

# Pistol Pete Fires Fusillade in Tribe Pinch-Hitting Role

Reiser Reaches Base Eight Times in Row; McCosky, Tebbetts Also Add Bench Punch

By HAL LEBOVITZ

CHICAGO, Ill.

Leo Durocher, the New York Giants' manager, whose charges were testing the Cleveland Indians daily during the closing stages of the training season, calls the Tribe:

"A very sound ball club, much sounder than in any of the previous springs we've traveled together."

One chief reason for the improvement, says Durocher, is "a better bench—Pete Reiser."



Last season, pinch-hitting-wise, the Tribe's bench was almost non-existent. Only the Browns wound up with a worse pinch-hitting record. The Indians' pinch-hitters averaged a sickly .173 for '51. Only Birdie Tebbetts' .455 kept the Tribe ahead of the last-place Browns in the pinch-hitting department.

Now the Tribe bench has been strengthened by the acquisition of Reiser, and what a spring the Pistol man has had. As if shot from a gun himself and still smoking, he reached first base in eight successive appearances as a pinch swinger. He missed out the ninth time when his bat unintentionally rolled a grounder to the pitcher as he was ducking a wild pitch.

In his first two stand-in appearances, Pete walked. Then came six successive hits—three triples, two doubles, and a single.

As torrid as he has been, Manager Al Lopez is considering him chiefly as utility. "Everybody can't be a starter," says the manager. "Of course, if something should happen during the season, Pete could break into the regular lineup."

Reiser understands. "I haven't been a regular for the last four years," he notes. "I want to help this club in any way I can, on the bench or in the field. Wherever I am, I want to win."

Reiser, who was publicized to a greater extent than even Mickey Mantle when he first came into the big leagues, failed to achieve his potential because of numerous injuries. Perhaps his body has absorbed more dents and fractures than any other player. In addition to leg and arm breaks, he was plagued by seven head injuries, two of which were fractures and the five others mere concussions.

## Feels Strong for First Time in Years

"I feel as though all my injuries are behind me," says Pete now. "I really feel good and strong for the first time in several years. I feel like I'm prepared to make a brand new start."

Reiser, even now, runs almost as fast as when he was the heralded rookie. His hustle backs up his words.

Durocher admits, "I wanted him with us. Pete came to me when he was declared a free agent and I asked him to come to spring training with us. We promised to take care of him if he proved to be sound physically. But I guess he got a concrete offer from Cleveland and took it. I don't blame him. He's a fine person and should be a big help to the Indians from what I've seen this spring."

With Reiser and Barney McCosky, the Tribe is well-fortified with portside utility swingers. Tebbetts remains the chief righthanded pinch-hitter. The Tribe has been seeking another, without success.

Tribe Tidbits: When the club left Indianapolis, Jim Fridley beamed. He was still with the varsity. He had fully expected to be left with the Tribe's American Association farm. . . . Larry Doby felt highly complimented when the Giants began to employ a "Williams Shift" against him. Larry had been loosening the ball's stitches with his blasts

## Smoking Hot at Bat



PETE REISER

against the best New York pitchers and so the Giants were willing to give him a single to left, rather than have him aim successfully for the fences. "I don't even watch the infield," says Larry. "I just watch the pitcher." As of April 6, Doby had six spring homers and Al Rosen had nine. . . . Rosen's long-ball record this spring was most unusual. Until he singled, April 6, all his hits—since the club left Tucson—had been homers. Incidentally, Flip has been using a 39-ounce bat borrowed from Ralph Kiner. When the season starts, he plans to use a lighter model. . . . Most of the New York scribes covering the Giants are high on the Tribe, although one put it this way, "Will win if they do not get apple in Yankee Stadium." . . . The tour with the Giants packed 'em in. The average attendance was above 10,000. . . . Ray Boone has become a member of the Indians' "Crouch Club." In an effort to turn his line drives—which have been hanging outs—into base hits, Booney decided to test a crouch stance. He tried it for the first time in Dallas, and whacked four far to left in batting practice. In the game against Sal Maglie, he singled twice in four attempts. One of his outs was a screamer which Maglie speared in self-defense. The other was pure thievery on Second Baseman Davey Williams' part. Booney is enthusiastic over his experiment. . . . Other members of the new "Crouch Club" are Bob Kennedy and Harry Simpson. Both have responded with the willow. . . . In Dallas, Lopez was visited by his old high school coach, Frank McKenna. McKenna related that when he first saw Al at the age of 13, he was a shy youngster who was too backward to fight. "I sure changed him," he said proudly. Lopez played for McKenna at Sacred Heart High School in Tampa. . . . Bobby Wilson, sold to Indianapolis by the Tribe, returned to his home in Goldsboro, N. C., rather than report to the Triple-A club.

## Tigers Plan Longer Stay in Florida, Quicker Homeward Trip Next Spring

By HAL MIDDLESWORTH  
Of the Detroit Free Press

DETROIT, Mich.—This year's exhibition jaunt may be the Tigers' last long expedition through the bushes. A longer training period in sunny Florida and a speedier return to Briggs Stadium are in prospect for future seasons.

By next spring, Tiger club officials may put into effect a streamlined training program. If they do, the Tigers will spend an extra ten days at their camp in Lakeland, Fla.

Then, instead of parading through the Southern Association, playing teams like Birmingham, Atlanta and Chattanooga, they would zip toward home—with perhaps only one game en route.

Manager Red Rolfe likes that Florida sun, which was beginning to really bear down the last two days his team was in Lakeland.

"It was hot enough to give those muscles a real workout," he pointed out. "Besides, we had everyone in shape so that we could go all out."

What would the Tigers do for "sparring partners" in exhibition games after the rest of the major league clubs left Florida about April 1?

"We could hold our Buffalo club for another week," offered General Manager Charley Gehringer in an off-the-cuff discussion of the question.

The Bisons would offer the Tigers competition which would be at least as tough as they said at the minor league stop-offs.

Coach Rick Ferrell said Washington tried a similar plan when he was playing with the Senators.

"We stayed in Florida until the last minute," he said. "We played our farm club at Charlotte on the way home and right on into Baltimore in Washington's back yard."

What about gate receipts?

The Tigers probably wouldn't miss them. It isn't likely Detroit ever made any money on its exhibition games.

## Tigers Roll Out Red Carpet for Dutch Queen at Opener

DETROIT, Mich.—Everything fit for a queen. That was the Briggs Stadium motto for opening day.

This was in anticipation of the visit of Queen Juliana of the Netherlands and her consort, Prince Bernhard, to the opener matching the Tigers and the Browns. The queen's schedule in Detroit was plenty crowded, but her planners insisted on the inclusion of a ball game.

President Spike Briggs gave the royalty the Briggs family box near the Detroit dugout. The committee asked for a half dozen seats with provisions for secret service men to occupy positions in the aisle without obstructing the view of others.

The queen's visit to the park was supervised by Jess Walls, new stadium manager who moved up when Charley Martin became traveling secretary.

Walls expected a dozen automobiles in the queen's caravan arriving at the park, but said most occupants were to remain outside while the queen and the prince entered for an inning or two.

Queen Juliana obviously is fully posted on Johannes Hendrikus Urbanus, the Bob Feller of Dutch Honkbal, who visited the training camp of the Giants this spring.

# Podres, Class D Kid, Still Bidding for Brooklyn 'B'

19-Year-Old Southpaw Would Be First Pitcher to Make Big Leap to Majors Since Sid Hudson

By ROSCOE MCGOWEN

BOSTON, Mass.

Manager Chuck Dressen is under no compulsion to determine the identity of the 25 players he will keep for this "crucial" pennant race, at least until one month after the season's opening.

But the time element doesn't enter too much into the decision he will have to make. His problems are present right now and, as it has been since even before the training season began, they are concerned chiefly with pitching.

The first pitcher to have been discussed at any length in these dispatches was, and is, Johnny Podres, the 19-year-old southpaw who was jumped from Class D at Hazard (Mountain States) to Triple-A at Montreal after only one season in professional ball—or baseball of any kind, for that matter. Podres' impression upon Dressen was tremendous, almost from the moment the little skipper saw him toe the mound for the first time. The impact upon Chuck has not lessened at

all during the exhibition season and, if the decision were left to the manager and made solely upon pitching ability, Johnny would be on the staff for the entire season.

"He is better than maybe seven pitchers who were on this club last year!" exclaimed Dressen, at what might be called an unguarded moment—if an honest and frank expression of opinion can be so termed.

Dressen completely discounted the little difficulty in which Podres was involved in his game against the Boston Braves at Mobile when Johnny made two balks and one wild pitch while facing one batsman.

"I don't think anything like that will happen to him again," declared Dressen. "Sure, he lacks experience, but he learns fast and doesn't make the same mistake twice. But even if he did," added Chuck, "what he's got you don't find very often."

Johnny Good Bet to Stick  
So, while the decision probably won't be made for some time, it still remains a good bet that Podres will be a Dodger this year—the first pitcher since Sid Hudson of the Washington Senators to have made that long jump from Class D to a major league.

Meanwhile, Dressen has some other pitching decisions to make. Eight pitchers perhaps can be named right now, not including Podres, who are sure to stick.

Preacher Roe, Ralph Branca, Clem Labine, Carl Erskine, Chris Van Cuyk, Clyde King, Ben Wade and Johnny Rutherford make up that double quartette which Dressen hopes will furnish a lot of sweet pitching melody this year. Billy Loes, the bonus kid, can be and will be retained without being counted because of his military service status.

After that, Dressen must eliminate three, possibly four, pitchers from among Mal Mallette, Joe Black, Bud Podbielan, Phil Haugstad, Johnny Schmitz and, of course, Podres.

Black, the big Negro righthander, could not have been sidetracked at any time during spring training because he showed enough to warrant further trial. Besides, Dressen's first impression of Black was very favorable, and Charley is not given to discounting first impressions.

Mallette Lacks Former Speed  
Mallette, too, could not be dismissed from consideration hastily. Mal is a highly intelligent fellow who knows how to pitch, knows precisely what needs to be done when he is on the mound, and the only question is whether he still has enough stuff to achieve his purpose.

The big southpaw, journalism graduate of the University of Syracuse, once had a fine fast ball, but developed arm trouble in 1950 and had an operation later that year. This spring he has not shown his former speed and has been compelled to rely on tricky stuff and control.

Podbielan, Schmitz and Haugstad are more or less known quantities in the pitching picture. Schmitz once was a great Dodger killer when with the Cubs but lost all that effectiveness, and there is no great evidence to date that he has regained it.

Podbielan never has measured up to his original promise and Haugstad, on his record, is a pitcher who can win in the high minors but can't seem to get started in the majors.

Lanky Phil, a tremendously strong fellow in spite of his seemingly skinny frame, has come up with a sore arm,



## Chattanooga's Negro Fans Cheer Jackie's Long Fouls

BOSTON, Mass.—There was a touch of irony in the Dodgers' visit to Joe Engel's fine park in Chattanooga on their homeward trip from spring training with the Braves.

For the first time in the history of the park, whites and Negroes played with and against each other, with the No. 1 attraction being Jackie Robinson, first Negro to crack the color line in Organized Ball.

Of the 9,098 fans who paid to see the game, more than 50 per cent were colored—and what did they see?

They saw Warren Spahn pitch seven hitless and near-perfect innings, then watched Ernie Johnson, ace righthander of the Milwaukee club last year, blank the Bricks for two more innings to complete the no-hitter.

Naturally, Robinson, who didn't hit a ball out of the infield and struck out once in three times up, couldn't put on any show for his admirers. Roy Campanella did a little better by drawing the only pass Spahn issued and stealing second base.

The Braves' Sam Jethroe made one hit off Preacher Roe and drew a mild hand. But it was Robinson these fans wanted to see in action, as was evidenced when Jackie hit two long fouls off Spahn on his first time at bat. Jackie drew more cheers for two fouls than anybody save Willard Marshall, who hit the game-winning homer in the ninth inning.

stiff shoulder or similar ailments, at the most unexpected times. One day he has announced himself ready to pitch and the following day has not been ready.

Outside the pitching picture it is practically certain that George Shota, the southpaw-swinging pull-hitter, will be one of Dressen's extra outfielders. Dick Williams, righthanded hitter, also has found favor with Dressen. Then he has Cal Abrams and Don Thompson, both lefthanded hitters and throwers, but neither a pull-hitter.

A deal might change much of the picture, but no deal was in sight when the Brooks came home from the South.

## Dodgers Hunting for Lad Who Hit Homer Into Park

BROOKLYN, N. Y.—The Dodgers are on the prowl for material—this time, literally right in their own backyard.

They're hunting for a lad who hit a 350-foot softball homer INTO Ebbets Field.

The story came out when a letter was sent the Flock asking for a return of a ball to the Talmudical Academy. It developed that the team was playing across the street from the field and a player hit a homer into the empty park—350 feet away. The boys wanted the ball back.

The Dodgers couldn't find the ball, so they sent a new one—and now they're looking for the lad who belted it.

PAUL GOULD.

# LOOPING THE LOOPS

By J. G. TAYLOR SPINK

## Pick-Off at First Base Puts Hassock Theft Champ in Bed

BROOKLYN, N. Y.

This is a story about Harold Patrick Reiser, a young man who was born in St. Louis on a St. Patrick's Day. It is a story about speed of foot, and speed of mind and perceptions. It is a yarn connecting Reiser with the Mercury-footed exploit of exploits—stealing home.

Only three days before the season closed, with his fleetness needed more than ever by the Dodgers in their bitter struggle to overtake the Cardinals, Pete Reiser was lost for the final games with a fractured leg. On September 26, in the first inning, Pete slid back to first base on an attempted pickoff by Pitcher Charley Schanz of the Phillies. Reiser's left foot caught in the bag and the leg was broken above the ankle.

When we visited Reiser at the hospital, we sought to cheer him by the reminder that he already had established an unusual record—swiping home seven times in nine attempts.

Various reports insisted that this feat had been excelled in the past, but the official records carry no item having to do with stealing home. Don't ask why. With all the huge volume of marks of various sorts, it is remarkable that this alluring venture never has found a place in the book. But the fact remains, chum, that it isn't there.

First, there was a report that Ty Cobb had stolen home a dozen times in one season.

A baseball writer who had covered the Tigers of the Cobb heyday said, "Yes, he stole home 12 times. However, maybe it was only nine."

Well, the McCoy is that Reiser holds the all-time record. Cobb never stole home nine times in a season. He never stole home five times.

Exhaustive examination of all the box scores right through the years proves conclusively that Cobb stole home four times in 1912, and never did any better. He made it safely in four out of nine attempts.

George Moriarty, Detroit third baseman, stole home four times in five efforts in 1909.

Now for the manner in which Pete accomplished the feat, and his own reactions, which he disclosed while wondering why he had to suffer such a tough break.

### Relies on Fear of Balk

"Stealing home is a trifle involved," Reiser explained.

"Stealing home would be a tremendous feat if it were not for the balk rule. I rely on the pitcher's fear of the balk. And I've got to lull him into something like a feeling of security. That means playing poker with your face and your feet.

"First, you have to get a good lead. You play fast and loose with the hurler. And you've got to know a lot of things about him.

"You study little quirks. This pitcher drops his head when he is about to deliver the ball to the batter. That one grits his teeth, another sticks out his tongue. You watch for these tell-tale actions.

"For example, early in the season, when Jack Brewer still was with the Giants, I discovered that when he was ready to pitch he dropped his head and never paid any attention to third base.

"Well, I am on third base. I know something about the pitcher. I stand relaxed. I am not going to steal, my attitude says.

"I am ready to break and have the ability to start fast. Once Bill Voiselle of the Giants challenged me. He said, 'Go ahead and steal if you dare.'

"I could not ignore this. I went about five feet off third and laughed. I made out I was going to leap back. He dropped his head and I ran on. Halfway through his windup I was halfway home, and made it.

### "Split Timing" Does It

"The big secret? Well, it's really split timing.

"Let me tell you something. I stole home eight times this season, not seven. Magerkurth called me out in Chicago when I was over the plate. He missed that one atrociously. Ordinarily, I would not have cared one way or the other. But this was very important to me.

"In my nine tries, there was a righthanded batter at the plate six times. That, too, is important. Just so long as I am letting you in on this trade secret, I might as well go the whole way. The righthanded batter helps to block the catcher's view.

"I slide by the catcher and stick out a hand. I run all bases that way. In one of my steals, I threw my hand over the catcher's glove. I never bowl over the catcher.

"You see, the hand is quicker than

### Almost a Yank—But Scout Arrived an Hour Too Late

Pete Reiser, stellar outfielder of the Dodgers, was almost a Yankee. He missed becoming a member of the New York Americans by one hour. Pete himself tells about it:

"I was working out in the Cardinal school at Sportsman's Park, St. Louis. Charlie Barrett was watching. So was Johnny Schulte. I had played on a club managed by a close pal of Schulte's.

"After the first day of that school, Barrett dashed to my home and got dad's promise to let me go with the Cards. That was at 6:30 o'clock. Just an hour later, Schulte showed up with a very attractive proposition from the Yankees. Johnny was too late.

"One hour away from the Stadium and the Bombers!"

the eye, or the foot. Sliding the way I do, the catcher has a very small target—just my hand."

We asked, "How about this speed of yours? Did you have it from the start?"

"Well, I could run pretty good when I was a kid," Reiser replied. "I never piled up any track feats in school, because I never went beyond the freshman class in high.

"I ran the dashes and was on the relay team for the freshmen and was all



set to be the No. 1 sprinter for the varsity when they made me ineligible.

"You see, at the ripe age of 15 I had become a professional soccer player. That is a secret chapter of my life. Under the name of Murphy, I had kicked for the Marres. I was lured by the dough. What a sucker!

"I had played freshman football and wanted to go to Notre Dame.

"If I had not got mixed up with the soccer pros I would have gone through high school and, who knows? You might have seen me running 90 yards for a touchdown for the Irish against the Army in Yankee Stadium.

"Yes, I most decidedly would have gone to college in spite of all the baseball offers. That is one secret regret. The other is that I never was a catcher.

"Well, at the age of 16, I found myself barred from amateur sports, a professional athlete.

"I had been pitching, catching and playing short around St. Louis. Charley Barrett, a friend of my dad's—pop had pitched in the Northern League—had been watching me since I was 14, and he signed me for the Cardinals.

"I was too young to be sent out to a Cardinal farm, so I became Barrett's chauffeur. We would go to a town for five or six days, and while Barrett looked them over, I worked out with the club.

"In 1937, at 17, I was sent to Spring-

# He'll Keep Catchers Dreaming . . . By Mullin



NOT SINCE 1915 WHEN TY COBB STOLE 96 BASES OR THE 1931 WORLD SERIES WHEN PEPPER MARTIN STOLE 5 BASES AND ANCKEY COCHRAN'S MASK AND GLOVE HAVE CATCHERS SPENT SUCH UNEASY NIGHTS

NINE TIMES THIS YEAR PETE REISER HEADED FOR HOME WITH LARCENY IN HIS HEART AND SEVEN TIMES HE WAS HOME FREE!

field, Mo., Class C," continued Reiser.

"I was supposed to play short, but got a seat on the bench. After one month of that I was sent to Newport, Ark., Class D.

"The next season I was on the roster of the Columbus club of the American Association and the Red Birds did their training at Winter Haven, Fla.

### Terry Moore at Hot Corner

"There were some fine players in that camp" said Pistol Pete. "Terry Moore had been sent there to become a third baseman. Why? Don't ask me. Don Gutteridge had been sent to become a shortstop. But those plans—and some others—failed to materialize. Suddenly, a bomb exploded. Judge Landis made 110 players owned by the Cards free agents and they were tossed into the open market.

"Barrett had tipped off Ted McGrew, Brooklyn scout, about me, and for the princely sum of \$100 I went with the Dodgers.

"I could have hollered to Landis, after I had come to realize what a financial boner I had committed, and got my freedom, and maybe got myself ten grand, or even more, from some other team. The Yankees, likely.

"You see, when I went with Brooklyn, I was under 21. I was signed to a

Dayton contract. My dad never signed it.

"Another thing. I signed with Dayton in February. As it turned out, the official decision taking me away from the Cardinals was dated March 28. In other words, the Brooklyn farm club signed me more than a month before it was free to do so, and all I had to do was let out a yammer.

"Sometimes the fact that I ignored my chances to get important money out of that break gets me all roiled up.

"Other times I take it philosophically. You see, Mr. Rickey has been very good to me. Always fair.

"I went to Elmira in 1939 and in June, 1940, arrived at Ebbets Field.

"As I said, my secret desire always was to be a catcher. But they would not let me go behind the bat. They said I was too fast for such work, that I would invite injuries back there. Well, I haven't passed up many chances to get hurt in other positions.

"I caught half an inning for Newport and that made my backstopping ambitions all the stronger."

Reiser had stolen 35 bases when his leg was broken.

"Oh, I could swipe 60 if I played regularly," he said.

"Funny how the fans think you steal on the catcher. Of course, you do it on the pitcher.

"However, I did not have much

chance to do a lot of real running this year. I am to undergo an operation during the off-season, by Dr. Hyland in St. Louis.

"Before this ankle injury, I had two sources of trouble that bothered me all year. First, a clavicle separation. That gave me the shoulder trouble. Dr. Hyland says that if the clavicle is tied up, the shoulder will take care of itself.

### "Two Bunts—a Wasted Season"

"Do I worry about all this? What do you think? I worry about myself and my future in baseball. And I feel sore concerning the club. Had I been able to play every game during the summer there would have been no race after Max Lanier. Fred Martin and Klein had jumped the Cardinals."

Reiser said that he was sure he suffered the clavicle injury at Camp Lee, when he jumped into a hedge after a fly ball and fell into a hole.

They say that when Pete threw, you could hear a cracking of bones. A game guy to go on playing at all under those circumstances.

"When I threw, my hand quivered and I couldn't grip a bat," he explained.

"That tells you why I did no bunting this season. Two bunts all year, good—and I could bunt .300. And this leg. Gosh, what a season!"

Yes, Pete, what a season!