

Hurler Murray Proud of HR Pitches

Yankees' Batting-Practice Server Has Sharp Control

By TIL FERDENZI

FT. LAUDERDALE, Fla.

As pitchers go, Spud Murray is a little unique. He measures his success on how far the hitters clout the ball.

"When they don't hit me good," said Spud, "I might as well buy a dinner pail and go to work."

Meredith (Spud) Murray says he likes the work as full-time batting-practice pitcher for the Yankees. To Spud, the job is a profession. He claims any time a pitcher can throw 90 strikes out of 100 pitches, he's more than a pitcher. He's a technician.

"On my good days," Murray said, "I really have to try to throw a ball out of the strike zone."

Unlike most pitchers, Murray is not looking for another pitch.

"I throw mostly fast balls," he said, "but when they ask for a breaking pitch, I can throw that, too."

According to Murray, the sweetest sound in the world is the smack of the bat meeting the ball.

"When I'm going good," he said, "nobody hits the ball on the handle."

Murray added that when he was going bad, nobody had to tell him. But they did.

"I've got no complaints," he said, "but when I'm having an off day and the hitters aren't connecting good, I get the message."

The message consists of dirty looks "for the most part."

"You can't expect a hitter who's in a slump to be the happiest guy in the world," said Spud.

"It works the other way, too," he added. "Some days when everybody is hitting them out of the park, you'll hear someone say: 'Looks like this is the day we get shut out.'"

Mick Powders Ball in Detroit

Murray says the long-range hitters in the games usually are the same way in batting practice.

"Mickey Mantle and Elston Howard have hit the longest balls off me," he said. "Mantle's hardest drives seem to be hit in Detroit. For real distance, Mickey is in a class by himself."

For pitchers who would like to break into the batting-practice business, Murray has two words.

"Be lucky," he laughed. "That's what got me into it. I got a sore arm and I figured my baseball career was ended. I guess that was the best sore arm a guy ever had."

Murray got his lucky sore arm in 1955 after a minor league career which started in 1947 when the Indians signed him and sent him to Batavia in the Pony League. From there, Murray went to Harrisburg in the Interstate League, Wilkes-Barre and Reading (Eastern), Tulsa (Texas) and Birmingham and Chattanooga (Southern Association). The end of the line came with Montgomery and Charlotte in the Sally League.

By then, Murray's sore arm was "really bad."

"But I kept telling myself," he said, "that it would come around again. I decided to give it one final try in the Nova Scotia League."

Murray's arm was no better in Nova Scotia than it had been anywhere else.

"When the Phillies finally turned me

Harmonica Player Murray Has Specialty: 'Old Shep'

FT. LAUDERDALE, Fla.—There is more to Spud Murray than meets the eye. The same cannot be said for what meets the ear. The Yankee batting-practice pitcher is an accomplished harmonica player.

Like most harmonica virtuosos, Spud specializes in hillbilly songs and his favorite number is "Old Shep."

Since "Old Shep" also is Ralph Houk's favorite ditty, Murray and his harmonica are in great demand at World Series parties.

loose, I figured this was the end," he said.

It was only the beginning.

"Dale Jones, who then was chief scout for the Phillies, told me the Phillies were looking for a batting-practice pitcher. Naturally, they wanted somebody who could throw strikes. If nothing else, I could do that, so I wrote a letter to Mayo Smith, who was managing the club. I also contacted Roy Hamey, who was the general manager at the time."

Spud Surprised by Phil Offer

To Murray's great surprise, he was hired.

"When the Phillies came north in 1958, I reported to the ball park and was signed up as a full-time batting-practice pitcher. I've been at it ever since. I stayed with the Phillies through 1959, then I got a call from Hamey again, and this time he called as general manager of the Yankees. I guess you have to say that was the best phone call I ever got."

If you add it up in dollars and cents, you can understand Murray's sentiments. In his four years on the Yankee payroll, he has cashed as many World Series checks.

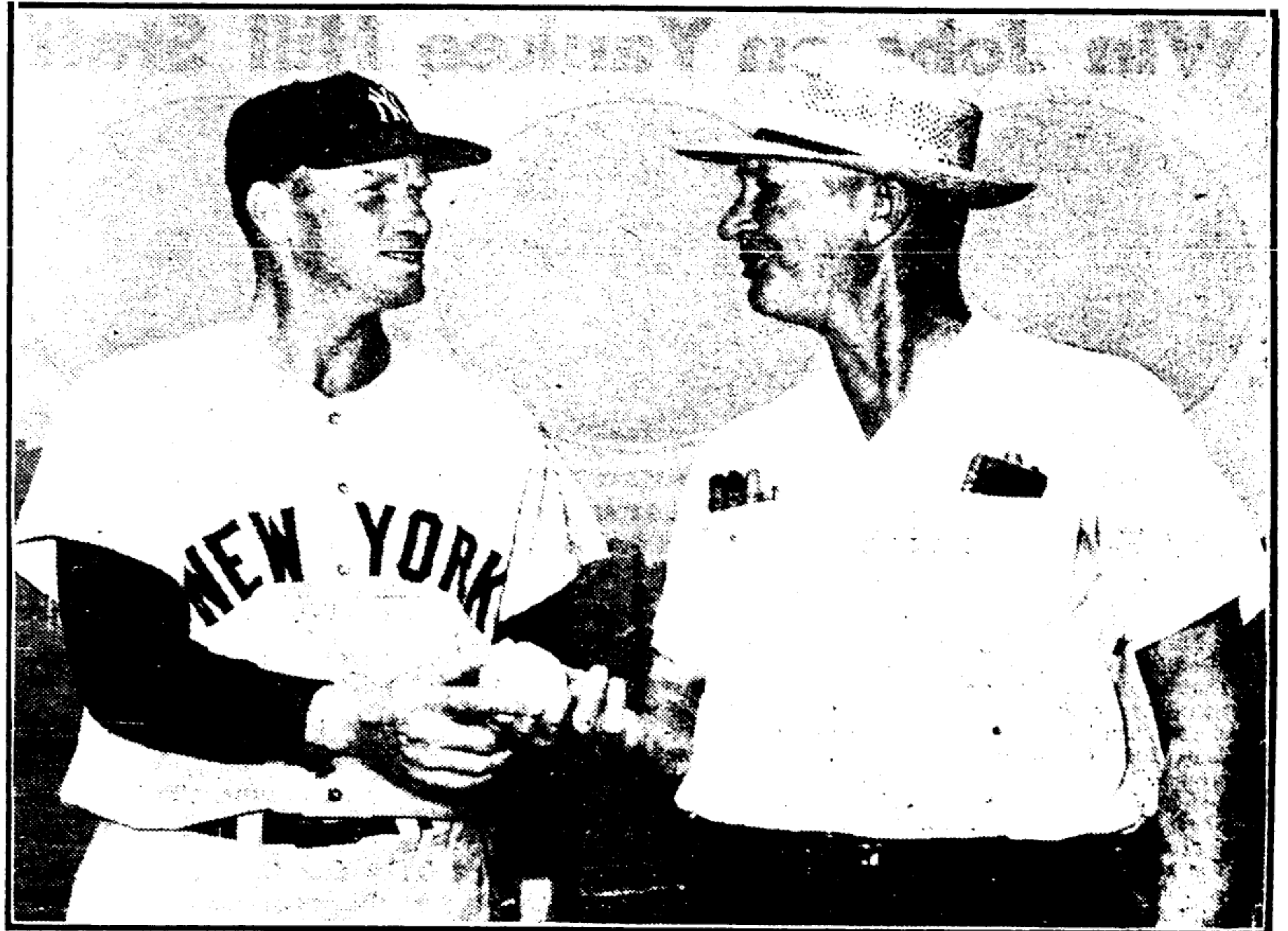
In 1960, Murray was voted a half-share in the Series. The next three years, he was cut in for three-quarters.

"I pitch to the batters every day for 20 or 25 minutes at a clip," he said.

"I hit flies to the outfield during infield practice," he said. "Then I go back into the clubhouse and get out of my uniform."

Murray's next chore is to find Bruce Henry, the traveling secretary.

"Bruce gets me a place to sit. Once that infield practice is over, I'm just another spectator," Murray said.



SPUD MURRAY, starting his fifth year as Yankee batting practice hurler, meets Paul Schreiber, who held the job for the Bombers in the 1930s and the Bosox in the 1940-50s.

'Richardson Can Lead Revival Of .300 Hitters,' DiMag Claims

By TIL FERDENZI

FT. LAUDERDALE, Fla.

Joe DiMaggio, an authority on the subject, says there should be no mystery about the decline of the .300 hitter.

The Yankee Clipper, now a special coach in the Yankee training camp, describes the temptations facing a major league hitter these days as being "something fierce."

"It takes a certain kind of restraint to hold off swinging your head off for home runs," DiMag said. "What with those slim-handled bats and one thing and another, the home-run craze has affected the batting style of a lot of kids."

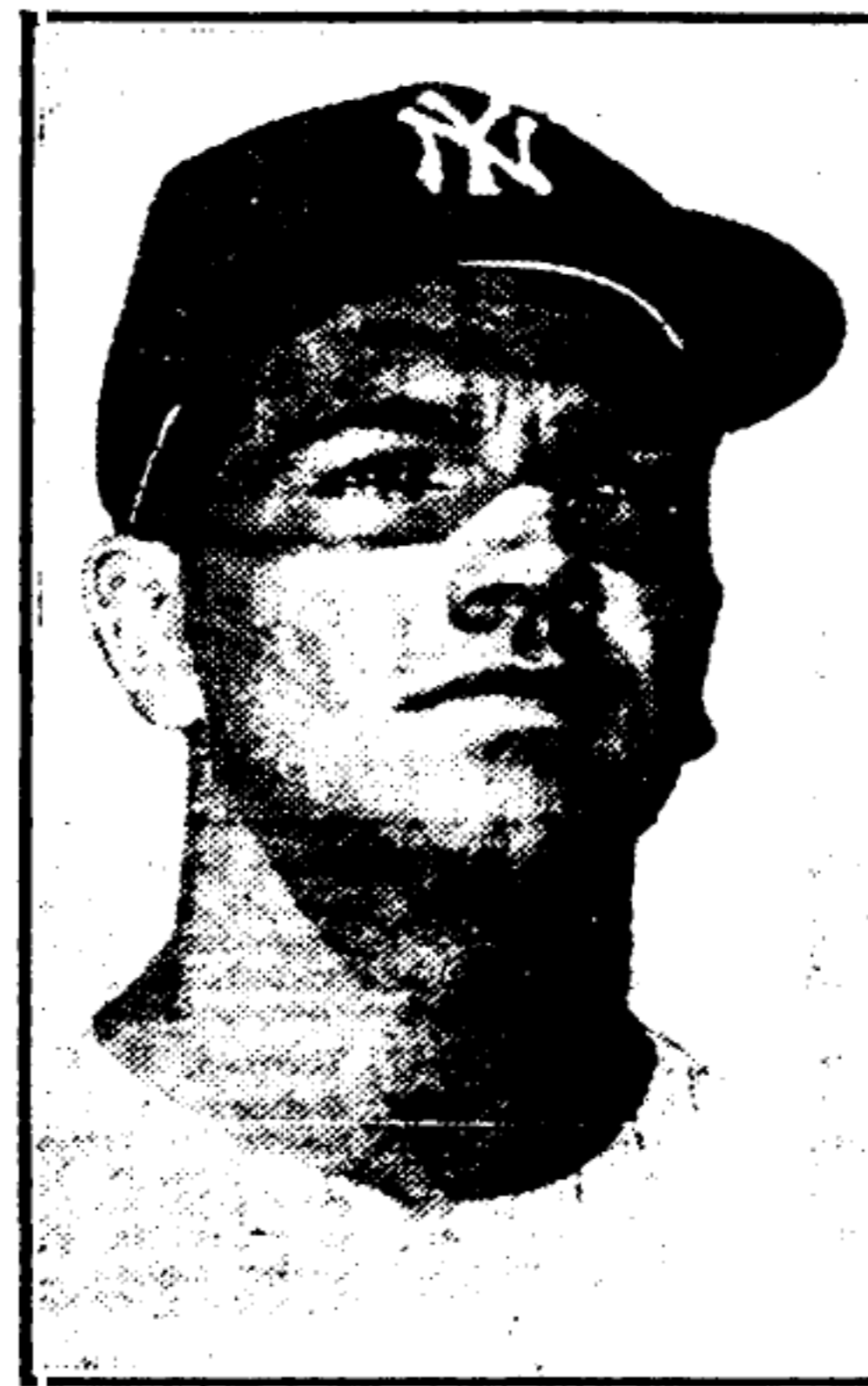
The subject of .300 hitters came up recently after Bobby Richardson had whipped through the first ten days of the Grapefruit League campaign batting slightly better than .600.

Big Year for Bobby?

According to DiMaggio, Richardson's fast getaway in Florida exhibitions could be the barometer of a big season for the little second baseman.

"Bobby's the perfect example of a big league hitter who bats with restraint," DiMaggio said. "And that is one of the big reasons he'll wind up the season batting .300, maybe even leading the club at bat."

DiMag said Richardson's bat was a natural deterrent to over-swinging. "Bobby's a smart fellow," the Hall



Bobby Richardson

of Famer said. "You don't see him marching up to the plate with one of those real, light bats. He's got a big bat, a bat he can get around, but not one he can get around so fast he swings his head off at the ball."

DiMaggio said that the success of "little-guy" hitters like Richardson was "almost sure" to start a trend. And nothing could please DiMag more than that.

"Wouldn't it be great," he said, "if one of these years we had a flock of .300 hitters instead of the handful we've got now?"

According to the Yankee coach, the day of the .300 hitter is definitely coming back.

They will, he said, inherit the major league scene once again, just the way it used to be.

"I mean it," he said. "It's simply a matter of economics. Batting .300 used to be a status symbol. It ought to be that again."

"Take Richardson," DiMaggio add-

Busy Linz Drills at Every Infield and Outfield Berth

FT. LAUDERDALE, Fla.—Phil Linz, a man-in-motion last year in the Yankee infield, is now also moving around in the outfield.

"Linz is going to be able to do everything," said Yogi Berra. "I want him working out at all three outfield positions."

That makes the bespectacled utilityman just about the busiest fellow in the Yankee camp. When he's not moving around in the outfield, he's working out at third base, shortstop, second and first.

ed. "He's now blossomed into a genuine hitter. That boy really can control the bat. He can pull sharply and he can hit to right field with the best of them. Like all successful little guys up at the plate, Bobby has the knack of banging the ball through holes in the infield. When you've got true control of the bat, as he has, then you're pretty sure to get a piece of the ball."

DiMaggio, one of the rare ones, was just as successful hitting home runs as he was hitting for average.

Easy Swing Often Does It

"You know," he said, "lots of times when I was guarding the plate, say on two-strike situations, I'd take an easy swing and the ball would sail out of the park anyway."

DiMag added it was tough to impress this on a "certain type of hitter."

"They think," he said, "that they've got to unload with everything in order to hit the ball out of the park. It isn't necessarily so."

DiMaggio was speaking from personal experience.

"When I was on that 56-game hitting streak (1941), there were lots of times when I'd be up there my last time at bat and the pitcher had me two strikes and no balls. That's when I'd alter my swing. I'd shorten

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Spud Confuses Spectators-- No. 55 Not on the Scorecard

FT. LAUDERDALE, Fla.—Spud Murray, the Yankees' batting-practice pitcher, wears No. 55 on the back of his shirt. There is, of course, no No. 55 on the scorecard. This, said Murray, leads to lots of conversations he otherwise wouldn't have.

"Somebody will lean over the box seats and ask me to identify myself," Murray said. "When I tell them I'm the batting-practice pitcher, I'm no longer a celebrity to them."

Murray says he is mostly mistaken for Tony Kubek. "Lots of people rush up to me in airports and say: 'Hey, Tony, how about your autograph?' I find it easier to sign them than explain I'm not really the man they think I am."

Bright Heeds Yogi's Plea— Dons Catching Tools Again

FT. LAUDERDALE, Fla.—Harry Bright, a fellow who originally was signed as a catcher back in 1946, has once again donned the catcher's tools at the request of Yogi Berra.

"I want Bright ready to catch, just in case," the Yankee manager said.

Bright, who has played just about everywhere during his well-traveled career, last caught a couple of years ago on a part-time basis for Washington.