it will be to his credit."

Patek is the first truly small player to come into the American League since Albie Pearson retired. Pearson, an outfielder who finished his career with the Angels, was three-quarters of an inch taller than Patek.

## Size Always Handicap

Ever since he started playing baseball, Patek has been fighting the handicap of size. When he played service baseball at Randolph Field, a number of scouts saw him. A few of them talked with him, but they showed no interest.

"They were nice enough to my face," Patek said, "but I knew they were all saying I was too small to play pro ball."

It seemed that all of the scouts were looking for the new Mickey Mantle, not the new Phil Rizzuto. Everyone, that is, except Larry DeHaven, who was scouting for Pitts-

burgh. He liked Patek and he persuaded the Pirates to draft him. The Pirates did and offered Patek a major league contract.

The terms were not flattering. If Patek signed, he was to get a \$1,000 bonus but only in the event that he remained in the organization a minimum of 90 days after the season opened. It was scarcely a vote of confidence, but Patek was so eager to play he signed anyway. He was playing with the Pirates' Columbus (International) farm club when his 90 days were up.

## Proof of Ability

"Collecting that bonus meant a great deal to me," Patek said. "It wasn't the money, but the fact that I had proved I could play. DeHaven was the only guy who had faith in me. When I made it to the majors, I think he was as proud of me as my mother and dad.

"Being small helped me in some ways because it gave me the incentive to go on and to try to be a success. I remember DeHaven telling me, 'If you're lazy, don't go into professional baseball. Quit right now.'"

Wherever he goes, Patek is constantly reminded of his small stature, but he says this does not concern him.

"As long as I'm doing all right, it doesn't bother me," Patek said. "In some ways, my size is an asset. If you are doing good and you hustle, people tend to adopt you because you are small. It gives me chills to do something for people and have them like it."

**Royals' Roundup:** Bob Lemon has set up a four-man starting rotation composed of Jim Rooker, Dick Drago, Wally Bunker and Bruce Dal Canton. They have been working regularly, with the other pitchers in camp filling in. . . . Joe Keough, who suffered a broken leg and a dislocated ankle last season, has been hitting well and running without any trace of a limp. . . . The Royal Lancers, a booster and ticket-selling group, was flown to Florida by the Royals for the third straight year. . . . Ted Abernathy, the Royals' veteran reliever, says he is about two weeks ahead of his normal training pace. He credits it to the warm weather here this spring.



Wells Twombly

## Big League Baseball—Japan Version

PHOENIX, Ariz.—The baseball leaped off the bat and went soaring through the clean desert breeze, seeking a place to hide. Back against the chain-link fence leaned the greatest center fielder whoever lived. Diligently, Willie Mays leaped up and missed. Now the ball was bouncing around like a jackrabbit gone berserk. The runner rounded second and came sprinting into the next base with an impressive triple.

In the stands at Phoenix Stadium, the natives were obviously restless. This is the springtime, a time of year when the San Francisco Giants are better loved along Van Buren Avenue than they are on Market Street. Old people come tottering out to sit in the sun and think uplifting thoughts about Juan Marichal and the two Willies. They are not present to see the big club get battered by the Tokyo Lotte Orions, which sounds less like a baseball team and more like an item on a menu at an Oriental restaurant.

For several embarrassing innings, the tourists from Nippon held the Giants in their fine little hands. Even though they cut off every throw from the outfield, even though they consider the bunt dishonorable, even though they think the waste pitch is sheer treachery, the Japanese played exceptionally well. Especially bright was a young man named Michiyo Arito, who looks like an Asian duplicate of Ken Boyer. Not only is Arito large and powerful, he plays third base classically.

"I'd like to open the season with him," said San Diego Manager Preston Gomez several days later. "He's a fine player. He'd be a star over here, too. In fact, I like their whole infield."

Like most clubs in their league, the Orions have a fatal flaw. Though their pitchers are excellent, there just aren't enough of them. On this particular day, the starter departed in the fourth inning. On came the Giants to save a little Occidental face.

Later on in the dressing room, the Tokyo writers clustered around Waturu Nonin, manager of the Orions, who looks very much like Herman Franks. They seemed to be asking him what he thought of his club's chances. He seemed to be saying that the Orions could go all the way in the Japanese Pacific League again. Well, it is spring in Nippon, too.

## Altman Stands Out in Japan Crowd

Most of the Orions are short, stocky and decidedly Asian. Somehow George Altman had a tendency to stand out. There he was beside the last locker near the shower stall. Perhaps you remember him. He played for the Cubs, the Cardinals and the Mets. When they asked him to go to Tacoma, he defected. He did not look like most of his teammates, who are training in Arizona for the first time. Altman is tall, black, handsome and as suave as anyone who ever got a master's degree from Tennessee State ought to be.

Instead of retiring or taking a few shoddy summers in the Pacific Coast League, Altman called the Orions three years ago and asked them how much they were willing to pay. The answer was gratifying. This will be his fourth summer in the Japanese leagues. He will be 38 soon. Despite the skills of people like Arito and Orion second baseman Hiroyuki Yamazaki, the quality of baseball on the far side of the Pacific is not that good, not yet. So a superannuated American like George Altman can still bat .319 and hit 30 home runs in a 130-game season. He can talk enthusiastically about playing next year and the year afterwards.

"Don't be mistaken. They play good baseball over there. There aren't as many complete players. There are some guys who can hit, but can't field very well. There are guys who play great defense, but don't know the first thing about hitting. Because the season is shorter, you only need three starters. After those three starters get used up, it's like falling off a cliff," he said.

On the upper side of Altman's left thigh, large strips of surgical tape were holding a severely pulled muscle in place. In the United States this is an excuse for a player to stay on the bench for at least six months. The Japanese are made of sterner stuff. Nobody gets paid 30 million yen for walking around with a limp. The customers don't buy tickets to see sick Americans.

"Ah, Altman-san, you will be able to play tomorrow against Oakland," said Hiromitsu Tshuiya, not really expecting no for an answer. "You play tomorrow. You be all right. Your leg be much better. You play."

With a wistful grin, Altman shook his head. Tshuiya frowned. All right! All right! George would play even if it killed him. He is not slow to assimilate.

## Orions Take Exhibitions Seriously

"They don't like to have you sitting around," he explained. "They take these exhibition games they are playing in the United States very seriously. Our club has been working out since early January. I just reported a few weeks ago. This pulled muscle is the sort of thing I had with the Cubs every spring. I should say, 'No, I can't play.' But what the heck, I shouldn't complain."

Most of the Japanese teams do not overwhelm the ball. The Orions are known as a power team even though their attack wouldn't make the San Diego pitching staff wince. But they play in a scale model version of Candlestick Park, which will amaze many San Franciscans, who think the original ought to be pushed into the bay. The difference is (a) the breeze doesn't blow very hard and (b) the foul lines are only 280 feet long, which ought to make Willie McCovey salivate. What Altman really loathes is the tendency to cut off every throw from the outfield.

"I don't know why they do it, but they do. I guess they all feel that they don't have great arms, so they cut off every throw. It is now a custom, so what can you do? I enjoy the money they pay me, so I don't complain."

There are a number of Americans in Japan, although some clubs have none at all. The Orions have Arturo Lopez, who once seemed to have a future with the Yankees. Amazingly, Willie Kirkland is still alive and well and living in Yokohama. Also over the seas are Dave Roberts, Aaron Pointer, Carl Boles and Jack Bloomfield. There is a big market in Japan for black players and athletes who speak Spanish. No one really knows why. They are simply popular.

"I don't say Japanese baseball is perfect. My wife hates it over there. But it beats being a has-been over here," said Altman, peeling back the tape.

Outside, a bus was waiting for the Lotte Orions. In Japan even the major leaguers ride the buses. It isn't comfortable. Management thinks it is good for the soul. Bad shock absorbers build character. It is an old custom, stolen from the American minor leagues, it would seem.

# Kauffman Dedicates 'Dream' Academy

By SPIKE CLAASSEN

SARASOTA, Fla.—Words of praise came frequently from baseball big-wigs and celebrities March 21 at the formal dedication of the Kansas City Royals' Baseball Academy, but it was a student shortstop who drew a standing ovation from the 400 persons attending the event.

Sal Balderrama of Yuba City, Calif., brought the spectators to their feet when he closed a dramatic, two-minute speech midway in the program by saying:

"When you finish high school and the scouts haven't come knocking on your door, a 17-year-old's dream of playing pro ball can become a 17-year-old's disappointment. But six months ago, the impossible happened. This academy is the dream of a lifetime come true."

## Nearing College Degree

Balderrama has only one semester remaining before getting a degree from the University of California at Davis. He is 22 years old now and hopes to become a youth counselor when his playing days are over.

Earlier, the crowd heard Commissioner Bowie Kuhn say that "baseball's power of growth is almost

without bounds. We are only beginning a new era.

"Obviously, if baseball is to progress, we must be prepared to grow and adapt to a world different from the world of 50 years ago."

## Cronin Among Speakers

Others who spoke were Joe Cronin, president of the American League; Tom Adams, Florida's lieutenant-governor, and Mr. and Mrs. Ewing Kauffman of Kansas City. Kauffman, owner of the Royals, is the founder of the academy. He told the audience on the lawn in front of the academy office that "my dream and the dreams of these young men have become interwoven. We want a World Series in Kansas City."

A telegram from President Richard M. Nixon was read by Buddy Blattner, former major league infielder, now a television sports announcer.

During the ceremonies, a plaque of dedication was unveiled. The inscription read:

"Here, at the first institution of its kind in baseball, our youth are provided with a dual opportunity, to pursue an education and at the same time learn the skills of our national pastime.

"This concept was conceived and brought to life by Ewing Marion Kauffman, owner of the Kansas City Royals, so that on these grounds and within these halls young men may achieve their dream of stardom as major league players, and acquire that unwavering strength of purpose that is the keynote of all individual success."

## \$1.5 Million Investment

The idea behind the establishment of the academy was to take athletes—not necessarily baseball players—and mold them into major league prospects. Kauffman spent \$1,500,000 in building the 121-acre facility on the edge of Sarasota.

The academy opened last August 10 with 42 students. They were screened from among 7,682 young men who tried out in 126 cities in the United States and Canada.

The academy's program includes a number of innovations. Director Syd Thrift said, "Baseball techniques are like the weather. Everybody in the business talks about them, but very little has been done about them. We have come up with some brand-new ideas."

The students, who are paid a salary, also attend classes at Manatee Junior College.