

Pesky Short-Hopping Back to Majors as Pilot

Starts Climb as Skipper in Tiger System

Hopes for Two More Seasons in Minors, 'Then Maybe Year or Two of Coaching'

By HY HURWITZ
BOSTON, Mass.

At one time he shined the shoes of a flock of major league stars. Some day, he hopes to manage a big league club.

It is no daydream which Johnny Pesky now is nursing. He became a solid big league player himself, in spite of a flock of obstacles. Currently, he is in his second season of managing in the minor leagues.

"I don't make things the easy way," said the former Red Sox shortstop of the 1946 American League champions. "Crashing the big leagues was a hard job for me as a player. I don't expect to get to the majors as a manager in one jump, either. I want to learn the trade like Mike Higgins (the Red Sox manager and former teammate) did but I hope it doesn't take me as long as it did Mike to get to manage in the big leagues."

Pesky has come a long way since the early '30s when he was a teen-aged "skinny runt" shining shoes and running errands around the Portland (Coast) park.

"I used to polish the shoes and sharpen the spikes for guys like Joe DiMaggio, Ted Williams, Mike Higgins, Bob Johnson, Frank Crosetti out in the Pacific Coast League," recalled the 1956 Manager of the Year in the Carolina League.

Recalls Posedel Tip

"In those years I felt I knew all the answers to baseball," continued Johnny. "I used to get into discussions with the players. Sometimes I was a little fresh about it."

"That's when my good buddy, Bill Posedel (now coaching for the Cardinals), used to bawl me out. He told me that if I wanted to learn baseball to keep my ears open and my mouth shut. Bill was probably the best influence I had and helped me as much as anybody."

"About ten years later, I had a strange experience with Bill. We were both in the Navy. Bill was a chief petty officer and I was a junior lieutenant. He had to salute me, which was a strange twist because it was like a father having to salute his son."

Pesky broke into Organized Ball in 1940. He was signed by the Red Sox for their Piedmont League farm club at Rocky Mount.

"I really was in the bushes," Pesky related, "but it was a great break for me. Because I learned how to hit from Heinie Manush. I used to stand deep in the batters' box and thought I was a slugger like some of the guys I had seen in the Pacific Coast League like Williams and DiMaggio. But Manush got me to move up close to the plate and that helped me."

Rookie of Year in '42

Johnny batted .325 for Louisville in 1941 and then the Red Sox brought him up in '42. He was good enough to be voted rookie of the year and in addition, he was selected to the All-Star team.

Then Johnny entered the Navy. He became an officer—quite an accomplishment for one who had a limited education. But it was an indication that Johnny had success in his system.

Pesky had made more than 200 hits as a freshman. When he came back after a year's hitch for Uncle Sam, there was a question of how well he'd be able to hit.

In '46 and again in '47, he amassed more than 200 hits, something that only Lloyd Waner had been able to accomplish in his first three seasons of big league competition.

In 1952, the Red Sox traded Pesky to the Tigers and Johnny shed tears. He wanted to end his career with the Boston club. But it was a big break for Pesky. He started a career with

Still Following Stars' Footsteps

By Vic Johnson

AS CLUBHOUSE BOY AT PORTLAND, OREGON, YOUNG PESKY SHINED THE SHOES OF PACIFIC COAST LEAGUE GREATS LIKE TED WILLIAMS AND JOE DIMAGGIO



THEM PATENT LEATHERS MINE?



AT DURHAM, THE LITTLE GUY WAS 'MANAGER OF THE YEAR' IN THE CAROLINA LEAGUE IN 1956

NO ROSE-STRAWN PATH TO SUCCESS LED POPULAR JOHNNY PESKY TO HIS NEW JOB AT BIRMINGHAM

Unselfish Gesture Helped Goodman Win Batting Title

BOSTON, Mass.—Although Johnny Pesky was one of the leading hitters on the Red Sox club in the late stages of the 1950 season, the little infielder unselfishly requested that he be taken from the lineup so that Billy Goodman, his teammate, would have a chance to win the A. L. bat crown.

When Ted Williams injured his elbow in the 1950 All-Star Game, Goodman stepped into left field for the Red Sox. In mid-September, Williams was ready to play again and Manager Steve O'Neill was confronted with the problem of where to move Goodman. However, he didn't have too much trouble making a decision. It had been made for him—if he wanted to go along with it.

Three weeks earlier, Pesky had approached the manager and had told him, "Goody has a good shot for the batting championship and we all want him to get it if he can. Ted probably will be back in the lineup before the season is over. If you're wondering about what to do with Goodman, he can play third base. I won't kick if you take me out, as much as I want to be in there every day."

When the time came, O'Neill took Pesky at his word and shifted Goodman to third. Pesky, who was batting .313, went to the bench, but Goodman went on to win the A. L. batting crown with an average of .354. He played seven games at the hot corner and accumulated 30 times at bat, enabling him to go over the required minimum of 400 official plate appearances. He finished with a total of 424.

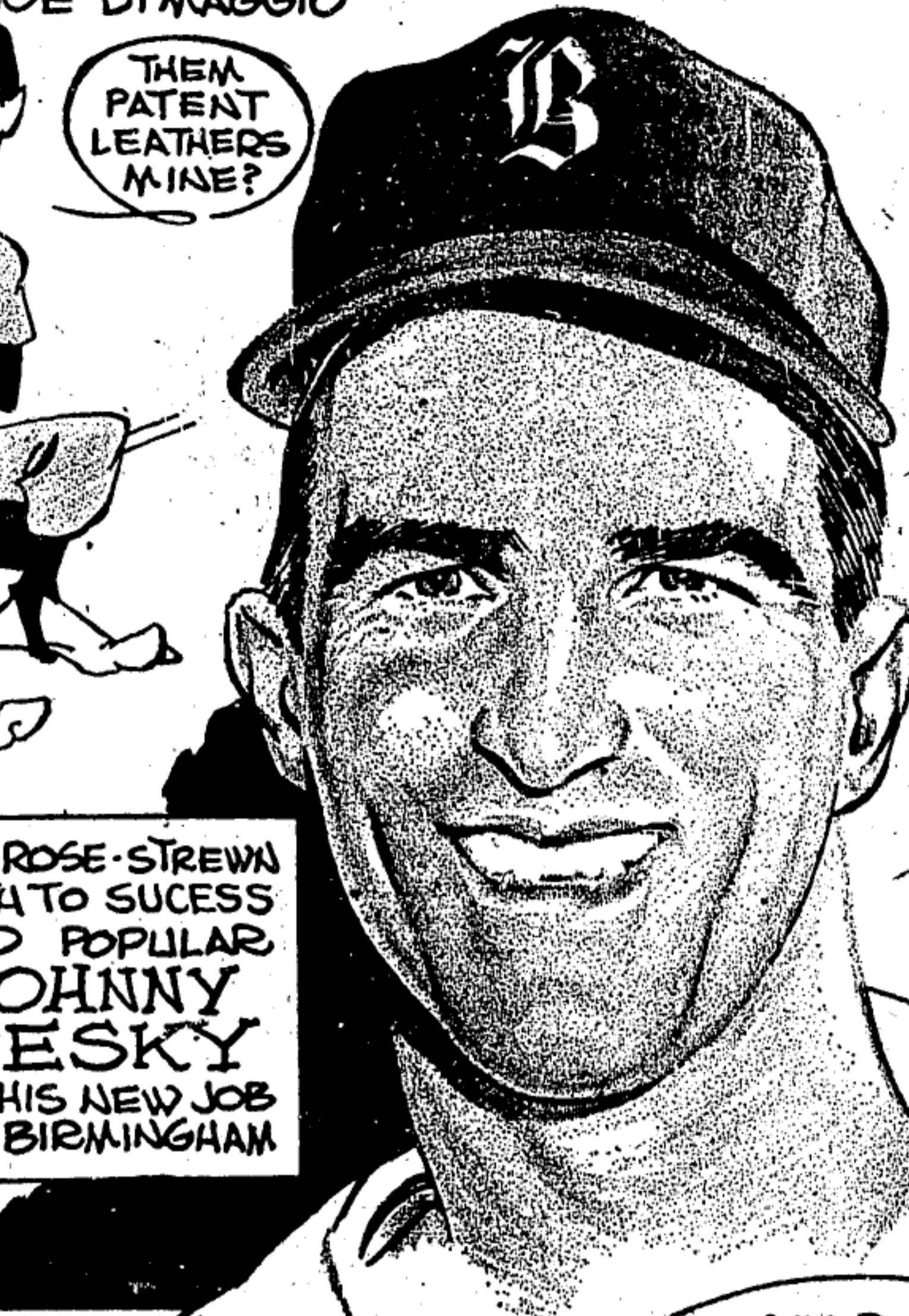
a club that could bring him back to the majors as a manager.

Pesky shook off the shock of the swap and although he was more or less a utility player, he helped a lot of Detroit youngsters like Harvey Kuenn, who was breaking in and later several other of the Bengal babies.

Two years ago, Pesky was a player-coach with Denver. It was then he was bitten with the managerial bug.

"I hadn't given it much thought while I was playing," said Johnny, "but now my active days were just about ending. I wanted to stay in the game. I thought I'd take a crack at managing in the minors."

The Detroit club assigned him to the helm of the Durham club. Johnny guided the Bulls to a second-place



HE LEARNED HIS BASEBALL AT PORTLAND UNDER "SAILOR BILL" POSEDEL. . . IN THE NAVY DURING WORLD WAR II, JOHN WAS A LIEUTENANT AND POSEDEL WAS ONE OF THE GOBS UNDER HIM!



finish and the Tigers elevated him to head their Birmingham farm in the Southern Association.

"I've played under a lot of managers and I watched a lot of them," Pesky relates. "Somehow or other, I like the Yankee system or the Joe McCarthy methods. I played for Joe when he managed the Red Sox. He had a good approach. He'd never insult the players. He'd call you over after you'd made a mistake and explain it to you. Sometimes, he waited for the next day to do it."

"Lucky at Durham"

"I was lucky at Durham. I had some wonderful kids. All I had to do was to fit them together like a puzzle."

"A few of the boys had problems. I'd get them out about 3 or 4 o'clock in the afternoon and work with them. The kids began to improve. Soon, others who wanted help came out voluntarily. I liked that. It was a compliment to me. Sure, it was hard work but everything I ever gained was only after a lot of hard work."

Several of Pesky's prospects have been advanced by the Tigers. They profited from Pesky's teaching and guidance.

He had some interesting, humorous experiences.

"I always impressed on my outfielders," he recalled, "to throw to the right base. If it was late in the game, always keep a tying or winning run out of scoring position. One day, Emil Karlik, one of my outfielders, tried to nail a runner at the plate when he should have thrown to second. The man on second later scored to tie the game."

"The next inning, Karlik came to bat and hit a home run to win the game for us. When he scored, he came over to me and said, 'John, you won't have to talk to me tomorrow about the wrong throw I made. I knew it and so I went out and hit the homer so I wouldn't get another lecture from you on it.'"

When he first got the job at Durham, Pesky asked Detroit's farm director, Johnny McHale, if there was any special system he wanted him to use in managing.

McHale advised him to handle the players and situations the way he felt was the best way.

"McHale was wonderful to me," Pesky declared. "He put me on my



"NEEDLENOSE" IS A CARICATURISTS' DELIGHT

Hit .307 in Major Career; Six Runs in Game Set Mark

BOSTON, Mass. — When John Michael Paveskovich shortened his name to Pesky, he picked a handle that not only fit better in box scores, but also reflected exactly the kind of player he proved to be during his major league career.

The son of immigrants from Yugoslavia, Pesky, batted over .300 in six of his first seven full seasons with the Red Sox. His average for his ten years with the Red Sox, Tigers and Senators was .307.

He holds the American League record for most runs scored in a game, six, against the White Sox, May 8, 1946.

own. It was another reason I wanted to make good. If things I tried didn't work out right, I'd try something else until I had the solution. A lot of young players in the game today are college kids. They can figure out a lot of things for themselves and they grasp things swiftly.

"It's been a pleasure managing thus far. I worked at it, just as the kids worked on their hitting and fielding and pitching."

"I don't know, all the managerial answers. I'd like a couple of more years in the minors. Then maybe a year or two coaching in the big leagues. By then, I feel I'll be ready to manage up there on my own."

Pesky has come a long way since he shined his first pair of spikes more than 20 years ago. But everything he's tackled has ended in success. That's why it's not hard to believe that some day Johnny will be back in the big leagues. This time as a manager for one of the greatest success stories in the history of the game.