

Dierker Keys Astro Blast-Off

By JOHN WILSON

COCOA, Fla.—Larry Dierker needs 29 more victories to become the first pitcher to win 100 games in a Houston uniform. That may be a few too many to add in 1971, but Larry would like to get 20 of them. And, in any given year, he has to be figured as a potential 20-game winner.

Last season, the Houston right-hander won only 16 games. But it wasn't all that bad a season. For instance, only four National League pitchers worked more "low-run games" than Dierker. He held the opposition to two or fewer runs on 11 occasions. Bob Gibson, Ferguson Jenkins and Gaylord Perry did it 15 times each and Tom Seaver 12 times.

The only thing wrong with 1970 as Dierker saw it was the stretch from May 18 to July 17. Larry won his eighth game on May 18 and was off to a great 8-2 start, all of which seemed to indicate his second 20-game season was a cinch, barring injury. He won his ninth game on July 17—one day short of two months later.

Might Have Won 20

"If I'd pitched just half as well during those two months, I'd have won 20 games," Larry said. He probably wasn't that bad during the winless drought. But he wasn't the maximum Dierker and he wasn't getting any breaks. He put in two weeks in the Army during that period and obviously lost some of his edge and had to struggle to regain his groove.

Dierker goes to summer camp again this season, but this is his last year. He missed half of the 1967 season because of service commitment and has had two-week summer camp and monthly training sessions all his other years in the majors. But he has managed to compile a 71-62 record

with a team that has won 372 and lost 443 during that time.

Larry pitched his first major league game on his 18th birthday, September 22, 1965. He lost the game to the Giants, but had a moment of exhilaration by striking out Willie Mays with two men on base in the first inning. His total minor league experience was 39 innings in a rookie league.

Dierker twice has come close to no-hitters, but didn't even come out with a win either time.

Beaten by Blooper

In his final start of his rookie season in 1966, Larry retired the Mets through eight innings without a runner reaching base. Eddie Bresnold led off the ninth with a hit to left—there was no question it had to be a hit, but it was a catchable ball with top-flight fielding. Ron Hunt won the game for New York, 1-0, with a bloop hit that landed on the infield dirt after fluttering over the pulled-in infield.

In 1969, Dierker pitched a masterpiece at Atlanta in September. He never will pitch a better game and few pitchers ever will match it. Again the Astros couldn't score in nine innings. Larry had a no-hitter with two out in the ninth before an infield hit in the hole between third and short broke it. Dierker still shut out the Braves through 12 innings and the Astros scored two runs for him in the 13th, when Larry went out for a pinch-hitter. But the Braves scored three in the bottom of the 13th to snatch the victory away.

He had missed by one out, on a scratch hit, getting a no-hitter. He had pitched 12 shutout innings without winning the game, and even had seen a two-run lead dissipated in the 13th. Houston players still talk about Dierker's reaction. After that mag-

nificent performance, he sat on the bench and watched the victory ooze away and while people sneaked glances at him to see how he was taking it, Dierker sat there without a flicker of emotion. When it was over, he got up and walked quietly into the clubhouse. When the writers got to him, he said he sympathized with the pitchers who tried to stop the rally in the 13th because he knew how bad they must feel.

The Astros need a big year from the 24-year-old Dierker if they are to make a challenge this season. The team has confidence behind him. They expect to win when it's his turn to pitch.

Larry says that this year he wants to try to improve in some of the fringe areas. "I know I'm going to have about the same stuff that I've had and I should have the same kind of control," he said. "Those things aren't going to change much."

Plans for Improvement

"But I want to improve my hitting and my bunting, and if I do, I may stay in a game sometime when normally I'd have to go out for a pinch-hitter."

Astronotes: Ron Cook, rookie reliever for the Astros last season, has been bothered by a sore shoulder this spring and, with only 10 days left for the team in Florida, still hadn't thrown hard. . . . When Bill Greif was asked what kind of pitch he threw Montreal pitcher John O'Donohue that started him toward a defeat, he answered, "I would call it a hanging fast ball, if there were such a thing." . . . The Astros will open the season with Jim Wynn in center field and Cesar Cedeno in right field. The management is highly pleased with Wynn this spring and he appears to be happy, too. . . . The Astros played 10 straight games decided by one run.

Catcher Porter Opens Brewer Eyes

By LARRY WHITESIDE

TEMPE, Ariz. — Frank Lane, a talent scout of some reputation, did not hesitate to call young Darrell Porter the sensation of the Arizona spring training camps. It was generous praise for a 19-year-old catcher, but on closer examination, isn't altogether a far-fetched notion.

Porter was the No. 1 draft choice last summer in the free-agent draft by the Milwaukee club, which considers him one of its stars of the future.

He had only fair success in his first season with Clinton (Midwest), but was so impressive in the Arizona Winter Instructional League that he was invited to join the parent club in spring training.

The move proved to be better than the Brewers had hoped for. Porter has been hitting with power and, despite his inexperience, has survived a heavy diet of breaking pitches.

The Brewers have revised their timetable of another year in Class A, and perhaps he'll go to the Triple-A level or even the majors a lot sooner than expected.

Plenty of Promise

"The boy has outstanding ability," said Lane, "and if he doesn't make it to the majors, we might as well junk our farm system."

Porter, 6-0 and 190, signed with Milwaukee for a reported \$70,000. At the time, he was called the finest catching prospect to come out of the southwest since Johnny Bench. He hit only .200 at Clinton, but came into his own in the instructional league.

"His hitting really picked up there," said Karl Kuehl, one of the Brewer coaches who handled the Milwaukee team that won the divisional

title in that league. "There were a lot of good young players in the league, including several No. 1 draft choices, but it was generally agreed among the coaches that Porter was the best prospect."

"The ball seems to jump off the bat when he hits it and he does well around the plate."

Kuehl's opinion was shared by Bobby Mattick, director of player development for the Brewers and their chief scout.

Consistency Vital

"Consistency is the only thing he needs," said Mattick. "When you're scouting players, you pick the one you think might help your club. We knew there were three good catchers available and we figured someone would take Steve Dunning right off. Montreal and San Diego took catchers and when we found out Cleveland wanted Dunning, we made up our mind to take Porter."

"Porter has the tools to make it, but it might not be for a year or two. He can hit the ball a mile and is like a cat behind the plate. But you have to do it consistently to make it to the majors."

Porter, who looks big enough to shave, but not old enough, is for the moment a young man of extreme modesty.

"It's a great honor even to be invited here," he said, "and I still get nervous. I've got so much to learn and getting here to work with the team early certainly has helped me."

"I really had problems after I signed. The first thing I noticed about pro ball was that the pitching was better and I had so much trouble that it upset my entire game. I

couldn't catch. I couldn't do anything right for awhile."

"They even tried to play me in right field once in Clinton, but that didn't work out, either. They gave me a choice of where to play and I chose right because it seemed to me not many balls went that way. Well, that night they hit about 12 balls at me and I bet I missed six or seven of them. I'm a catcher from now on."

Perhaps the best testimonial for Porter came from Phil Roof, the Brewers' No. 1 receiver and the man Porter will replace one day if he's successful.

Dark Changes Mind

"I was talking about him with Alvin Dark (Cleveland manager) before a game one day," said Roof, "and I told him that this guy is going to be some kind of player some day."

"Dark took one look at the kid in warmup and yelled to me: 'I'm not impressed.'"

"After the game, during which Porter got one hit and hit two line drives that should have been hits, I yelled to Dark, 'How do you like him now, Alvin?'"

"He said to me: 'I'll take him. I'll take him right now.' I laughed because I knew he was going to say that."

Brewer Manager Dave Bristol had the last word, although he didn't say it directly about his young star.

"You never can tell about young talent," said the former manager of the Reds. "I had two veteran catchers one year and they were pretty mad at me for putting a young catcher ahead of them. No one's complaining now. Not about Johnny Bench."



Ed Spiezio . . . Fighting for His Job at Third Base.

Padre Defense Springs Some King-Size Leaks

By PAUL COUR

YUMA, Ariz. — That old Padre bugaboo, defense, has reared its ugly head again in the spring training camp of the National League tailenders.

The Padres were charged with 18 errors in their first 12 Cactus League games. Most of the leaks sprung on the left side of the infield—where the Padres have been vulnerable for two seasons.

Too many times the Padres gave the opposition four and five outs an inning, and they haven't been able to break the habit this spring.

The major problem was at third base, a position which was wide open after a month of spring drills.

The incumbent third sacker, Ed Spiezio, walked out of camp in a salary dispute. As spring training wore on, Manager Preston Gomez was looking for another third baseman. Meanwhile, Spiezio reconsidered and finally signed after missing over two weeks of exhibition games.

Spiezio's chief rivals for the job were second baseman Dave Campbell and John Sipin. Whether either was the answer remained to be seen.

Hernandez Hurt

The Padres' inner defense suffered a momentary jolt when rookie shortstop Enzo Hernandez, acquired in a winter trade from the Orioles, was sidelined in the fourth week with a pulled hamstring.

Hernandez had shored up the infield defense in the five games he played. "He can make all the plays," said Gomez of the 22-year-old Venezuelan. "He's going to need a lot of work with the bat, but if he doesn't let his hitting get him down, he'll help us."

Padre outfielders were having their defensive troubles, too, under the high sky in Arizona, losing balls in the sun.

The offense wasn't up to snuff, either. It was shut out in two of the first six games and held to one run in two other contests. Of course, Gomez wasn't going with his first team most of the time, taking a good look at kids who didn't figure to make the 25-player roster. Nate Colbert and Larry Stahl showed consistency with the bat.

While veteran Tom Phoebus, acquired from the Orioles, disappointed in his early outings, the pitching generally was a bright spot, as it figured to be.

Making strong bids for starting jobs were Al Santorini, Dick Kelley, Bill Laxton, Steve Arlin, Danny Coombs, Dave Roberts and Clay Kirby. Gary Ross and Al Severinsen sparkled in short relief.

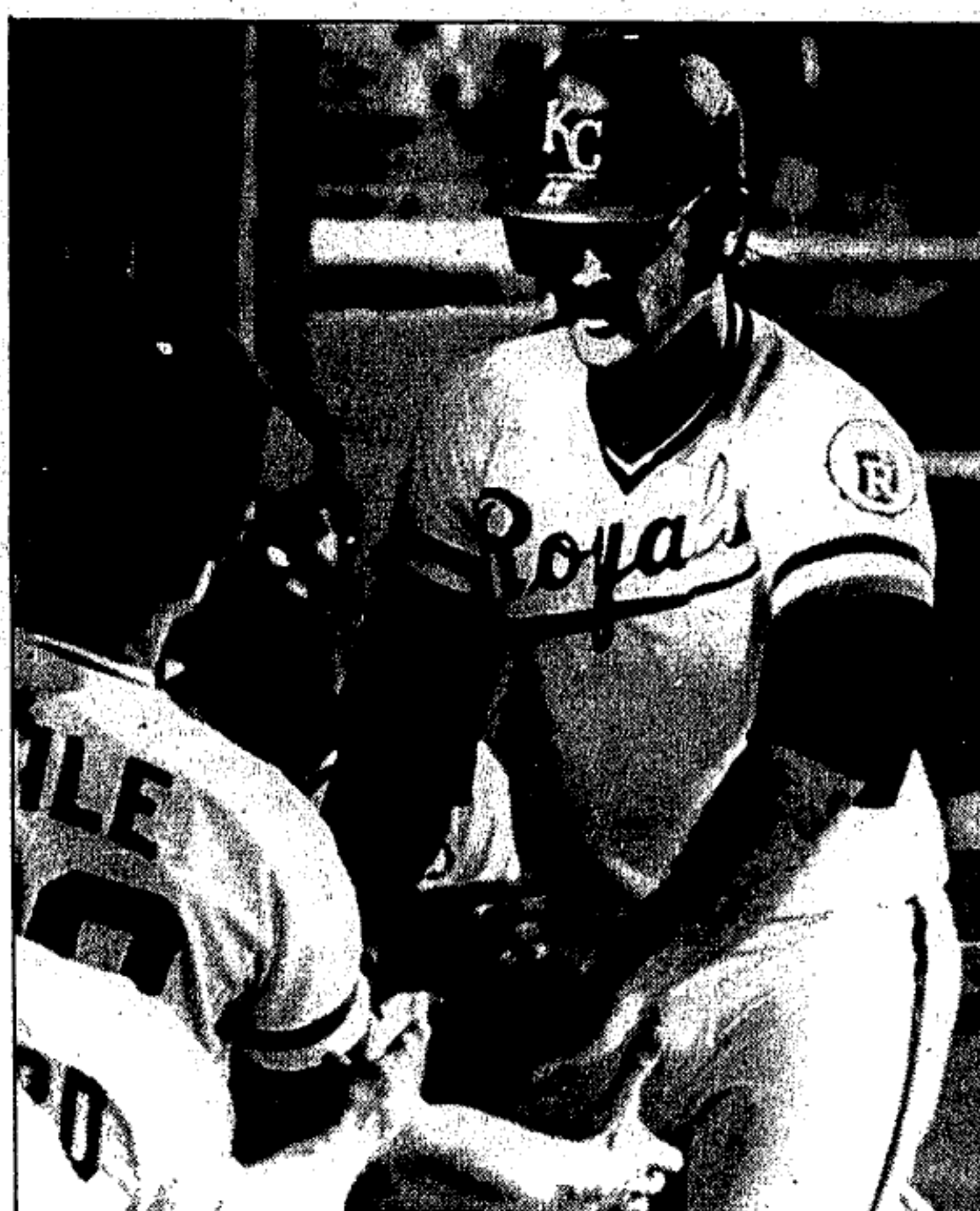
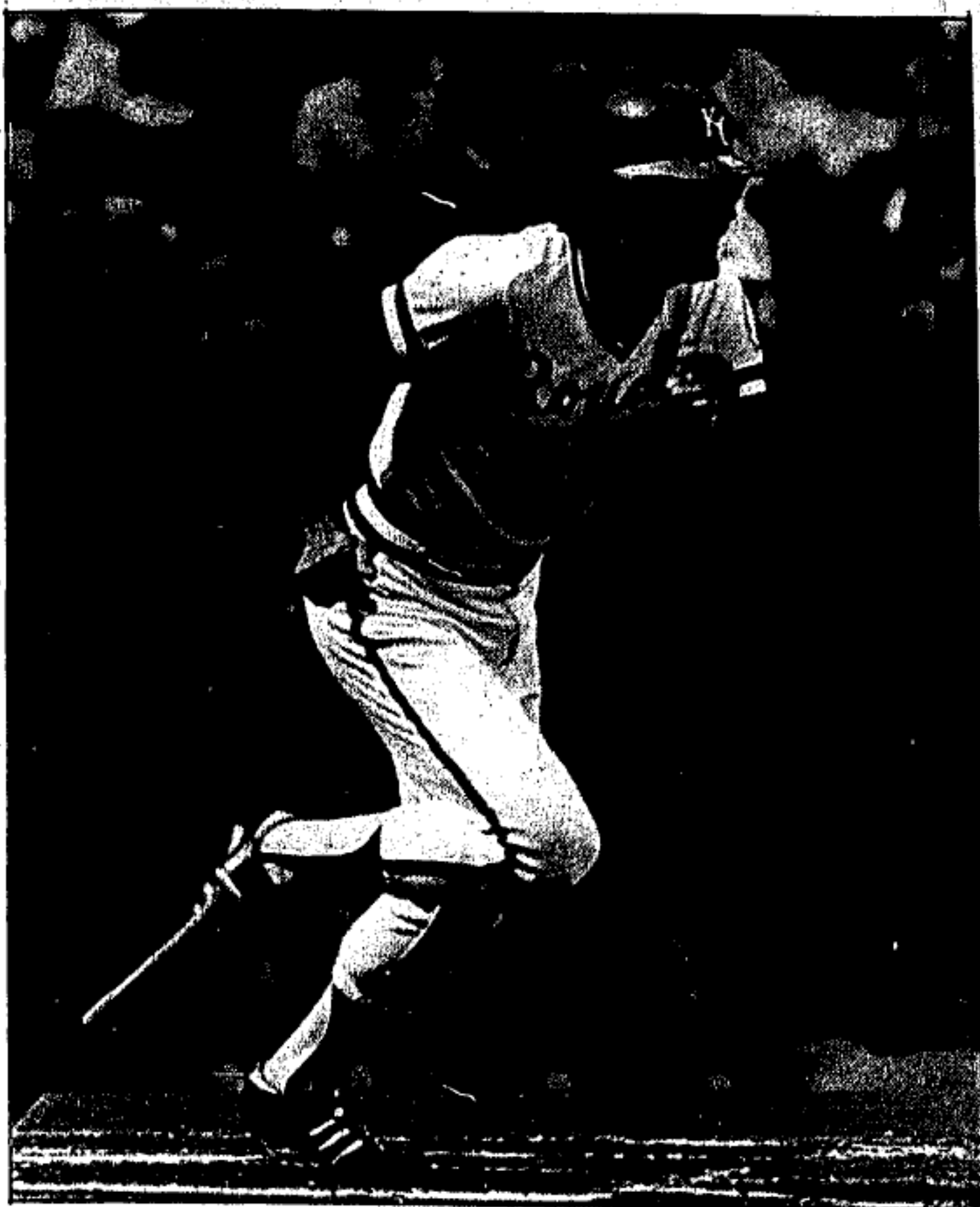
Roberts, Coombs and Kirby appeared to have the inside track on three spots with the fourth wide open.

Beene's Elbow Tender

Fred Beene, another ex-Oriole pitcher, continued to be troubled with a tender elbow, which kept him out of Cactus League action. Kelley was sporting a 2.00 earned-run average when he, too, was put out of action by a pulled hamstring. It wasn't expected to keep the big lefthander down long.

"Kelley's been a pleasant surprise," said Gomez. "He didn't pitch an inning for me last season because of that shoulder injury. He's throwing better than anyone in camp this spring. If he keeps it up, he'll have to be one of my starters."

Padre Pickups: The Padres signed John Duffy, a righthanded pitcher released by the Dodgers, as a free agent. He reported to the minor league camp here March 20. Duffy pitched at Spokane (Pacific Coast) and Albuquerque. . . . Pitcher Danny Coombs was named professional athlete of the year in his home state of Maine. . . . Catcher Mike Ivie, the top free-agent draft choice last June, and infielder John Hilton, the top pick in the January lottery, were in the same lineup for the Padre "B" squad against the Cubs. . . . Rookie pitcher Ralph Garcia bugged open a few eyes when he pitched three hitless innings and struck out four in the "B" scrimmage with the Cubs. Manager Leo Durocher, looking on, said Garcia's curve was the best he's seen this spring. The 22-year-old righthander was 0-1 at Tri Cities (Northwest) and 3-6 at Lodi (California), striking out 121 in 91 innings, after being picked up in the June free-agent draft.



Darrell Porter produces at plate . . . and is saluted by teammates

MITT STAR, HIT MASTER

Deal for Porter a Royal Steal

By DEL BLACK

KANSAS CITY—As far as Manager Whitey Herzog of the Royals is concerned, Darrell Porter is exactly where he should be at this juncture of his career:

The best catcher in the American League.

"When we got him, I told him that I believed he was among the four best catchers in the league," Herzog said. "I told him I thought he could be one of the top two after one season and in his third with the team I expected him to be the best in the league.

"Right now, that's exactly what he is. The All-Star catcher. He's proving this season he's really that good.

"I know one thing: without Darrell Porter, we sure wouldn't have won our second and third straight championships in the West Division."

Porter has improved with each season he has been in Kansas City livery. Obtained from Milwaukee in one of the great baseball steals, Porter has more than fulfilled Herzog's confidence in him.

"When we got Darrell, people just flat out told us we were making a mistake," Herzog recalled. "They said he had trouble at Milwaukee and that he'd never change. I had confidence in him or we wouldn't have made the trade. You can't give up on a guy with that kind of potential. All Darrell needed was a change of scenery. He's too good an athlete, with too much desire, not to make it in this game."

Kansas City's grand theft of Porter was staged on January 6, 1976, when he was obtained along with pitcher Jim Colborn for outfielder Jim Wohlford, infielder Jamie Quirk and a player to be named later—who turned out to be reliever Bob McClure.

While Colborn is now out of the majors, he won 18 games in 1977 for the Royals. What's more, Quirk is back with the Royals, ironically being employed as the No. 3 catcher, backup infielder and the club's top pinch-hitter.

It was Colborn who might have set the groundwork for smoothing Porter's entrance and subsequent acceptance as one of the Royal favorites. On the first day of spring training in '77, Colborn sat in a Fort Myers, Fla., lounge at the team's hotel and mentioned to several teammates:

"I think it would be good if a few of you guys would go out as soon as possible and have dinner with Darrell. I think it would really help him feel like he's wanted here. He needs it, and when he believes that, I think he'll really help this team."

The Royals took it from there, and Porter has turned his career around.

It was a career that had hit rock bottom in Brewerland in '76. He batted only .208 with five homers and 32 runs batted in during a 119-game stint. Porter had batted .232 the previous season, hammering 18 homers, with 60 RBIs. In '74, his first complete major league campaign, he swatted at a .241 clip, stroked a dozen roundtrippers and drove in 56 runs.

When he arrived in Kansas City, Darrell Porter's career was on the line, if not in jeopardy. He hadn't been treated as a complete catcher because the Brewer manager, Del Crandall, called all the pitches, and the fandom of Milwaukee took out their frustrations on the youngster, who when drafted No. 1 in June of 1970, was labeled the next Johnny Bench. So much was expected of this high-strung Oklahoman that the Brewers called him for his first major league exposure when he was an 18-year-old.

Now 27, Porter reluctantly looks back on some nightmarish experiences, personal and on the playing field, where he and Charley Moore were yo-yoed. He says little about what happened before Kansas City, only:

"I got to the point that I hated the game and didn't want to play it. I didn't want to go to the ball park. It wasn't fun anymore.

"Now it's fun. It has been ever since I've been here."

Porter is having a season of milestone proportions.

Going into the final two weeks of the season, the 6-0, 193-pounder was leading the league in walks, was third in on-base percentage, was fifth in triples and sixth in runs batted in.

Porter's production included climbing to the century plateau in bases on balls, hits, runs and RBIs.

What he is doing this season puts him in extremely fast company.

Porter is only the fifth catcher in American League history to reach 90 runs and 90 RBIs in a season. The others to accomplish this combination are Yogi Berra, Bill Dickey, Mickey Cochrane and Carlton Fisk. Porter is the second catcher in the league to hit the 100 mark in walks, runs and RBIs. Cochrane was the other, amassing 118 runs and 112 RBIs while walking 100 times in 1932.

The last American League player to pull off the 100-walk, runs and RBI feat was Boston's Carl Yastrzemski in 1970.

Needless to say, Porter is enjoying his finest major league season, producing career bests for home runs (20), hits (146), runs (96), RBIs (108), triples (10) and, of course, bases on balls.

Porter, whose batting average has hovered near .300 all season, hit .265 last year with 18 homers and 78 RBIs while collecting 138 hits.

"Yeah, knowing I've done all that makes me feel good," Porter said. "But the name of this game is winning, and that's why I'm out here. I want to win this thing (A. L. West) again, and if we don't, all that personal stuff doesn't mean as much."

The season hasn't been an easy one for Porter despite all his achievements in the wake of being elected the All-Star catcher in the American League.

His pitchers have struggled and he has at times taken their slumps with a blame-himself attitude.

"Darrell was getting frustrated," Herzog acknowledged. "He was blaming himself for what the pitchers were doing. What he didn't realize was that he was putting the same signs down this season as he did the last two, when all those earned-run averages were some of the best in the league. He wasn't the guy who was hanging the curves and sliders or not putting the ball where it should have been when most of the staff was struggling.

"I could see how upset he was making himself. So I used him as the DH a couple of times, and showed him that the pitching didn't get any better with him not behind the plate."

When the pitching collapsed in early July, Porter noted: "It's so frustrating that I'm just about ready to start jumpin' up and down and shoutin'. It's gettin' that bad."

But the pitching righted itself to a degree and the Royals mounted a stretch drive.

Porter, however, wasn't spared still more frustration. He encountered a slump about three weeks before the finish. He snapped out of it in the big four-game series against California at Royals Stadium, driving in 10 runs in the first three games while going 6-for-12 at the plate.

"I was more psyched up for this series than I've been for any in a long time," Porter said. "I came into it in sort of a slump, but Steve Boros (Royals' coach) pointed something out to me with some advice.

"He said he didn't think I was going up to the plate with a good idea about hitting. He told me to get my pitch instead of trying to hit the one they wanted to give me. It's really helped. I've got a lot better idea now."

That he leads Kansas City in RBIs, as a catcher brought an explanation from the lefthanded swinger.

"I've been fortunate to be put in the No. 4 hole (cleanup) quite a few times this season," he said. "With guys like Willie Wilson, Hal McRae, George Brett and sometimes Amos Otis hitting ahead of you, there are a lot of chances to drive in runs. Those guys get on base."

Along with Brett, Porter continues to be Mr. Clutch for Kansas City.

"If there's such a thing, I'd like to think I can get it done," Porter said, accepting the role. "I think catching gives me somewhat of an advantage; or at least it helps. I find out that the other real good hitters in the league look for the same things and we pitch them about the same way as other teams pitch our top hitters."

Porter has been especially effective against lefthanded hurlers, batting .284 with a half-dozen home runs.

"I've learned to hit lefties because I've opened up my stance," he explained. "Actually, I see them good and have a better chance of hitting the long ball because I'm up on the plate and can pull them."

Twelve of Porter's distance shots have come on the road.

"Darrell really has taken charge behind the plate, too," said Herzog. "When he first came over here, he looked for help. About the middle of that season, I went to him and said, 'Hey, you're my catcher.' From that time on, he's been in charge. Sure, he comes to me sometimes between innings and will ask about certain hitters, but as far as what goes on out there, he's taken command."

Herzog went into the season determined to give Porter a rest every now and then. With McRae on the disabled list for more than a month, the designated-hitter role opened up and served the purpose. Porter hit .325 in 40 at-bats as a DH.

"We wore Darrell down last season by catching him so much," Herzog admitted. "We had to because Duke (John Wathan) was hurt for almost a month. This year has been different and I think it's shown in his performance.

"The thing I like about Darrell Porter is that he plays with enthusiasm; he's a gamer. I'd hate to think where we'd be without him."

Royals Notes: Larry Gura pushed his record against California to 2-0 this season and 8-0 career-wise by beating the Angels in the third game of the four-game series in Kansas City.

Brett is only the fifth player in major league history in the 20-20-20 circle for doubles, triples and home runs. Brett's 200th hit and 100th RBI of the season came on an 11th-inning home run, his 21st, in beating Seattle. Brett also is closing in on 20 stolen bases. He leads the A. L. in hits, runs, triples and shares the leadership in two-baggers. The only other A. L. player to reach the 20s in doubles, triples and homers was Jeff Heath of Cleveland in 1941. Jim Bottomley of the Cardinals ('28), Willie Mays of the Giants ('57) and Frank Schulte of the Cubs ('11) are the others accomplishing the unusual triple.

Wilson recorded his 74th stolen base of the season by swiping his 34th in his last 35 attempts. The Kansas City left fielder was third in the A. L. with 13 triples. Wilson is the ninth player in A. L. history to steal as many as 70 bases and only the fifth since 1915. He had been thrown out only 11 times.

An 'Aware' Porter Tells His Story

By MIKE DeARMOND

KANSAS CITY—What about the drugs, Darrell? What about the drinking? Everywhere Darrell Porter goes, in every American League city, it is the same.

At first it made the Kansas City Royals' All-Star catcher uncomfortable. This delving into his bout with alcohol and drug addiction, a battle that took Porter out of spring training on March 14 and kept him out of a Royals' uniform for six weeks, made Porter so uncomfortable that he didn't want to talk about it.

But gradually, as he has tasted the acceptance and admiration of the fans around the league, Porter has begun to drop the veil of secrecy that at first surrounded his off-the-field problems.

While teammates and hometown fans rush to defend his right of privacy, Porter has now taken another tack.

"I hope it never gets shoved completely under the rug," Porter said. "I've always got to be aware of it myself, because I'm a drug addict and I am an alcoholic, and I will be for the rest of my life. It means that I am more or less allergic to alcohol and drugs. It's something I've got to be constantly aware of."

Such problems are not naturally interwoven into the fabric of athletic greatness. They tarnish the image.

Only Darrell Porter doesn't view it that way.

"I'm telling my story," he said. "And, in essence, what I'm trying to do is help other people."

And so, around the batting cage on one sunny afternoon, Porter spoke words that rang with the tenor of conviction. Without hesitation, with the perception of a story straight from the soul, Porter spoke of his personal hell that began 10 years ago on a cool summer night in Appleton, Wis.

"It started with a lot of loneliness," Porter said. "I'd always been a star, ever since I started playing baseball. From Little League all the way through high school (in Oklahoma City). I was one of the best players around in the area."

"When I started playing pro ball, the first year, I got in there with a bunch of people who were just like me. For the first time in my career, I struggled. It was hard. It was work. It wasn't just go out and do it."

"And I was lonely. I'd never been away from home before. That was the killer, the loneliness."

The year was 1970. Porter, then a brash young 18-year-old, was feeling more young than brash. His batting average, which would later top out at .200 in 62 games with the Milwaukee Brewers' Class A Midwest League club in Clinton, Iowa, was considerably less than that when the team hit the road for a midsummer series.

"We were going real bad, and we were in Appleton," Porter said. "I was going out early (to the park) every day. I was the only guy on the team that was going out early. They made me. The coach was taking me out."

"Besides being lonely, besides feeling like I'd failed, I had to go out and work out every day all by myself."

Porter's athletic successes were behind him. They didn't help when he trudged back to his motel room, alone. He was desperate. In high school, Porter was never known as a drinker. Far from it.

"I took one sip of beer and that was all," he said. "I used to be the guy that drove all my friends around. They'd drink and I'd drive."

But Porter was alone, and frustrated. And so, he dropped by some teammates' room and asked if anybody wanted to hit a bar.

"We got out there and we proceeded to get pretty well soused," Porter said.

"It was remarkable. I'd found my answer, man. No more loneliness. You kidding? This is great! Alcohol! Make me have a good time. Fun, fun, fun!"

"Little did I know," Porter said. "It always starts that way. Alcohol and drugs are a fun thing. They do what you want 'em to do."

One year later, Porter began taking drugs.

"I went to winter ball," he said. "Somebody introduced me to marijuana. It started on pot. That was great, too. It really was a blast."

"Smoke pot and get high and you just laugh and laugh. You'll laugh at anything."

"I just progressed up," Porter said, preferring not to reveal the drugs he used. "One thing just led to another."

Ten years later, March 14, 1980, Porter made the decision that he flatly states saved his life. He went to Joe Burke, executive vice-president and general manager of the Royals, and said he needed help. Porter enrolled in The Meadows, a rehabilitation clinic, and spent six weeks there, returning to the Royals in late April.

Recently, Porter was batting .300 with 29 runs batted in and five game-winning RBIs. Those statistics, and the sensational nature of his battle against drugs and drinking, continue to make him an extra special news item both at home and on the road.

In some circles, it is said that Porter's off-the-field problems should be forgotten, that it is a topic that should not be discussed in the media. Forget it. Sweep it under the rug. Don't pick on Darrell Porter.

"There are days when I just cannot handle it," Porter said. "They told me, though, that when I left The Meadows, it would take me 12 to 18 months to get my mind really started functioning back to normal."

"There are days when my mind is just a tangled mess. It's hard for me to put things together. It's hard for me to make decisions sometimes."

"That will pass. But it's going to take me awhile. It blows me away. What brings me back is the fact that it will vanish."

"I did drugs for 10 years, so I've gotta be patient. It's going to take time."

It is, at times, hard for Darrell Porter to accept that fact. "I'm the kind of guy that when I want something, I like it right now," he said. "I'm pretty impatient. I want my health and I want my sanity. And it's not coming like-wham! But it's coming, gradually."

Royalties: Frank White says his \$150,000 a year salary places him outside the top five in the pay scale for major league second basemen and he wants to renegotiate his contract. Club policy prohibits renegotiation. So, White says, "When you've got a situation that's unresolvable, you've just got to part. You've just got to go separate ways." White doesn't expect the Royals to reverse the policy. "The only thing I do expect is to talk to Joe (Burke) when the season's over. And, if I get the same answer, I'll just ask him to try to work a deal for me."

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Porter Faces Alcohol Problem

By DEL BLACK

FORT MYERS, Fla.—More than a week after catcher Darrell Porter left the Kansas City Royals' training camp under mysterious circumstances, his father revealed the reason for the catcher's absence. Darrell is under treatment for alcoholism, according to Ray Porter of Oklahoma City.

Royals officials had steadfastly refused to say why the 28-year-old standout catcher had left camp. General Manager Joe Burke had called it a "confidential and personal problem."

But when a Kansas City Star reporter talked to Darrell's father March 22, the story came out. Ray Porter said his son had been afflicted with alcoholism for most of his 10-year pro career, including seven seasons in the majors.

The elder Porter, a service manager for a car dealer, said he himself had suffered from alcoholism and had conquered it. He said he'd known of Darrell's problem for about three years.

Darrell has been a standout player for Kansas City for three years after prior service with the Milwaukee

Brewers. He batted .291 last season, with 20 home runs and 112 RBIs. He is the second major leaguer whose alcohol problem has been revealed this spring. Earlier, pitcher Bob Welch of the Los Angeles Dodgers acknowledged he'd been undergoing treatment as an alcoholic.

The elder Porter refused to reveal where his son is taking treatment. He did say he'd been in contact with Darrell, who reported he was "coming along fine." The program will continue until late April, the father said.

Ray Porter blamed his son's problem, in part, on "pressures and the environment professional athletes are in all the time. There are a lot of lonesome times," the athlete's father said. "Darrell's not any exception."

The elder Porter said the biggest problem his son faced with his rehabilitation was anticipated public reaction.

"It's a pretty big thing to him. Darrell doesn't know how people are going to feel about this thing," Porter said. "Him being a professional athlete, they (fans) ask, 'How could he have a problem? He has the greatest of everything going.' But there is immense pressure out there."

"Some people say he's just hiding out for a better contract," Porter said of his son. "I find that vulgar."

Darrell had talked intimately with his father over a three-year period about his alcoholism, the elder Porter said.

"He has been seriously concerned about it the last year and a half to two years," his father said.

Porter said his son began treatment because of a need to renew his Christian convictions.

"He was a Christian at one time, but his personal life became so messed up it took him a long time to realize he wanted to straighten his life up once more," Porter said. "Someone approached him in spring training and encouraged Darrell to kick it out in the open and tell the club he was making a decision now."

The elder Porter said his son's greatest alcohol consumption has been during the off-seasons.

"Winter is his play time. Darrell doesn't have that much of a drinking problem during the season," his father said, "but you don't become an alcoholic without some continual involvement."

Porter said the continuation of his son's career would depend on the team's acceptance of his treatment. He is expected to join the team shortly after his release.

"Darrell loves Kansas City and he loves the Royals. That has been his happiest time since he became a pro," the elder Porter said.

Porter said his son was embarrassed about how he would be accepted by the fans and his fellow players.

"I told him the other day that it takes a major leaguer to make this decision, to risk the public's acceptance of you and say, 'This is what I've got to do.'"

Porter said his son will publicly explain his illness with the intention of helping others avoid the problem.

"I think it's probably a blessing this thing happened."

Royalties: Non-roster pitchers John Skinner, Atlee Hammaker and Jeff Twitty were sent to the Royals' minor league complex in Sarasota. . . . The Royals are wearing special warmup shirts for the first time. The blue jerseys will be worn during batting practice and pre-game workouts throughout the season. . . . Pitcher Steve Busby has returned to camp and is carrying out much of the rehabilitation prescribed after arthroscopic surgery on his left knee early in March.

Brown Battles Three Vets For Yankee Left Field Post

By PHIL PEPE

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla.—It's primary time and with the position up for grabs, the candidates are battling it out hot and heavy, stumping up and down both coasts, hoping to impress the voters.

These are the candidates: Louis Victor Piniella, Oscar Charles Gamble, Bobby Ray Murcer, Rogers Lee (Bobby) Brown.

The position for which they are campaigning is left field, New York Yankees, and each has his own platform. There is no clear frontrunner, although Piniella and Gamble might have a leg up because of their special talents.

It's not really a one-man office, not like the presidency or governorship. The office can be shared and in all probability it will be. It's also probable that each of the four will get a shot this year.

Piniella will likely be used primarily against lefthanded pitchers, at least in the first half of the season. Gamble's potent bat will be in there against righties, either as left fielder or designated hitter. That leaves Murcer and Brown, an established veteran and a kid, seeking an opportunity, but neither with any assurances.

"I'm not looking to make a big thing about it," said Murcer. "Not now. Not before they have made a decision. I intend to talk with Dick (Howser) about my situation, to get an idea what he has in mind."

At 34, Murcer doesn't think he's ready to be put out to pasture, unless you're talking about the left field pasture in Yankee Stadium. His last two seasons were subpar for him, but prior to that he had two years in which he had a total of 50 homers and 179 RBIs.

"I've never been a part-time player," he said. "I've always been an everyday player. I don't think I can be effective if I have to go a week or a week and a half without playing. You mean all of a sudden I can't hit lefthanders? I've always hit lefthanders. If I play every day, depending on where I bat in the lineup, I'll hit my 20 to 30 home runs and drive in 90 runs, just like I've always done."

Brown, 25, has not done the things in the major leagues to which he can point with pride. His time, Brown believes, has yet to come. But he thinks it is coming, provided he gets the opportunity.

"All he needs is confidence," insists General Manager Gene Michael, who was Brown's manager at Columbus (International) last year, when he batted .349, hit eight homers, drove in 41 runs and stole 25 bases in less than half a season. "I don't believe you can have confidence before you have success. I have no doubt if he went back to Columbus, he would hit between .320 and .360 because he would have confidence. If he gets a little success in the big leagues, he'll get the confidence."

After his brilliant start at Columbus, Brown bounced up and down between Columbus and New York, where he was in and out of the lineup.

"It's hard to play when you go to the ballpark knowing you're not really wanted in the lineup," he said.

That was a subtle reference to former Manager Billy Martin, who seemed to resist the front-office suggestions that Brown play every day once Mickey Rivers was traded. Billy was more intent on finishing ahead of Detroit and went with Murcer, the veteran, in center most of the time.

Now, with Rupe Jones taking over in center, Brown is tossed into the race for left with the veterans. His attributes are speed and youth. The early returns indicate he is lagging in the race.

"To tell you the truth," he said, "I haven't tried to size up the situation. I'm taking the approach that I'll do the best I can when I get the chance to play and see what I can learn when I'm not playing. Nobody has promised me anything. Last year, after they traded Rivers, they promised me I would play every day. Then I was in and out of the lineup and I wondered what I did wrong."

"This year, I'm going to just try and make contact instead of going for the long ball. They pay those other guys \$3 million to hit home runs. I'm just going to try to make contact and get on base and try to do the things I can do best, and I'm going to work on my defense with the help of Paul Blair."

Blair, a special spring training outfield instructor, says Brown has all the tools to be an outstanding outfielder.

"I think his problem is that he has a tendency to run past the ball. He runs too long without looking at the ball. He should be able to pick the ball up early, but that's something he can correct. Last year he never relaxed because he was up and down and in and out of the lineup. You can't play this game without being relaxed."

Yankee Doodles: The Yankees went right up to the inter-league trading deadline thinking they had an excellent shot at acquiring veteran righthander Don Sutton from the Los Angeles Dodgers. LA wanted lefty Dave Righetti in return, but the Yanks said nothing doing. Instead, they prepared a list of seven prospects, from which the Dodgers could choose, then waited for a call that never came. . . . The last Yankee regular to pitch in a spring game was Luis Tiant, who worked three hitless innings against the Texas Rangers.

A two-day trip to New Orleans to play two games with the Orioles in the Superdome resulted in one Yankee casualty. Graig Nettles took a ground ball off his chest, the ball ricocheting off his right little finger, which was dislocated. X-rays showed no broken bones and Nettles was expected to miss about a week. . . . Ron Guidry and attorney John Schneider are involved in negotiations to extend the lefty's contract past 1981, when the present pact expires. Guidry is looking for a package that will pay him an average of \$700,000 per year regardless of length, although he'd like a five-year extension. He earns almost \$200,000 now.

Morabito Resigns

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla.—Mickey Morabito, director of public relations of the Yankees for the past 3½ years, has resigned to pursue other opportunities.

Morabito, 28, joined the Yankees 10 years ago, working in a variety of capacities until he was named director of public relations in November of 1976.

"It was a difficult decision to make," said Morabito, "but I think it's time to move into other areas."

With his resignation, the Yankees announced a restructuring of their public relations department. Larry Wahl, 26, Morabito's assistant, was named director of media relations and John Fugazy, 28, was appointed director of public relations. Fugazy had been the Yanks' director of marketing services.

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MVP Porter Has a Case of the Shorts

By MIKE MCKENZIE

ATLANTA—In the bedlam of the St. Louis Cardinals' pennant clinching, catcher Darrell Porter tried to do eleven things at once.

He squinted into TV lights as one last straggler requested one last interview. "Happy to oblige," Porter said, "but let me find my underwear first."

Club officials paged him. Hurry, Darrell. Time to get on the bus. Flight time. Time to head back to St. Louis.

The Cardinals had laid waste to the Atlanta Braves in a three-game sweep for the National League championship. Standing at the heart of the attendant joy in the clubhouse after the 6-2 victory October 10 was Porter, still in the buff some 90 minutes after the fact and trying desperately to do something about it. Darn those missing scanties.

He granted the quickie interview. Hugged a friend. Stuffed catcher's mitts and what-not hurriedly and sloppily into a duffel bag. And put the bus-beckoners on hold. Where in tarnation had those underpants gone...?

"Can't believe all this," Porter was saying as he gathered the confusion in a concentrated effort to get out of town. "Fantastic. Really neat."

His niche in the hour of triumph: Most Valuable Player of the N.L. Championship Series. "Now that has to be what you call a long shot," Porter said.

This hadn't been the best of years for Porter. Nor the worst. He had missed 42 games in the regular season because of a hand injury. He has battled slumps and head games with a sometimes-hostile home crowd. His .231 batting average was 20 points off his norm, and 50 off what fairly should be expected of him. His runs (46) and runs batted in (48) and home runs (12) are half what the Cardinals are looking for in return for an approximate \$700,000 annual salary, based on his past flashes of production.

His playoff numbers were more the ticket the Cardinals thought they had punched when they signed Porter from the free agent market two years ago. Against the Braves, he was on base 10 times in 14 appearances at bat—five hits (three doubles, a record for three games), five walks, three runs, an important run batted in. Plus, he threw out two runners attempting to steal, both times nipping a possible rally.

"I just decided to relax and have fun, that's been the difference," Porter said. "I ain't ever-going to put any more pressure on myself."

That wasn't to be easy, given circumstances of the World Series. The opponent was Milwaukee. The Brewers' catcher is Ted Simmons.

The reaction of St. Louis fans to Porter replacing Simmons has been a constant for two seasons now: Boooooo!

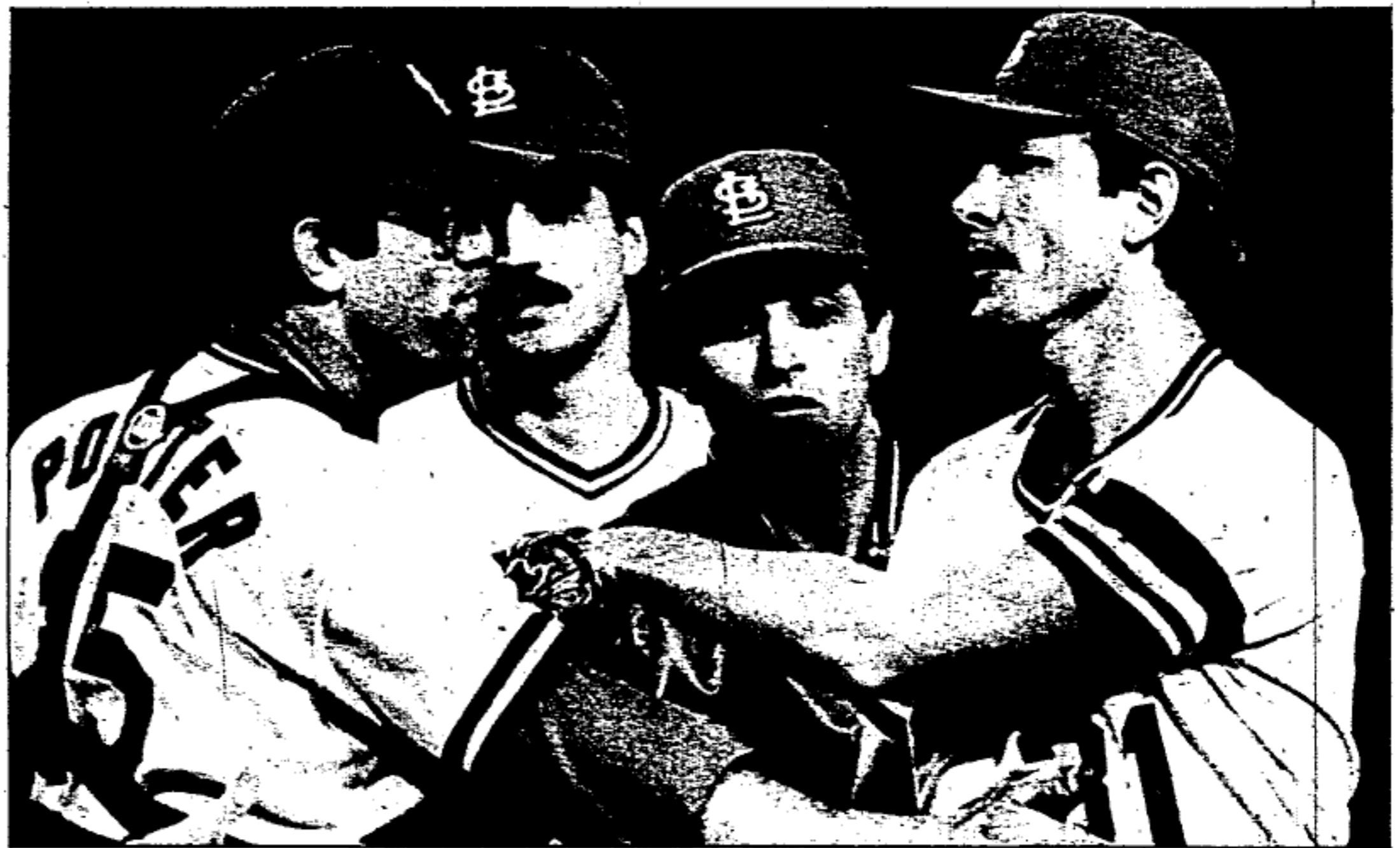
Was he ready to handle the face-to-face situation? "I doubt it," Porter said. "I wouldn't count on me going any higher."

Porter has struggled hard to overcome the unwelcome feelings. Sometimes they are overwhelming.

During the first two games of the playoffs in St. Louis he was greeted warmly before he batted, and ecstatically after he batted well.

"A lot of people have been pretty good to me, really," Porter said. "But you always hear the boos and don't hear the cheers as much. I'm out to win the boos over, too."

The thing is, he didn't relish coming before them in the first



Darrell Porter (left) had more trouble off the field than on it.

place. His signing with the Cardinals was a tearful occasion.

Porter never wanted to leave Kansas City. He had enjoyed three outstanding seasons there. He owns a lakeside home he loves. He took a local bride. And 1980 ended in a World Series after it had begun in a nightmare.

In the winter of '79, following his most prolific season, he turned down a long-term, high-pay contract offer from the Royals. And not many weeks later Porter found himself in Arizona, his world crashing down around his shoulders.

He was admitted to The Meadows, a center for treatment of drug and alcohol dependency. When he returned he was a shadow of his former self on the field.

The Royals wanted to keep him, but they were not willing to reward him handsomely for a bad year, nor were they willing to make a long-range investment not knowing if Porter could rebound from his personal battle.

Doctors told Porter he would be a year to two on the mend in his drug rehabilitation and to beware of danger signals. There was no way to tell if he could perform well again.

The Cardinals gambled. Manager Whitey Herzog thought he knew something of Porter's mettle from their three years together on the Royals. "The teams he's played for haven't done anything but win since 1976, so he must be doing something right," Herzog said. "Yet people are mad because he replaced Simmons, who never was on a winner. I don't understand it."

Porter has picked up the pieces, if slowly and not always surely. He has stayed sober, become a father—two giant steps,

he said.

"Most of my frustration has been because I couldn't do anything," he said, referring to injuries and unproductive hitting. "Now I'm feeling better than ever before. That's the key. The last five months or so I've begun to know who I am again, what I'm all about. My reality for so long was being high all the time—that unrealistic world of drugs."

"I was miserable. Drugs mess you up. But eventually you can feel good, and I'm here to tell people that. All things considered, this is the peak of my career. A lot of good things happened to me in Kansas City, but I wasn't capable of appreciating it."

Cardinals teammates have stood by Porter in his personal struggle, he said. They showed their respect by not involving him in champagne baths after clinching the East Division title and the N.L. championship. "I'm glad they didn't, because that stuff might get in my pores and get me drunk," Porter said with a laugh.

Teammate Bruce Sutter, when he witnessed the crush of attention focusing on Porter after the clincher against the Braves, said: "There's a hard-working man. He's had a ton of problems, but he kept his head up. I'm happy for him that it ended all right."

Well, almost all.

"You know what I think?" Porter said, finally sliding his legs into his slacks. "I think that woman reporter that was in here got my underwear."

—Cardinals

(Continued From Page 20)

him toward home. The Braves were just now surrounding the baseball.

Alas, too late. With anguish on his face, McGee had to stay at third.

"He turned a five-base hit into a three-base hit," said Herzog with a chuckle. "But that's Willie—that's what makes him exciting."

Herzog could afford to chuckle because, much to McGee's relief, Ozzie Smith lofted a long fly to center and Willie scooted home with the first run of what developed into a 7-0 St. Louis victory.

McGee's run would have been enough this night for Forsch, the 32-year-old righthander who was in his first postseason game after having an effective, albeit largely uncelebrated eight-year career with the Cardinals.

A pair of singles by Washington and one by Benedict were all Atlanta could muster against Forsch, who walked no one and struck out six—a total Forsch hastened to point out that was high for his style of pitching. "I'm the type of guy," he said, "who throws ground balls and lets the defense have fun. Sometimes, it isn't real pretty."

Teammate Keith Hernandez, who arrived with the Cardinals within days of Forsch, said, "He's been underrated for a long time. He's been better the last two years than I've even seen him. He's a polished pitcher now. And tonight he was brilliant."

The Cardinals, who won the East Division despite a league-low 67 homers, accumulated five runs in the sixth inning with a variety of singles. Six singles, in fact, a record for one inning in the playoffs. That's their style—singles, speed and scrape up all you can get. The Braves helped things along when their pitchers had problems covering first base. Lonnie Smith started the

inning when Perez let first baseman Chambliss' throw bounce off his glove. Later, reliever Steve Bedrosian neglected to cover on Ken Oberkfell's grounder and Chambliss slipped and fell as he tried to run for the bag.

A poor throw by second baseman Glenn Hubbard led to another St. Louis run in the eighth. Torre surprised no one when he said: "We didn't play very well."

The next night, October 8, the Braves didn't play at all. The weather forecast was so gloomy that many fans didn't bother to make the trek to the stadium. Indeed, the monsoon hit shortly before game time and Feeney quickly called his second postponement in three days. The delay seemed to be a stroke of good fortune for the Braves, it gave Niekro an extra day of rest for Game 2.

Niekro's knuckler was dancing—perhaps too much when he started again October 9. In the first inning, he wild-pitched Oberkfell home. By the fifth, though, Niekro had a 3-1 lead. McGee, in center field, contributed by missing Rafael Ramirez' run-scoring single in the third inning. Ramirez scored, too, on the three-base error and Atlanta had a 2-1 lead. Niekro himself poled a sacrifice fly for a run in the fifth.

After the Cardinals scored a run in the sixth, getting four hits, Torre replaced Niekro with a pinch-hitter and trusted bullpen ace Gene Garber to protect the one-run lead.

But the Cardinals scratched up the tying run in the eighth on a walk, George Hendrick's single and a fielder's choice.

So it had come down to a duel between the two relief stars—Garber and the Cardinals' Sutter, who had arrived in the top of the eighth to defuse an Atlanta threat. To a loud chorus of "B-r-u-u-u-u-u-e!" Sutter ran through three quick outs in the ninth. Garber couldn't match him.

David Green, another swift St. Louis rookie, singled, went to

second on Tommy Herr's bunt and home on Oberkfell's drive to center. This prompted questions about strategy.

Why didn't Torre intentionally walk Oberkfell to set up a double-play situation? That would have brought in Dane Iorg to bat for Sutter with one out. That, Torre explained, would have been dandy if Iorg had cooperated by hitting into a DP; but, if he didn't, Garber would have to contend with Hernandez.

"I never considered walking Oberkfell," Torre said.

"If I'd been in that situation," Herzog said, "I'd have done the same thing."

So Oberkfell, despite his 6-for-10 record against Garber this season, got to swing and he hit a shot just out of racing center fielder Brett Butler's reach. The Cardinals had a 4-3 victory and were headed toward their 13th N.L. pennant.

In Game 3, Torre started Rick Camp and the Cardinals sent him to the showers in the second inning. Hernandez singled, Porter walked and Hendrick sent home Hernandez with a single. Next up was McGee, who slapped a drive to right center for a two-run triple. Ozzie Smith's single plated McGee and Camp was finished.

Hernandez drove home a fifth run in the fifth inning, making things easy for Andujar in his second start of the series. Joaquin had a two-hit shutout through six innings, but needed Sutter's help after giving up four hits and the two runs in the seventh.

"If I'd had a vote for MVP," said Porter, who won that honor, "I would have made it a split vote between Willie McGee and our entire pitching staff. To me, those were the keys."

"Our pitchers didn't allow a home run to a team that led the National League in homers. Our pitchers just made good pitches to the right spots. If you wandered a little bit, with their big guns, they would kill you."

Porter Cleaning Up at Royal Dish

By SID BORDMAN

KANSAS CITY—A year ago, Darrell Porter celebrated his move to Kansas City by batting .275, with 16 home runs and 60 RBIs to help the Royals win their second straight American League West title.

The rugged 26-year-old lefthanded-swinging Oklahoman is on the same plateau this season, one of the Royals' most valuable players.

"Even better than last year," said Manager Whitey Herzog of Porter. "Darrell is a 'gamer,' a guy who comes to the park every day ready to play as hard as he can. He's been a lifesaver for us. He made the All-Star Team—and deserved it."

As the Royals braced for their September fling, Porter definitely was a key to their chances of beating California and Texas to the wire.

MOVING INTO a homestand against Chicago and Detroit, Porter was hitting .280, with 13 home runs and 61 RBIs, one more than he collected last season. Four of his homers were off southpaws.

On the Royals' trip to Chicago (1-2) and Texas (1-2), Porter clouted four homers and drove in eight of the Royals' 17 runs.

In Arlington, where Porter is regarded as an Oklahoma varmint more than a standout major league catcher, he went 6-for-11 with three homers, a double and six RBIs. His two homers helped Kansas City salvage the finale of the series, 4-2, which returned the Royals to first place in the Wild, Wild West.

"These Texas fans make me mad," said Darrell. "They keep me fired up. I guess

they're still mad about the fight we had here last season."

PORTER ISN'T wrong. The Ranger faithful cannot forget the battle that erupted when Porter and Bump Wills became involved in a ruckus during a rundown between third base and home plate.

"One guy kept yelling at me," recalled Porter, "telling me I wasn't even a Double-A catcher. I don't like that."

In 12 games, Porter had punished A.L. pitching for 19-for-48 (.396), with three doubles, five homers, a triple, 15 runs scored and 13 RBIs.

"Every time I hit a snag, I just remind myself to get more aggressive with the bat," noted Porter, whose catching has been as impressive as his hitting.

"Lately, I've moved up in the box and toward the plate," added Porter, "and I can tell the difference. I've opened up my stance against lefthanders and have done okay. So I've kept it open against righthanders, too, and I'm hitting with more power."

"When all of my mechanics are down pat—sometimes I'll accidentally hit one out of the park."

"DON'T LET HIM kid you," said Herzog, smiling. "Darrell can hit some homers. He's a threat in any park, although our place is tough for anybody."

Porter, whom the Royals obtained from Milwaukee with pitcher Jim Colborn before last season, said he has never been more comfortable in a baseball uniform.

"Now I feel more at ease around our fans," he pointed out. "Trying to fit in with the new club and its fans is an adjustment.

Except for the new surroundings, I didn't have a lot of trouble last season. There was little pressure because everybody on the club was having a good year. I didn't have to ask myself to do anything extra.

"We've had some guys not going as well as last season. So earlier this season I probably put too much pressure on myself to pick up the slack. And I hurt my hitting. Overall, I've been more consistent—and that was one of my goals."

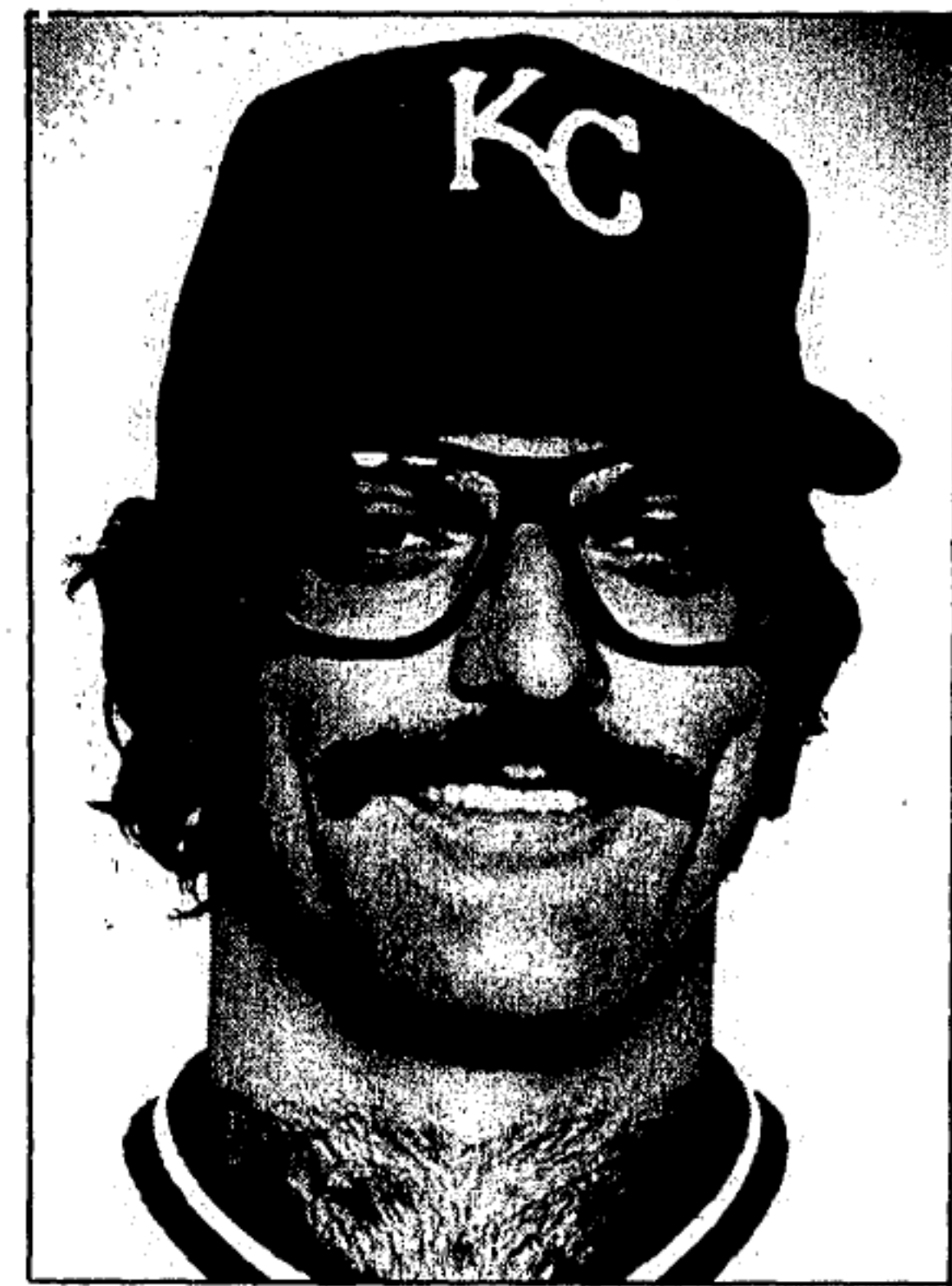
PORTER IS doing more than collecting base-hits. He has become a cap collector deluxe. And the top of the lockers in the clubhouse at Royals Stadium reflects it.

"I started collecting them in spring training," Porter said. "I picked up four one week. Then people started helping me. I've got 'em from all over the country. I'd say I've got more than 250 of 'em—and still looking."

Somehow or other, Porter has received few "caps" from Texas.

Royals' Roundup: By beating out a bouncer to the right of shortstop Don Kessinger in the sixth inning, George Brett ended his longest slump as a major leaguer, 0-for-21, August 26. It was the first time the slugging third baseman had gone longer than three games without a hit during the last three seasons. He went three games without a safety once in 1976. . . . Reserve infielder U. L. Washington sprained his left ankle August 25 against the Rangers in Texas and was expected to be on the sidelines for a week or two.

Steve Busby, former Royals' ace righthander attempting to come back after



Darrell Porter

shoulder surgery, was placed on the major league roster September 1. Busby prepped for his return to the majors by twirling two scoreless stints (four and six-inning ones) for Sarasota, the Royals' Gulf Coast Rookie League club. "I feel good," said Busby after throwing in batting practice for the Royals. "In Florida, my fast ball was timed at 86 miles an hour and slider at 83. The speed of my slider is very encouraging." . . . Catchers Jim Gaudet and Art Kusnyer, pitcher George Throop and outfielders Joe Zdeb and Luis Silverio were brought up from Omaha for the final month of the season.

A's in Rut, But Rookie Robinson in High Gear

By TOM WEIR

OAKLAND—No one ever will accuse Bruce Robinson of having his induction into the major leagues made easy by a lucky break.

It's true the A's rookie catcher

wouldn't have been inserted in Oakland's starting lineup unless a hyperextended knee had forced Jeff Newman onto the disabled list.

But no one could have picked a tougher time to move up from the

Triple-A level.

In Robinson's first 10 major league games, he faced Jim Palmer twice and also got to see Bill Lee, Catfish Hunter, Ed Figueroa and Mike Flanagan.

Yet the 24-year-old jumped in

with a .361 start and was held hitless in only one game.

"The first day was quite a shock," said Robinson of getting called up from Vancouver (Pacific Coast). "I didn't get any sleep because I rushed to get here. Then I

read in the paper that Bill Lee was the pitcher."

SINCE BOTH Robinson and Boston's Lee are lefties, it seemed certain Robinson would sit while Jim Essian caught. That's not how things work in Oakland, however. When the A's signed Tito Fuentes in June, he arrived five minutes before game time and was on the field in the fourth inning.

Rico Carty made a cross-country flight after his trade to Oakland, arrived with the game in progress, and still went to the plate twice.

"I was lucky because of that," said Robinson. "I didn't have time to think about anything. I was right in there, and I got past that anxiety of the first hit right away."

THE REST OF the A's should be so fortunate. Robinson's three errors in 10 games helped keep the club in last place in team defense, but his batting was a major factor in preventing the A's from slipping behind the Rangers for the cellar spot in hitting.

Robinson also joined the A's during one of their worst stretches since coming to Oakland in 1968.

The team ended one seven-game losing streak, only to run into another nine-game string.

With things going so bleakly for the A's, Manager Jack McKeon announced he would go with Robinson the rest of the season, barring a monstrous slump. It's the time of year for experimenting, with Oakland's deficit in the standings inflating to double figures.

A's Acorns: After going hitless in his first game with the A's, Carty started a 12-game hitting streak that included five home runs. . . . Mike Norris was sidelined by a freak collision with Rich Dauer of the Orioles. Norris fielded a bunt and tried to flip to third for a force, but tossed the ball into left field. As he ran after the wayward throw, he didn't see Dauer rounding third. The resulting collision left him with a bruised rib, pulled groin and sprained neck.

Furman Bisher



(Continued From Page 2)

sport what I'd like to do was meet the frontier valet who has the job of putting the clothes on 1,000 pounds of agitated sirloin.

The undressing, strange as it may seem, they leave to the womenfolk. Those western gals have always been a pretty hardy type willing to do their share of the plowing. You picture, naturally, some rawhide female with parenthetical legs and a voice like Ma Kettle. The kind of leathery filly you'd hand a rifle to and tell her to take one window and you'd take the other and together you'd hold off the Apaches until the cavalry arrived.

INSTEAD, Cindy Alexander walked in. Heads in the sports department turned, and even in the women's department. When you've invited to meet somebody from the rodeo, you expect a drawl and a stride to match. You surely don't calculate on meeting a queen, which Cindy Alexander is.

She's Miss Winston Rodeo, but don't jump to conclusions. She's not like one of those race track queens, "Miss Greasegun of 1978," who wouldn't know a rollbar from an after-hours bar. Cindy is no powderpuff with rolling eyes, coquette-ish manners and a lot of

"oh, pshawa" rolling out like honey over a biscuit. Miss Winston Rodeo Alexander gets right in there with them, which is how steer undressing happened to come to light.

She was explaining that her specialties on the Rodeo Association circuit are team roping, calf roping and steer undecorating.

"Did you say steer undressing?"

"In a way, that's what it is," Cindy said. "I said 'undecorating,' which is the official name. They glue this ribbon around the neck of a steer and the object is to get your horse out of the chute and rip the ribbon off the steer's neck in the fastest time."

AND I THOUGHT I'd pretty well covered everything from topless dancing to deep sea diving.

Cindy is the kind of girl that every cowpoke figures he's going to meet on the next ranch and ride off into the sunset with, singing "Happy Trails" to her. She's of beauty queen height, long, flowing brown hair framing a suntanned face with dreamy blue eyes—and a husband named Joe.

Cindy was Cindy Dodge when she became Miss Winston Rodeo, but once she met Joe Alexander, her lifestyle took several changes. Now they form one of the rarest of

teams in professional athletics, a husband and a wife rodeo team. Not that they perform together. Joe works the Rodeo Cowboys Association circuit while Cindy works the GCA.

We of the tender feet have lost our touch with all the new sophistications of rodeo cowboy culture. We still date back in custom to the dusty breaking pen and the cactus times of Ken Maynard, Buck Jones and Tim McCoy, of the cowpoke who got his education on the ranch and the range.

True, Joe Alexander comes from Cora, Wyo., where the population swells to seven when he visits home. But he developed rodeo skills on the campus at the University of Wyoming. He was no ordinary ranch bum. He went to Wyoming on a scholarship and since has developed into a five-time world champion bareback rider. He was working toward his sixth when he came down on a shoulder in Calgary in July.

CINDY WAS A little bound up herself. She walked in with her left arm in a sling, but the steer was innocent. So was rodeo.

"I was just riding along on a pony in a pasture," she said, "when the pony stepped into a hole and went down. I went over his head and got this, a dislocated shoulder. The pony took off for the

Cards Do a Quick-Change Routine

By RICK HUMMEL

ST. LOUIS—"Who says you can't make deals?" rasped St. Louis Cardinals General Manager-Manager Whitey Herzog. Then, Herzog went out and easily laid claim to being Executive of the Week during baseball's winter meetings at Dallas.

In a space of 24 hours, Herzog lopped off 25 percent (10 players) of his 40-man roster in deals with the San Diego Padres and Chicago Cubs. Suddenly, the National League's worst bullpen had become the best with the acquisition of Rollie Fingers from San Diego and Bruce Sutter from the Cubs.

Herzog then moved Fingers to Milwaukee, along with pitcher Pete Vuckovich and catcher Ted Simmons, who'd demanded to be traded after Herzog had given free-agent catcher **Darrell Porter** \$3.5 million for five years.

That deal gave the Cardinals righthanded pitcher Lary Sorensen (12-10 last season), outfielder Sixto Lezcano (.229, 18 home runs), minor league outfielder David Green and lefthanded pitcher David LaPoint. The deal was concluded when the Brewers agreed to throw in an estimated \$750,000 demanded by agent Larue Harcourt before Simmons would waive his no-trade as a 10-year major leaguer who has spent the last five years with the same club.

"I've done my job as general manager," said Herzog. "Now if the manager doesn't screw it up. . . ."

The Cardinals' lineup will have Keith Hernandez at first base, Tom Herr at second, Garry Templeton at shortstop and Ken Oberkfell moving from second base to third. Lezcano will be in left field with Tony Scott and George Henderick remaining in center and right, respectively. **Porter** will do the catching.

The starting rotation will have Sorensen, Bob Forsch, Bob Shirley (acquired from San Diego) and rookie Andy Rincon. Heading up the bullpen will be Sutter, who had 28 saves with the Cubs, and 42-year-old Jim Kaat.

The proposed move of Simmons to first base and Her-



Bruce Sutter . . . Relief is on the way.

nandez to left field had drawn a negative reaction from both. They felt the team's defense would be weakened at two positions.

"You're taking a Gold Glove and putting him at a posi-

tion other than where he might win it," said Simmons of Hernandez. Simmons initially said that playing first base would be "just fine" with him, but he wondered if it would be "just fine" for Hernandez to play left. Later, Simmons, upon considering the possibilities, decided first base wasn't "just fine" and asked through agent Harcourt to be traded.

Harcourt also had been an integral factor in the trade that sent third baseman Ken Reitz, first baseman-outfielder Leon Durham and a player to be named (infielder Ty Waller) to the Cubs for Sutter. Reitz had a no-trade clause in his contract for this year and Harcourt asked for \$200,000 from the Cubs and Cardinals to give it up. He settled for \$150,000.

Herzog, commenting on the deal with the Brewers, said, "We would not have made the deal without Green (.291, 8 home runs and 67 RBIs with Holyoke of the Eastern League in 1979)."

The trade drew less than rave reviews throughout St. Louis and departing pitcher Vuckovich had a parting shot for the Cardinals.

"They say he (Simmons) can't catch," Vuckovich said. "That makes me laugh. They say they want more speed. But you don't have to run the way he hits them."

Redbird Chirps: The St. Louis baseball writers have decided to cancel their dinner, scheduled for January 14, because of the fees demanded by athletes who were asked to appear. It would have forced the price of the tickets much higher than the \$25 of last year. The dinner is scheduled to be resumed in January, 1982.

The Cardinals acquired 19-year-old catcher Bob Geren as the player to be named in the trade with San Diego. Geren hit .254 at Walla Walla (Northwest) and .287 at Reno (California). . . . In the annual draft of minor league players, the Cardinals chose outfielder-catcher Orlando Sanchez, who hit .307 at Oklahoma City (American Association), and outfielder Carlos Lopez, a former Oriole and Mariner who played at Mexico City in the Mexican League.

Bull (Durham) Was the Key to Cubs Trade

By DAVE NIGHTINGALE

CHICAGO—He was vilified, not deified, in some segments of the local media, but Chicago Cubs executive Vice-President Bob Kennedy remained adamant.

"We're going to rebuild this team with young players who want to play the game," he said at the Dallas winter meetings.

And with that, he dealt premier reliever Bruce Sutter to the St. Louis Cardinals for two youngsters (Leon Durham and Ty Waller) and veteran third baseman Ken Reitz.

"Bruce Sutter might win a pennant for the Cardinals in 1981," Kennedy conceded, "but he, alone, wouldn't have been the difference . . . wouldn't have won the pennant for us."

Kennedy then packed off slugger Cliff Johnson to the Oakland's A's (Cliff had demanded a swap, his contractual right) for 20-year-old lefty Michael King, the No. 4 pick in the first round of the 1980 June amateur draft.

Continuing to deal, Kennedy sent outfielder Jerry Martin to the San Francisco Giants for second baseman Joe Strain and lefthanded pitcher Phil Nastu. The Cubs also gave up outfielder Jesus Figueroa and a player to be named later. The next order of business was to get outfielder Hector Cruz from Cincinnati for outfielder Mike Vail.

And Kennedy said he was willing to take any heat he might receive if he could get a Class AA pitching prospect

from the New York Mets for outfielder Dave Kingman. "Except I don't think the Mets will make the deal," he said. (He was right.)

Sutter, the 1979 National League Cy Young Award winner and the N. L. saves leader (28) last summer, took a \$700,000 salary with him when he left town—nearly twice what the Cubs will be paying Reitz, Durham, Waller and King next year.

The apple of Kennedy's eye in the St. Louis deal was the 23-year-old Durham. "The Bull was the key," he said.

"Kennedy is so much in love with Leon that he would have traded Sutter for Durham even up," another general manager insisted.

Durham batted .271 in 96 games with St. Louis last season but couldn't crack the starting lineup until Bobby Bonds hit the skids. Even so, Cardinals scout Fred McAlister declared: "The Cubs may have got the next (Dave) Parker. If this kid can't hit, especially in Wrigley Field, then I don't know who can."

Kennedy also said he expected a power increase from Reitz, who has a career homer average of eight per year, because of the short power alleys in the Walls of Ivy.

"When I was trying to persuade Reitz to join us, I told him that some of his long line drives in Busch Stadium would be homers in Chicago," Kennedy said.

Reitz needed convincing because his Cardinals contract, a five-year, \$1.4 million pact signed in 1980, contained a

no-trade clause. It took five days of negotiating with Reitz and his agent, Larue Harcourt, before the player waived the no-trade provision.

"I thought a move to Chicago would be good for Kenny," said Harcourt, "especially since the Cardinals were making it clear they weren't going to play him regularly in 1981. But I felt Kenny should receive extra compensation to accept the trade because he had taken less money a year ago in order to assure himself of stability."

Harcourt asked for a \$200,000 bonus; the Cubs and Cards offered half that. A compromise was reached at \$150,000, the Cubs and Cards each paying half.

Martin, who wanted a fat contract and had said he never would play again for the Cubs, swatted 42 home runs and drove in 146 runs in his two years in Chicago. He batted .227 with 23 homers and 73 RBIs last season.

Strain, 26, took over at second base for the Giants when Bill Madlock was traded to Pittsburgh in the 1979 season. Strain hit .286 in 77 games last season.

Cubbyhole: Former Cubs catcher Randy Hundley was named to manage the team's Iowa farm club (American Association), while ex-Toronto pilot Roy Hartsfield will direct the Midland (Texas) team and former White Sox infielder Rich Morales will be the skipper of the Class A Quad Cities (Midwest) team. Jim Napier becomes minor league pitching coach.

Ultimatum by Cardinals Made Porter an Ex-Royal

By MIKE DeARMOND

KANSAS CITY—The S.S. Norway settled heavily as the bow of the great ship cleaved the waters of the Caribbean. It was late afternoon, or early evening, that most indefinable of times when the sun hurtles, albeit imperceptibly, toward the rim of the world.

Darrell Porter, quite frankly, cannot remember all the details of what transpired. There was, suddenly, a shadow over the sparkle of his honeymoon trip.

Porter remembers hanging up the telephone. He remembers digging into his pocket and feeding money into a dollar slot machine. He remembers losing \$32.

Porter, quite simply, didn't know whether to laugh or cry. He still doesn't.

That day, **Porter** told agent Frank Knisley he would accept terms on a contract that will pay him \$3.25 million over the next five years to play with the St. Louis Cardinals.

By accepting those terms, **Porter** severed his association with the Kansas City Royals and, in large part, with a city whose fans had suckled **Porter** through the most joyous

and trying period of his 28 years.

"At that point, I'd made up my mind that that was the best thing to do," **Porter** said. "It just hurt me inside that I'm leaving Kansas City."

"It doesn't hurt that I'm going to the Cardinals. It's just a very empty feeling in me, leaving a place I love so much." **Porter** was backed into a corner.

Whitey Herzog, former Royals manager now field boss and general manager of the Cardinals, did the pushing. Herzog pushed Knisley by offering the contract on a take-it-now-or-never basis. Knisley pushed **Porter**.

"I was having a nice, relaxing time until that moment," **Porter** remembered. "Then Frank told me that Whitey was withdrawing his offer, that we had to make a decision."

Porter protested.

"I told Frank, 'There's no possible way I could make that decision right now.'" He wanted to talk to Joe Burke and give the Royals an opportunity to match the offer.

Herzog kept pushing. Knisley called Burke, Royals vice-president and general manager. Burke said the Royals couldn't match the Cardinals' offer.

Knisley told **Porter** the Royals couldn't come close.

"There was too much difference," **Porter** said. "We asked Joe if he would match it and he said no. We asked him if he could come close and he said no."

Porter said simply, even sadly, that he had no choice.

"After '79 (**Porter** hit .291 for the Royals), I thought I might make some good bucks," **Porter** said. "I wasn't sure that would happen after this year (.249). I wasn't exactly confident."

"To tell the truth, I wasn't sure what would happen after this year. Considering the difference between what I was offered there (St. Louis) and here (K.C.), I would have been a fool not to go there."

"I quit being a fool when I went to The Meadows," **Porter** said, referring to the alcohol and drug treatment center in Wickenburg, Ariz., where he underwent therapy last spring.

Royalties: The Royals dipped into the free-agent market to sign former Baltimore first baseman Lee May. May will serve as pinch-hitter, designated hitter and backup first baseman to Willie Aikens.

Porter Given a Royal Reception

By SID BORDMAN

KANSAS CITY—Six weeks after leaving spring training to begin treatment for alcohol and drug addiction, Darrell Porter rejoined the Kansas City Royals on April 25.

In an emotion-filled clubhouse, following a 7-0 victory over Baltimore at Royals Stadium, Porter read a prepared statement to teammates and news media.

"I am very happy to be back," he stated. "Six weeks ago God gave me the strength, courage and determination to face up to my personal problems and to seek professional help. I went to Joe Burke (Royals' general manager) and advised him I was a drug addict and an alcoholic. My whole life has been affected. I have hurt my family, my friends, the great baseball fans of the Royals, my teammates and I almost destroyed myself.

"For the past six weeks, the doctors, the counselors and the staff at The Meadows in Wickenburg, Ariz., have made me realize the most important thing we have on our side is our life and good health. With their help I have a greater understanding and appreciation of myself and of my responsibilities. I have been successfully treated, and I graduated this afternoon.

"I will always be grateful and thankful to those who prayed for me, sent letters of encouragement and supported me. From this day forward, I will be facing the greatest challenge of my life. I am confident with the help of God and your support and understanding I will be successful. I will be in uniform tomorrow to complete my spring training."

The All-Star catcher quickly received a show of support from fans and teammates.

"We're enthusiastic about having Darrell back," said Pete LaCock, one of Porter's closest friends on the Royals. "It's like missing a friend. We all realize the seriousness of his problem."

Porter suited up the following afternoon, April 26. After the Royals fell to Baltimore, 4-0, Porter took batting practice before more than 1,000 fans, many of whom wore yellow ribbons as suggested by a local disc jockey to welcome

home the popular catcher.

Reporters, photographers and television cameramen, as well as Manager Jim Frey, surrounded the batting cage.

Some fans clapped rhythmically; others shouted encouragement. After Porter took his last swing, the fans gave him a standing ovation.

"It made me feel very warm," said Porter. "All along, I was worried how the public would react. I thought they would receive me all okay, but I didn't know.

"I was excited to get back. I felt loose and confident at the plate. My biggest problem will be getting my arm in shape. I have trouble with it every spring."

Porter might have been concerned about his arm, but it didn't take long to assert himself with the bat. He returned to the lineup May 4 and drove in three runs and scored a fourth in the Royals' 5-3 victory over the Red Sox. Porter belted a run-scoring triple in the fourth, then singled home two runs in the third. He had flied out as a pinch-hitter two days earlier in his first official appearance since returning.

John Schuerholz, vice-president and director of minor league operations for the Royals, was with Porter in his final week at the clinic.

"I did some throwing to John," said Porter. "I did some running and weight work, so I'm in pretty good shape."

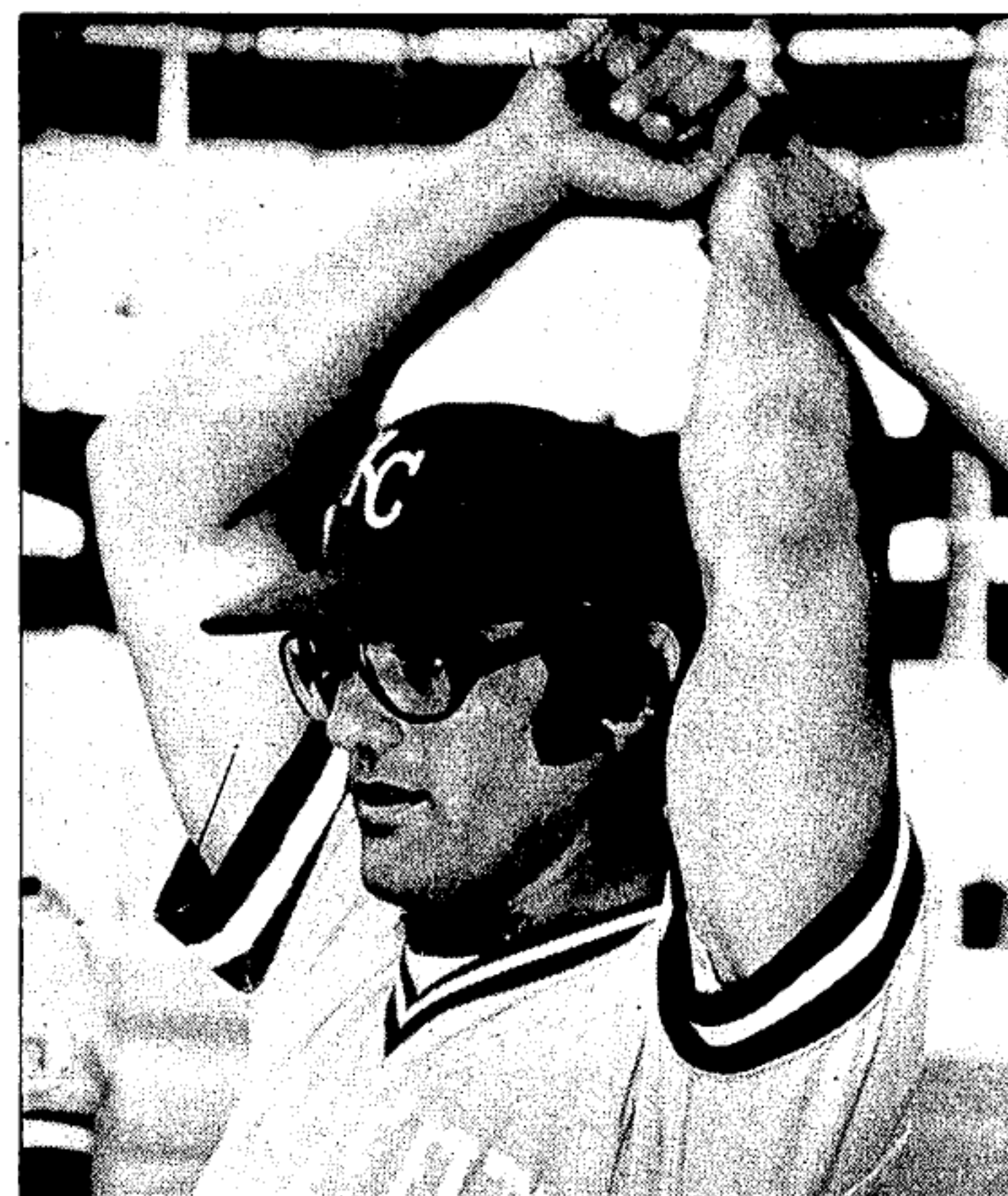
Baseball was on Porter's mind in Arizona.

"But it was not the most important thing," he emphasized. "I had to put first things first. This is a whole new game, a whole new life for me."

Burke, an understanding individual, said Porter "just needs some time. The toughest part of his life could be the next two months. He's told the truth, and there's really nothing more to be said at this time."

Porter conferred with Burke in spring training, seeking help for his problem after hearing Don Newcombe, former Dodgers pitching star who works in an alcoholic rehabilitation program. Porter went to Los Angeles first and was transferred to the center in Arizona.

Royalties: With Amos Otis sidelined by a broken finger, Frey turned his outfield into a revolving alignment. Only center fielder Willie Wilson was an everyday starter.



Darrell Porter . . . 'First things first.'

Through the first 16 games, Frey used six outfield combinations. . . . Clint Hurdle unloaded his first home run of the season on April 25. His three-run shot in the first inning off Steve Stone helped the Royals whip Baltimore, 7-0, behind Larry Gura. Two days later, the young right fielder broke up Dennis Martinez' no-hitter and shutout with another blast of more than 400 feet to the left of the Kansas City bullpen in right field. The Royals rallied for a 3-2 decision. "I think the fans in right field are happier," smiled Hurdle, who had been on the unfriendly end of their taunts earlier in the season. . . . When the Royals flew to Toronto for their late April series, they were wearing lapel pins displaying American and Canadian flags. Bill Phillips, a long-time baseball fan and member of the Royal Lancers, designed the pins to show the United States' appreciation of the Canadians' rescue of the U.S. embassy workers in Iran.

Gura's 7-0 taming of the Orioles was the lefthander's second shutout and third complete game.

Another Lezcano Chapter Penned by Carlos of Cubs

By RICHARD DOZER

CHICAGO—It may not be a good bet that Carlos Lezcano will be the National League's rookie of the year, but for the Chicago Cubs he is definitely the longshot of the year.

Lezcano, 24, a second cousin to Sixto of Milwaukee, was battling to save the ring finger of his throwing hand at this time two years ago. Now he is making contributions to the Cubs, a team he had virtually no hopes of joining in spring training.

"I think I may need a year in Triple A," Carlos freely admitted—a belief that was reinforced by a look at the Cubs' deep and well-established outfield.

Who could find room amid (left to right) Dave Kingman, Jerry Martin and the three who felt they belonged in right: Scot Thompson, Ken Henderson and Mike Vail?

Carlos Manuel Lezcano, that's who.

Lezcano may yet get that final apprenticeship in Wichita (American Association) that he had expected. But for now, he is playing more often than not and is giving the Cubs the best center fielding they've had since Rick Monday in 1976.

"He's got to play to stay up here," cautioned Preston Gomez in a sort of managerial prophecy that will make it easy for Carlos to understand his fate. The question was only whether he could hit major league pitching well enough to stick. But Lezcano, whose first two big-league hits were home runs, was staying close to .300.

A number of things have given Lezcano a more thorough test this spring than he might have had. When Martin was slow in recovering from knee surgery, Lezcano was an immediate hit in spring training. When Thompson had a week's siege of shoulder trouble, Lezcano got more playing time. When Miguel Dilone left the club during the boycott, Lezcano stayed.

When the season opened, Carlos was in center field but was shelved the next four games because of left eye damage suffered in an opening-day collision with Ken Henderson. Later, Henderson went on the disabled list with a hamstring pull, and again Carlos surfaced in center—Martin shifting to right. Now Thompson finally is starting to make inroads on Lezcano's playing time, and the day of decision may come with the return of Henderson.

The Lezcano story began when club Vice-President Bob Kennedy saw the fleet Puerto Rican while watching his own son, Terry, play with Lezcano at Florida State in 1976 and '77. Because Carlos was a foreign student, he could be signed without going through the draft.

"And we couldn't have signed him if Florida State had been invited to the NCAA tournament," Kennedy recalled.

But Kennedy closeted scout Eddie Lyons with Lezcano in a Tallahassee motel room, and when he got the word that FSU was not tournament-bound, he phoned Lyons, who, said Kennedy, "signed him that very minute." Carlos got a mere \$7,500 bonus but has no regrets.

"They told me they would start me in Double A, and that's what they did."

After modest beginnings (.231 in '77) at Midland, his career was put in jeopardy when he leaped to touch a no-parking sign after his day's workout in Scottsdale, Ariz., the following March. He came down with his finger nearly severed from his hand. His ring caught on the sign and had torn the finger to shreds.

Dr. Leonard Bodell, a Scottsdale surgeon, is responsible for saving the finger, although Carlos said the doctor told him several weeks later that "it was dead and he didn't think he could save it.

He played baseball in '78 until returning to winter ball for Arecibo in his native Puerto Rico. But '79, which normally would have been his year at Wichita, found him "starting over" at Midland, where he batted .326 with 11 homers and 82 runs batted in.

Carlos has returned to bachelorhood after an ill-fated marriage that ended more than a year ago. But his ex-wife, a Puerto Rican also, is a flight attendant for an American airline now, and they remain friendly.

"She is a nice girl . . . and who knows?" he smiled, declining further comment.

Cubbyhole: The Cubs hit 20 home runs in their first 20 games, well ahead of last year's pace that produced 135, fourth highest in the league. . . . Kingman has demonstrated fielding prowess that has scouts rewriting their "book" on him. During April he threw out Frank Taveras and Garry Templeton trying to score from second base on singles to left.

Bruce Sutter, who saved seven games, won one, and lost one in his first nine appearances, balked twice in the same game (April 25). He didn't balk once all last year but admitted he had become careless and didn't stop at the belt "because I wasn't worried about the runner." The Cubs led by three runs and beat the Pirates' 5-3 when the runner eventually scored. . . . Dennis Lamp suffered the Cubs' first kayo of the season in the first inning April 26 when the Bucs won handily, 9-2.

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Porter's Dad Takes Rap

KANSAS CITY—Ray Porter wants to take the rap for parental pressure that may have been a factor when his son, Kansas City Royals catcher Darrell Porter, turned to alcohol and pills.

"I guess I felt that if I couldn't amount to anything, I'd make sure my sons were going to," said the elder Porter.

Darrell was the second of four sons and always was pressured to try harder, even at the age of nine when his dad coached his Little League team.

"I drove him into the ground," said Ray. "I never patted my kids on the back for their accomplishments. I always kicked them in the rear to do better.

"I'd give him a job to do and he'd forget about it and be playing baseball or basketball. I'd say, 'Hey, boy, you bet-

ter be good at sports, 'cause you ain't worth a flip at anything else.'"

Porter rejoined the Kansas City club April 25, six weeks after leaving spring training to undergo treatment.

The All-Star catcher, given a moving show of support from teammates and fans, returned to the lineup May 4 and contributed two hits in a victory over the Red Sox.

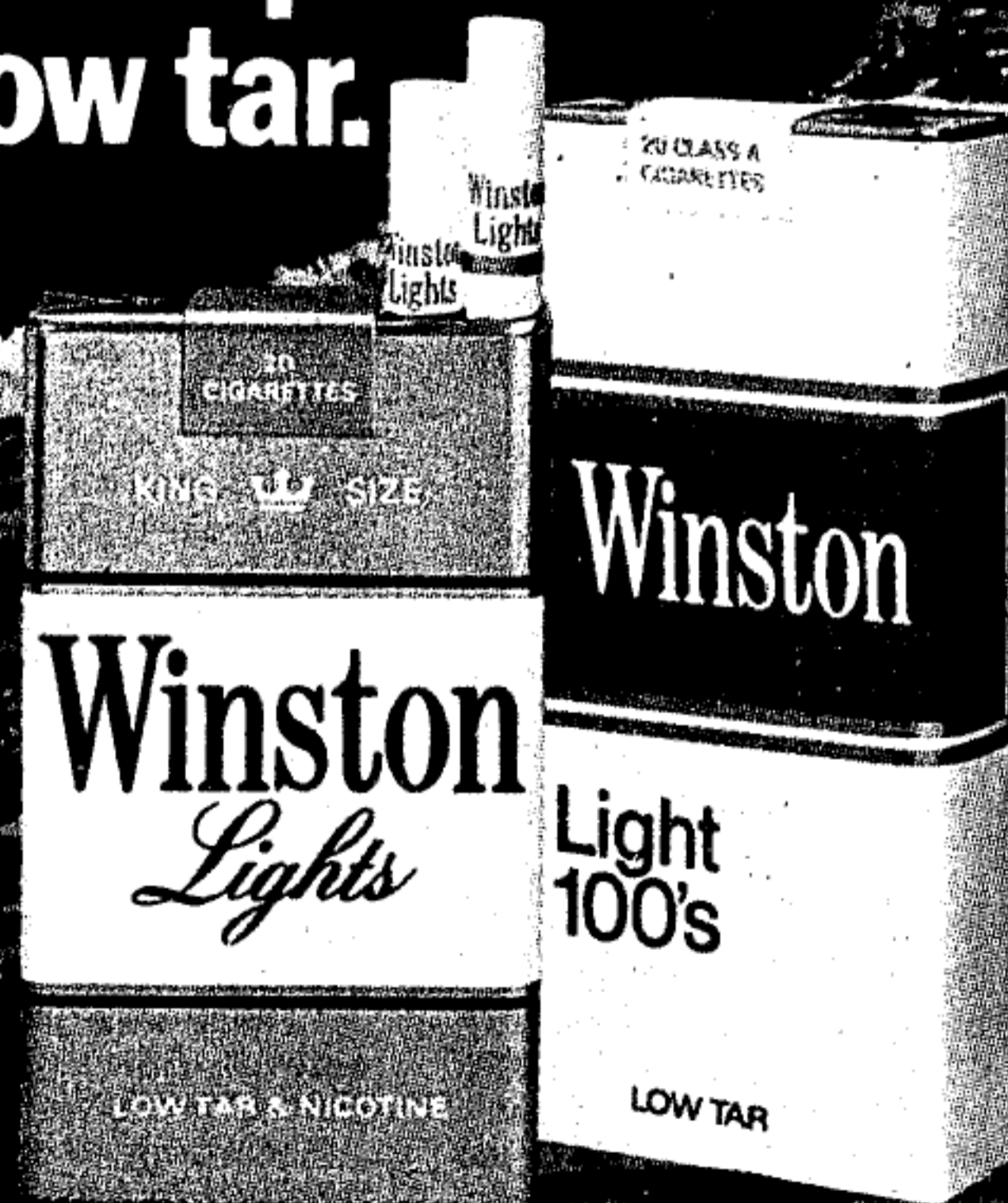
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