

# All's Well With Piniella After Tallis Showdown

By JOE McGUFF

KANSAS CITY—The incident was something like a spring storm. It came and went quickly, but it was exciting while it lasted.

As the Royals returned home from their last western trip, Lou Piniella declared that he was dissatisfied with the way he was being used and would request a conference with General Manager Cedric Tallis to discuss his future with the team.

Piniella did not say so, but the inference was that things had reached the point that he would just as soon be playing for another team.

"You can say I definitely am unhappy and that I don't like the way I've been used," said Lou. "I'm going to see Tallis. If McKeon (Manager Jack McKeon) wants to come, he can and see what happens."

**THE MEETING** with Tallis took place the following day and produced expressions of harmony and solidarity.

"We had a very pleasant meeting," Tallis said. "It was just a misunderstanding and everything was resolved."

"We're all right," McKeon said. "It was not too big a thing, at least from my standpoint. The thing began with a misunderstanding, a little bit of nothing traveling from a third party to another third party. We talked for a good 15 minutes and we understand each other."

Said Piniella, "I'm going to go back out and play, inflate my balloon and see if I can keep it inflated for longer than a week or so. I don't necessarily think I was wrong, but I never tried to say he was wrong to make decisions as the manager. I respect the authority of the manager to make out the lineup. I really do."

**A VARIETY OF** things apparently contributed to Piniella's flareup. To begin with, he is not enjoying one of his best seasons. Last year, he was the second-ranked hitter in the American League with an average of .312. He had a career average of .294 coming into this season. At the time of his complaint over the way he was being played, Piniella was batting .235. However, he had driven in 39 runs, the No. 3 total on the team.

With the hits not coming as frequently as they had in the past, Piniella found himself spending a little more time on the bench. He has been used as a designated hitter and as a pinch-hitter and, for the first time in his career, he has found himself being removed from left field in the late innings for defensive purposes.

Before his meeting with Tallis, Piniella expressed his feelings in regard to McKeon by saying, "We're at an impasse as far as I'm concerned. He's the manager and I don't see that he's going to change. I'm not going to change the way I want to be played. I'm not doing myself any good or the team either this way."

**THE SITUATION** seemingly was brought to a head the night before the trip ended. The Royals and Rangers were playing a doubleheader. Piniella was not in the starting lineup for the first game. A story circulated in the clubhouse that Kurt Bevacqua had gone into McKeon's office before the first game and said jokingly, "My roomie (Dick Drago) is pitching tonight. I got to play to help him out." McKeon supposedly asked him where he wanted to play and Bevacqua said left field. But like so many stories of this type, there was no truth to it.

McKeon explained the incident in this manner: "I already had the lineup card made out. Blattner (Bud Blattner, Royals' announcer) was in there with me when Bevacqua sticks his head in the door and says, 'My roomie's going. I gotta play.' I'm joking with him and I say, 'How about catcher?' He ducked out and I told Blattner, 'I never told him I already had him down for left field.'"

"**I WANTED LOU FOR** the second game and I was going to play Bevacqua at third to give Paul Schaal a rest."

Piniella declined the offer to play in the second game, saying he had a sore throat.

When Piniella and McKeon finally got together to discuss the problem, it was disposed of in fairly routine fashion.

"He told me I was reacting too much," Piniella said. "It was a rest, trying to help me out, get me going. He said he was satisfied with the way I was playing, that I had played hard for him, that I had given him everything I had."

"That's all there was to it," McKeon confirmed. "It's easy to understand a guy getting a little frustrated when he's not going the way he knows—and I know—he can. I told him to forget the average. Just go out and play and do the best he can and not worry about it."

In a way, Piniella's problem was symptomatic of what was happening to the entire team in late June and early July. The Royals were losing tough games. They were mad at themselves, mad at their manager and mad at the world.

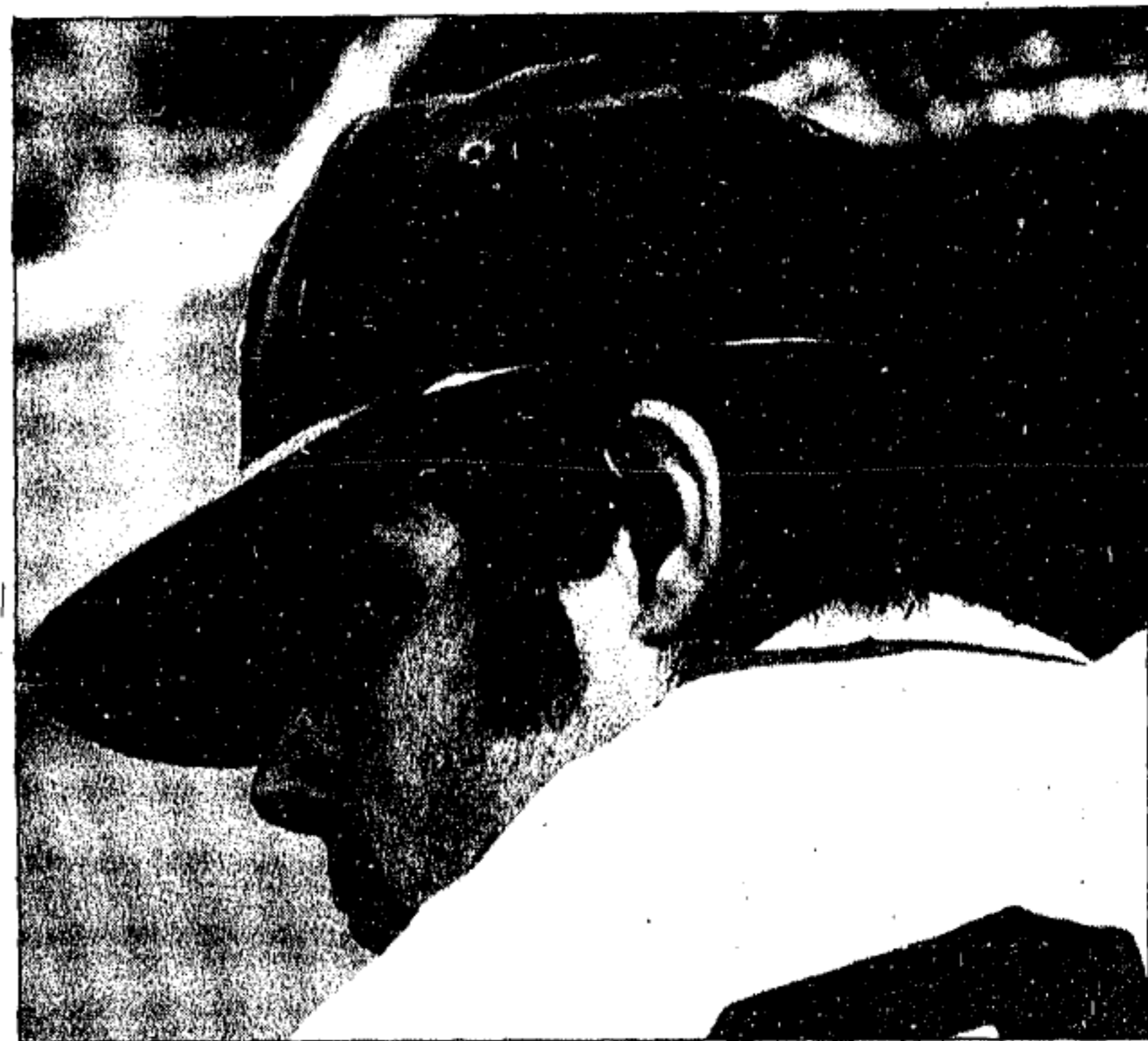
The Royals had lost seven out of nine when they finally got things turned around with a 7-6 victory over the Twins. They were within one out of winning the game, 6-5, but Tony Oliva homered to tie the score. Schaal won it in the last of the ninth with a home run.

The next night, the Royals rallied for four runs in the ninth to gain a 5-4 triumph.

As the Royals passed the July 4 milepost, they were hoping that they had righted themselves.

**Royals' Roundup:** John Mayberry was out July 3 with a jammed left wrist. It was only the second game he had missed this season and he returned to the lineup the following night. . . . Like many other teams, the Royals are complaining about the American League schedule which is chopped up into short trips and short home stands and is now virtually devoid of open dates.

. . . A new warning track surface has been installed from foul line to foul line at Royals Stadium. The outfielders get a sandpaper effect when they run on the 15-foot warning track. The new surface was sprayed on after outfielders complained that they could not tell when they left the synthetic playing field and reached the warning track, which is also synthetic.



Lou Piniella . . . Symptomatic Reaction

## OLD CROW.

Taste what it does for the 19th hole.



KENTUCKY STRAIGHT BOURBON WHISKEY, 86 PROOF, DISTILLED AND BOTTLED AT THE FAMOUS OLD CROW DISTILLERY CO., FRANKFORT, KY.