

# Two Rookies May Open in L. A. Lineup

Gray, Pignatano Regarded  
as Good Bets for Berths  
in 'Frisco Curtain-Raiser

By FRANK FINCH  
TAMPA, Fla.



Although the Los Angeles Dodgers yet have to campaign in Injun country through Texas, Arizona and Nevada, there would be very few surprises, indeed, in Walt Alston's varsity combo if the season were to open tomorrow.

Alston's not saying that; we are. Walt's dues are paid up in the Managers' Union and he's not about to court complacency by announcing that this athlete or that one already has nailed down a steady job.

The fact remains, though, that there won't be more than two new faces in the Los Angeles lineup when the bell rings at San Francisco on April 15.

The possible interlopers are Third Baseman Dick Gray and Catcher Joe Pignatano. Gray, a .297 hitter with 111 RBIs and 16 homers at St. Paul last season, has quite a battle on his hands to wrest the job from a rejuvenated Randy Jackson, an eight-year major league vet whose skillful play this spring is evidence that his trick knee has healed completely.

But Alston likes Gray's forte for pulling the ball, particularly since the Dodgers will be playing 77 games in the Los Angeles Coliseum, where some of the left field seats may turn out to be just a long putt for pull hitters. And Gray is one of the speedier men on the team, an item that Alston has not overlooked.

Walt "Encouraged" by Catching Pignatano, a righthanded batter, stands a good chance of opening against the Giants if Southpaw Johnny Antonelli is Bill Rigney's hurling selection.

Alston says he has been "greatly encouraged" by the catching, supposedly the chink in the Dodger armor. "Pignatano has looked the best—all-round. He's exceptionally fast, a fine receiver and I have hopes that he can hit," said Alston. In eight games for Brooklyn last year, the native Flatbusher hit .214, but in 70 games for Montreal he was only one point below .300.

Johnny Roseboro, who failed with the stick at Brooklyn but hit .273 for Montreal, is a greatly improved receiver. Capable Rube Walker rounds out a staff that will function without Roy Campanella for the first time in 11 years.

Our guess is that Gil Hodges at first base, Charlie Neal at second, Pee Wee Reese at short and Gray at third will comprise the L. A. infield in the opener, with Gino Cimoli in left field, Duke Snider in center and Carl Furillo in right.

The possibility remains, though, that Snider will play left field and Cimoli center.

Depends on Duke's Knee "If Duke's knee isn't 100 per cent fit on opening day, he will be in left field instead of center," Alston disclosed. "And if Antonelli starts, Duke won't be in there at all unless he's in top shape."

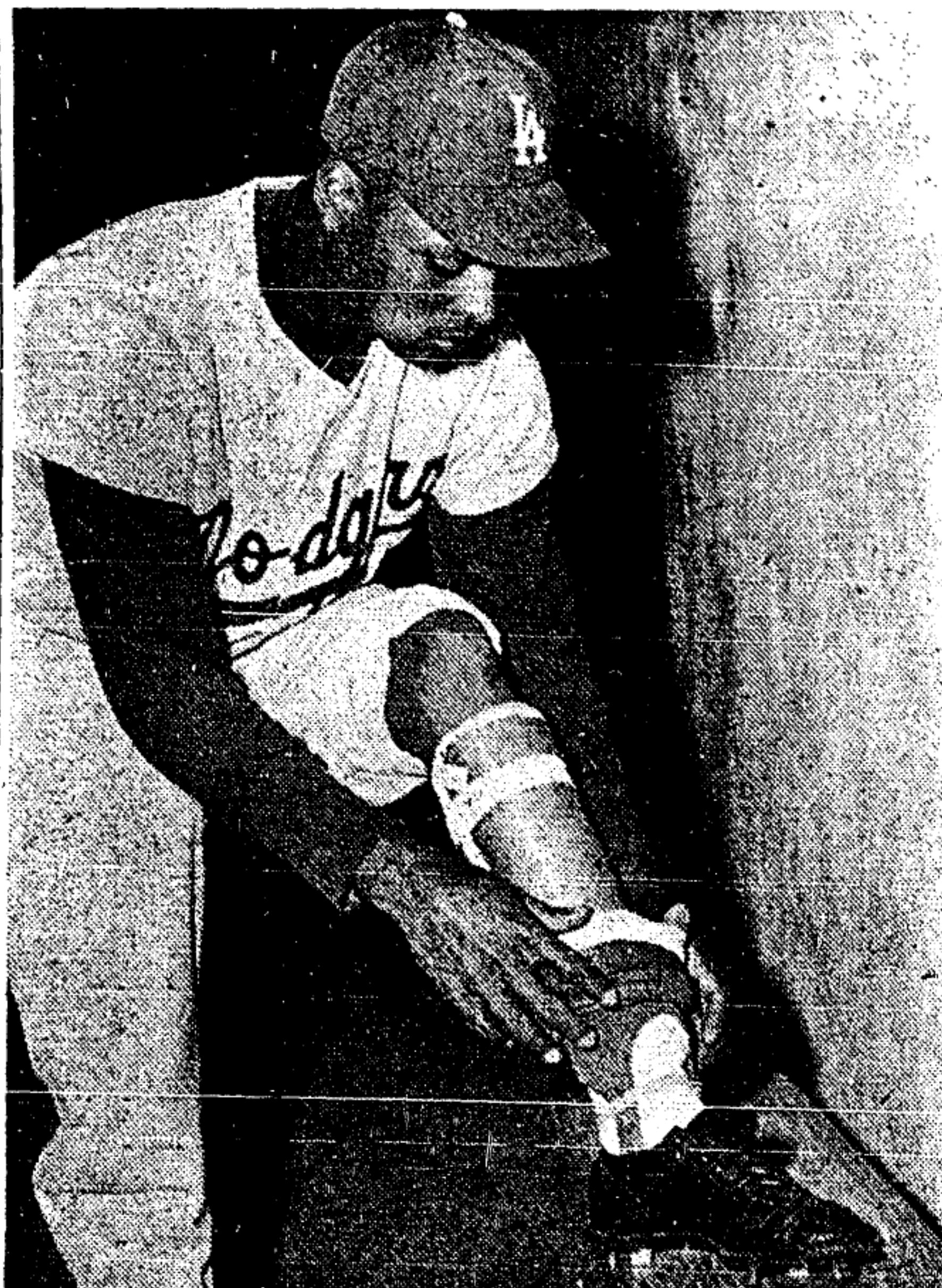
Snider, who hadn't played left field since his rookie year in 1947, asked and was granted permission to play a few exhibition games in left beginning with the March 31 engagement with the Yankees at St. Petersburg.

However, we believe he will be in his regular spot when the race begins. Although they lost three in a row to the Pirates, Red Sox and Tigers, the Dodgers were coming up with the big inning—an encouraging sign—in late March.

During a five-game stretch, the Dodgers had six-run sprints against St. Louis and Detroit, scored four runs in one frame off the Pirates' Bob Friend and tallied five times in the first inning against Cincinnati. The fireworks were interrupted by Boston's 2 to 1 victory.

The real Donnybrook was Detroit's 12 to 11 triumph, March 28, in which

# Major Infielders Add New Armor to Protect Legs



CHARLEY NEAL of the Dodgers displays the aluminum shin guards he'll wear as protection against runners.



JOHNNY TEMPLE of the Reds wears a fibre guard to protect scar from burns on his left prop.

## 10 Runless Rounds in Skein Run Up by Young Drysdale

TAMPA, Fla.—Don Drysdale, the Dodgers' best bet to be a 20-game winner this season, ran up a string of ten scoreless innings to his credit.

The 21-year-old ace allowed only one run in 13 innings of work against the Red Sox, Tigers and Cardinals, and racked up two victories.

Gail Harris' high hopper that scored Billy Martin from third base and gave the Tigers a 12 to 11 win, March 28, was the first run allowed by another Dodger deceiver, Lefty Jackie Collum, in a dozen rounds of relief against the Phillies, White Sox, A's, Yankees and Tigers.

The Tigers collected 19 hits and Los Angeles 14, both figures being new "highs" for Los Angeles.

Until that fracas the Dodgers had hit only four home runs in 17 games, but the total was nearly doubled as Carl Furillo flogged a pinch grand-slammer, Felipe Montemayor hit his second homer of the spring and Norm Larker laced No. 1.

Dodger Dope: Sandy Koufax and Don Drysdale left the club at Tampa during the last week-end in March to return to Fort Dix, N. J., for their release from the Army. . . . Catcher Rube Walker says Southpaw Danny McDewitt has the stuff to win 20 games this year. . . . Norm Larker, rookie first baseman, is supposed to be a line-drive hitter, but he cleared the center field fence—a 375-foot shot on the fly—when the Dodgers slugged it out with the Tigers at Lakeland, March 28. . . . Billy Martin, who Chuck Dressen said would be a flop at shortstop for Detroit, twitted his former boss when they met, saying, "Hey, Chuck, I already got four votes for the All-Star Game." . . . Roger Craig, who has more good stuff than the law allows, has been experiencing tendon trouble in his right shoulder. . . . Slow-motion movies of Johnny Roseboro confirmed Walt Alston's suspicions that the rookie backstop was uppercutting the ball.

Alston also discovered a flaw in Shortstop Bob Lillis' batting style via the camera. . . . Manager Goldie Holt of the Dodgers' farm club at Spokane says that Frank Howard, L. A. freshman outfielder, has the greatest potential he's seen in years. . . . The players buy postcard-size photos at \$30 a thousand to take care of requests from fans. Duke Snider is stuck with 1,500 pix of himself wearing a cap with a capital "B" on it. . . . Sandy Amoros, the deposed Dodger outfielder now with Montreal, has been stinging the ball at Vero Beach.

## Neal Puts Aluminum Device Over Shins; Temple Has Covering for Burned Spot

By DICK YOUNG  
VERO BEACH, Fla.

The age of the armored ball player has arrived. Charley Neal, eager to play second base for the Dodgers, but not at the cost of having a leg chopped off by slashing spikes, has donned aluminum shin guards. He plans to wear them regularly as protection against base-runners who mistake his legs for second base whenever Charley tries to pivot on a DP.

This is not the male version of the sack; not a stylish fad. If anything, it figures to take hold and become an established piece of equipment for second sackers.

"I think it's a fine idea," says Johnny Temple, Cincy's second baseman. "I think all second basemen should wear shin guards, at least on the front (left) leg. That's the one they go for."

Temple revealed he has been wearing a fibre shin guard throughout his career—but for a very special reason. His left leg, below the knee, was severely burned when he was 16, and a skin-graft was performed.

Guard Shaped to Leg "If I get cut," Johnny said, "the stitches wouldn't hold, so I have to wear this guard."

He rolled down his red stocking to reveal the plastic covering. "It's made from a mold," he said, "shaped right to my leg."

Temple revealed that Johnny Logan, Braves' shortstop, planned to have a special set made. Logan was idle much of last season due to a badly gashed shin bone that festered. "A guy's crazy," Johnny has said, "not to have some protection against those guys who come at you with knives on both shoes."

Temple, oddly enough, is one of the men mainly responsible for Neal's unique armor-plate. "This is where Johnny got me last year," said Charley, pointing to a dime-sized scar on his right leg.

Charley fingered a fresher wound on the other shin. "Roseboro gave me this in a camp game," he said.

Team Trainer Harold Wendler and his assistant, Bill Bushler, put their talents together and came up with the aluminum guards—about a foot long, shaped to cover all but the rear of each lower leg, and padded inside with foam rubber. They are light in weight and do not reduce Neal's running speed.

Charley wrapped them around his spindly legs and smiled appreciatively. "They fill out my stockings. Now people will think I have big legs," he said.

## Crackers Again Expected to Rate as Flag Favorite

Atlanta Seeks Third in Row; Birmingham, Chattanooga Looming as Challengers

By GEORGE LEONARD  
NASHVILLE, Tenn.



Earl Mann

It seems to be a popular pre-season custom in the Southern Association to pick Atlanta for the pennant.

The Crackers are the "Yankees of the minors" with 16 flags in 57 years—hardly comparable to the Bombers' 23 American League championships in the last 37 years, but still, a record for minor league ball.

This season Atlanta will be seeking its third consecutive Southern title. If achieved, this would be another record for the league.

A working agreement with talent-rich Milwaukee has been extremely profitable for the Crackers. This, plus Atlanta President Earl Mann's ability to turn up with the right player when needed, not to mention a winning tradition (four pennants since 1950), is sure to make the Georgia entry a favorite again.

Late Acquisitions Tell Tale

Actually, it is too early, even now, to venture a sound opinion on the course of the coming race. One reason is that some clubs, training at a major league affiliate's base for farm teams, don't take definite shape until just a few days before the opening game. Another is that personnel acquired at the trim-down date in the majors and Triple-A leagues can have a vital effect on the trend of the race.

Even so, Atlanta, Birmingham and Chattanooga may be good bets at this stage to finish in the first division.

The Crackers will be guided by capable, cool Hubert (Buddy) Bates for the second successive season. He was named manager of the year in 1957 after directing Atlanta to the pennant and then winning the playoffs.

There'll be a solid corps of returning veterans as usual. They include Outfielder Billy Reynolds (.265), First Baseman Buck Riddle (.227), Infielder

## Dixie Openers

April 11

Chattanooga at Nashville (day-night), Atlanta at Birmingham (night), Little Rock at Memphis (night), New Orleans at Mobile (night).

Secondary Openers

April 14

Memphis at Little Rock, Mobile at New Orleans, Birmingham at Chattanooga, Nashville at Atlanta. (All night games.)

Sam Meeks (.282), Outfielder-First Baseman Bob Montag (.246 with 20 homers), Pitcher Paul Cave (3-6) and Pitcher Jack O'Donnell (16-10).

Birmingham will start with a better club than a year ago. It has been 27 years since a pennant flew at Rickwood Field. In an attempt to change that, General Manager Eddie Glennon hired Cal Ermer, 33-year-old dean of league pilots. Ermer managed at Chattanooga the past six years.

Ermer is confident of presenting a classy infield of Slugger Lou Limmer at first base, Veteran Howie Phillips at second, Frank Kostro at shortstop and Steve Demeter at third. Reliable pitching mainstays should be Bud Black and Larry Donovan.

Vet Lineup for Chattanooga

Holdovers galore brighten Chattanooga's aspirations for an all-the-way contender. Pitching may be a question mark, however. In the returning contingent are Outfielders Ernie Oravetz, Bob Allison and Vern Morgan, Infielders Jesse Levan and Stan Roseboro and Catcher Guy Morton. John (Red) Marion, Birmingham manager in 1951, will be at the helm.

Nashville, under First Baseman-Manager Dick Sisler another season, apparently will go to the post with its infield as the strongest department. The foursome includes Tommy Brown, preparing for his fifteenth season in O. B. at the age of 30, at third; Bobby Durnbaugh manning shortstop, Larry Taylor at second and Sisler, 1957 all-star team choice, at first.

Early-season scorecard sales at Russwood Park in Memphis should be brisk. Just about the only thing familiar about the 1958 Chicks is the name. Almost everything is new—major league working agreement (the switch was from the Chicago Cubs to Boston Red Sox), manager (Warren Robinson) and players. Outfielder Gip Dickens, who averaged .276 and hit 22 homers for Memphis last year, is returning.

Mobile, under Mel McGaha; Little Rock, piloted by Les Peden, and New Orleans, led by Charlie Silvera, are the other clubs with new leaders.

Silvera has the toughest task. His job is to whip up a winning club to jack up attendance figures and thus save the franchise for New Orleans.