

Cleveland's Hard-Luck **Robinson** Gets Rolling

Husky **Eddie** Belting Ball for Distance

Texan, a Picture of Power at Plate, Showing New Confidence This Year

By ED McAULEY
CLEVELAND, O.

Cleveland's fast-moving Indians had just notched their toughest victory of the young season, a 14-inning, 12 to 11 verdict at the expense of the Chicago White Sox.

Larry Doby, Ken Keltner and Dale Mitchell all had made handsome defensive contributions, and Lou Boudreau and his coaches were discussing with reporters which had been the best play of the long afternoon.

"Gentlemen," smiled Bill McKechnie, "the best play of the afternoon was turned in by **Eddie Robinson**, when he hit the ball out of the park in the fourteenth inning."

That game-wrecking homer was Eddie's second of the matinee and his third of the season. It kited his batting average for the first five games to .476—and this is the boy who was benched after two starts last year because he looked as if he never would find the range.

The Indians' pennant prospects are tied up in a veritable knot of imponderables, but anyone brash enough to try to reduce the situation to a single, simple sentence would have to say: "As **Robinson** goes, so will go the Indians."

And **Robinson**, one and all are happy to observe, is going very well.

Won Int League Award

Boudreau and his aides long have believed that the handsome Texan needed only a hypodermic in the confidence to become as effective against American League pitching as he was against the throwing in the International League, where he won the most valuable player award in 1946. Whoever applied the needle, the treatment worked. In the opening series with Detroit, **Robinson** stepped into the box against Hal Newhouser as if he hardly could wait to swing at the offerings of the circuit's premier southpaw.

Robbie's only hit off the Tiger left-hander was a single in three trips to the plate, but he went out on a solid smash to first base and even the fouls he lined into the corners were soundly met.

"I felt good that day," he admitted, "but don't go saying that I like to bat against Newhouser. I'd much rather hit against a righthander than a left-hander, and if I had my choice of southpaws to face, I certainly wouldn't name Newhouser."

Eddie believes that he will hold the pace, but he has no explanation to offer for his sudden development into one of the most feared sluggers in the business.

"I got a lot of tips from Boudreau and others at training camp," he says, "and I've tried to put their advice into practice. For one thing, I'm not trying to pull those outside pitches the way I did last season. I'm hitting them to left. After I do that a couple of times, I've discovered, the pitcher starts working on the inside, and then I'm really in business."

Robinson testifies that he does nothing but "stand up and take my cuts," but his batting form would qualify for one of those how-it-should-be-done movies distributed by the major league promotion departments. Standing six feet three inches, and weighing over 200 pounds, **Eddie** is a picture of power as he stands well back in the box and goes into a slight crouch as the pitcher takes his windup.

Robinson finished the 1947 campaign prematurely when he broke an ankle bone by the painful method of hitting himself with a foul tip. At the time, his average for the season was an unimpressive .244, but for a month prior to the injury, he had been traveling at a clip well over .300. He was far from satisfied and offered

On The Beam



EDDIE ROBINSON . . . wielding heavy Indian club

a surprising index of his conviction that he wasn't in his true form.

"I struck out only 13 times all summer," he said. "When I'm hitting right, I have a lot of strikeouts. I take a big swing at the ball and either miss it or murder it."

Within the club, **Robinson** probably has a larger personal rooting section than any other Indian. Both on and off the field, he has experienced so much misfortune that his teammates believe it is time he started getting even.

The big first baseman was born in Paris, Tex., December 15, 1920. He broke into pro ball with Valdosta in 1939, but batted only .249 that first season. Even so, he drove 88 runs across the plate and when, the following year, he raised his average to .323 and batted in 105 runs, all observers agreed that the young man was on his way.

To Elmira, to Baltimore

Moving up to Elmira in 1941, he hit .295, a performance which earned him a promotion to Baltimore. With the Orioles in 1942, he had an average of .306, hit 27 home runs and drove in 105 tallies. That was enough for Roger Peckinpaugh, then front office chief of the Indians. He bought Robbie's contract under the terms of the Tribe's working agreement with Baltimore.

Eddie played a few games for Cleveland at the end of 1942, then enlisted in the Navy. It was at this time that trouble started hitch-hiking. An old leg injury flared into a sore spot and a Navy doctor operated. Weeks later, **Eddie** was horrified to discover that he had what is known popularly as a "dangling foot." Only another operation, and months of patient convalescence restored life in the member. He was wearing a brace attached to his baseball shoe when he reported to the Tribe's training camp at Clearwater, Fla., in 1946.

He made a good impression that first spring, but just before the club returned to Cleveland, he was summoned to Baltimore by the serious illness of his baby daughter. When it became evident that the child would not recover quickly, **Robinson** asked Peckinpaugh to assign him to the Orioles. A few weeks later, the baby died, following an operation, and Eddie's heart was heavier than his bat as he smashed his way through the summer. But at the finish his average was .313. He had hit 34 homers and driven 123 runs across the plate. He definitely was

ready to take over as the Indians' first baseman.

But he couldn't convince a squat fellow-Southerner named Les Fleming that he belonged on the initial sack. As a fielder, Fleming couldn't carry the polished **Robinson's** glove, but he was so dangerous at the plate that he kept Robbie out of the regular lineup almost half the season.

But the Indians disposed of Fleming last winter, and although they added the stylish Elbie Fletcher to the roster, their plans for 1948 were based on the supposition that **Robinson** would play first base—if he could hit consistently.

Have you looked at the American League batting averages lately?

Everybody Joining Tribe's .300 Club

Robinson and Boudreau Set Early Batting Pace as Team Clouts at .332 Mark During Victory Streak; Keltner Finding Home Run Range

By ED McAULEY

CLEVELAND, O.

Manager Lou Boudreau of the Cleveland Indians made five hits in six times at bat in Chicago last week—a feat which, at this early stage of the season, ought to have a stimulating effect on a fellow's batting average.

It did. Boudreau's individual mark after the game in question was a stratospheric .455, but the best it gave him was second place among the Tribesmen. **Eddie Robinson** was hitting .476.

Bob Feller won his first two games in easy fashion, throwing 17 runless innings before the Detroit Tigers pushed across a score. Bob Lemon lived up to his billing as the club's No. 2 pitcher and the defenses looked tremendous as the squad swept out front in the opening weeks of the campaign.

But the really amazing story was that hitting. By the time a couple of postponements in Chicago interrupted the victory march, the Indians had won five straight and accumulated a club average of .332. Behind Boudreau and

Robinson came Ken Keltner, with five home runs and a mark of .364. Allie Clark was batting .350, Jim Hegan .333 and Larry Doby .320. Only Joe Gordon, at .240, and Thurman Tucker, at .238, were under the .300 mark.

Ken Pulls 'Em to Left

Boudreau was happiest about the stick work of **Robinson**, whose power at the plate or lack thereof will be a most important factor in determining the Indians' finish, but he had some excitement left for Keltner's long-range blasts. In training camp this spring, the manager told Keltner to forget his efficiency at the hit-and-run and concentrate on pulling the ball to left. Ken responded eagerly to the suggestion. A natural pull hitter when he joined the Indians in 1938, the Milwaukee veteran had sacrificed much of his power while aiming at old League Park's close right field fence.

As the team headed east for its first direct meeting with the pennant-favored Yankees and Red Sox, the lineup which Boudreau named for the opening game was intact, in spite of the fierce competition for the regular outfield jobs. Doby struck out five straight times in Detroit, and when he followed this sorry performance by fanning on his first appearance at the plate in Chicago, there was some press



Ken Keltner

Veck Back in Hospital

CLEVELAND, O.—President Bill Veck of the Indians was back in Cleveland Clinic hospital as his club made its first invasion of the East.

The Tribe's head man was scheduled for treatment for recurring infection in his right leg, part of which was amputated 18 months ago. Veck had a second operation last summer and it was feared that he would have to go under the knife again before the troublesome stump heals permanently.

box suspicion to the effect that he soon would be watching the games from the bench. But before the afternoon was over, the Negro newcomer had a home run and two singles and also had contributed one of the most spectacular catches of the young campaign.

Doby pulled a leg muscle in that contest and Boudreau announced that Pat Seery probably would start in right field the following day. But the postponement of the next two games gave Larry ample time to recover and he was in the starting list when the Tribe opened against the Browns in St. Louis, April 29.

Christopher to Rescue

The one worrisome item was the failure of the second-line pitchers to follow the example set by Feller and Lemon. Feller won two and Lemon one of those first five decisions, and on each occasion the starting pitcher was on duty when the game ended. But Al Gettel, starting in Detroit, and Don Black, opening in Chicago, both needed assistance—and early. In both these games, Boudreau had reason to be thankful for the addition of Russ Christopher to the casting corps. The Thin Man halted the opposition when it seemed most dangerous, although he tired late in his stint against the White Sox and Feller marched from the bullpen to retire the side in the fourteenth and final inning.

The Indians followed Feller's opening-day two-hitter against the Browns by sweeping three straight in Detroit. The series drew 135,768 customers, but even this good news for the front office was small consolation for Steve O'Neill, who saw his three top pitchers, Hal Newhouser, Art Houtteman and Fred Hutchinson, beaten impartially by the Tribesmen. Keltner hit two home runs in the opening game of the series and duplicated the performance in the finale.

Indians Play to 208,931 in First Four '48 Games

CLEVELAND, O.—The Indians are believed to have set a new major league record for total attendance for the first four days of the season, when they drew 208,931. The Tribe played before 73,163 for the home inaugural, 45,233 in the Detroit opener, 41,655 on the second day in the Motor City and 48,880 in the Tigers' first home Sunday game.

Doby Ties Strikeout Record, West Walk Mark on Same Day



Larry Doby

Two major league records—one for strikeouts and the other for walks—were equaled in the major leagues on the same day, April 25, when Larry Doby, Negro outfielder of Cleveland, struck out five times, and Max West of Pittsburgh walked the same number of occasions.

Doby, who had murdered practically everything tossed his way at the plate in the previous two days' games, was set down on strikes by Hal Newhouser, Virgil Trucks and Rufe



Max West

Gentry. Before the April 25 game Newhouser, who started on the mound, asked Art Houtteman how he had pitched to Doby the day before.

"He seemed to hit everything I threw up there," said Art. "I threw him a fast ball and he clouted that. I came in with a curve and he hit that good. I tried a change of pace and he got a clean single."

"I'm going to pitch inside to him," Newhouser said. Hal did—and struck out Doby three times. Trucks tried the same thing and struck him out. Gentry continued the experiment and also fanned the Negro star.

Only Carl Weiland, a former pitcher for the Browns, whiffed oftener, six times in a 15-inning game. Doby, however, tied Bob Grove, Red Sox, 1933; John Broaca, Yankees, 1934; Chet Laabs, Tigers, 1938, and Floyd Young, Pirates, 1935, for a nine-inning game.

In receiving five walks from Cincinnati pitchers in the second game of the double-header, Max shared a distinction with many other moderns in the National, Mel Ott so benefiting four times. Walter Wilnot of the Cubs established the record of six, August 22, 1891, and the feat was duplicated by Jimmie Foxx of the Red Sox for the American League, June 16, 1938.

West, incidentally, was serving as a substitute for Dixie Walker, who was suffering from a cold, and the five walks were drawn from three different pitchers—and not one was intentional.