

Catcher **Tenace** Can Drive a Hard Bargain

By RON BERGMAN

OAKLAND—Gene Tenace has almost a scout's knowledge of the needs of other clubs in one position.

"I check out the box scores," Tenace disclosed. "I know what clubs need catching. There are about 12 to 14 clubs."

Tenace comes by his knowledge

out of self-interest. As the last of the unsigned major league catchers, he appreciates his bargaining position.

He doesn't think that his present employer, A's Owner Charlie Finley, will re-sign him.

"RIGHT NOW, I'd have to say no," said Tenace about Finley's

chances. "Unless he comes up with an ungodly figure and a no-trade and no-cut contract. I don't see him doing that."

In the three seasons prior to this one, Tenace averaged 159 games played and 26 homers a year. That's what makes him so attractive to other clubs.

The tough 29-year-old will fall short of his norm this season because he sat out six weeks with an injury suffered trying to steal a base. Not many clubs are as speed-crazy as the A's.

"I just want to go where people appreciate me," said Tenace about his future home in baseball. "I want to be treated like a professional. I've been underpaid ever since I've been here."

"IT'S DEPRESSING to see what other catchers are making. But it has to be encouraging, being the only unsigned catcher."

Tenace's unique position came about when the Red Sox brought Carlton Fisk to terms on August 8. Both catchers, by the way, are represented by agent Jerry Kapstein.

Originally, Kapstein and Tenace asked for either a one-year or a three-year contract. The one-year contract proposal was for \$100,000. The three-year contract would have paid \$85,000, \$105,000 and \$130,000, with a \$7,500 bonus if named the league's Most Valuable Player. There also were no-cut, no-trade clauses to be included.

Instead, Finley offered a \$14,000 raise to \$65,000 and then cut Tenace the full 20 percent to \$40,800.

NOW THE PRICE of Tenace has gone up. To what amount, nobody knows because Kapstein and Tenace won't say for strategic purposes. They don't want to name a price. They'd rather prospective employers do that.

"I'm totally relaxed right now," said Tenace during a hot bat

streak in August. "I hope to stay healthy until the end of the season. I'm not concerned about next season, or this winter, right now."

Tenace's main hope is that the A's remain in the race.

"If we get eliminated, I know Charlie would bring somebody up from the minors and sit us down," Tenace said, referring to himself and the five other unsigned A's.

IT WILL TAKE a lot of money to keep Tenace in the fold, but one selling point for Finley might be the retention of Chuck Tanner as manager.

"We're not quitters on this team," said Tenace. "We still think we can win it. We've got the optimism that Chuck Tanner instills in us. It makes us think we can win it. It's a pleasure to play

for the man."

A's Acorns: Billy Williams was ejected from a game for the first time in his 17-year career when Umpire Bill Kunkel thumbed him on August 16. Kunkel called strike three on Williams when the player wouldn't get in the batter's box after arguing over the first two called strikes. Afterward, Tanner told Bob Fishel of the American League office, who happened to watch the game in Milwaukee, that the A's didn't want the Lou DiMuro crew to work any more of their games. The Indians made the same request earlier in the season.

Utilityman Cesar Tovar was taken off the disabled list after he complained to Marvin Miller, executive director of the Major League Players' Association. Tovar broke a bone in his right wrist on May 31 and recovered about a month later. To make room for Tovar, runner Larry Lintz was optioned to Tucson (Pacific Coast). That led to an angry shouting match in the clubhouse between Lintz and Tanner.

Claudell Washington didn't take care of a spike wound, a team spokesman said, and had to be hospitalized with an infected ankle in Milwaukee. . . . Sportswriters Betty Cuniberti of the San Francisco Chronicle and Stephanie Salter of the San Francisco Examiner are allowed in Tanner's clubhouse office in the Coliseum. They also want to conduct interviews in the players' clubhouse, but haven't so far. Allison Hock, another female sportswriter for the Examiner, also has reported a couple of games. Forgive us, Gloria Steinem, but all three women are attractive. . . . When reliever Jim Todd pitched to two batters on August 17, it marked his first action in 24 days. Todd had turned the bullpen into the doghouse.

Singleton's Once-Dead Bat Now Buries Rivals

By JIM HENNEMAN

BALTIMORE—It's been a long struggle, and he's had to perform in the shadow of Lee May and Reggie Jackson, but Ken Singleton gradually has pulled himself back to respectability.

While the "Lee and Reggie Show" has captured most of the attention as the Orioles make their annual belated bid for a division title, Singleton quietly has become the club's most consistent hitter. So steady has been his progress, in fact, that the switch-hitting outfielder is a definite threat to lead the Orioles in hitting.

That hardly would rank as an upset, because he did it last year with a .300 average. He won't reach that station this year, but if he maintains the pace he's set the last three months, he'll be in the neighborhood.

ON JUNE 2, Singleton was hitting a paltry .185—and he already was on the rise. It was an embarrassing stretch that brought back some amusing boyhood memories for Singleton.

"When I was a kid, every Sunday my father and I used to get the paper and look at the averages to see who was the 'strongest' hitter in the league—the guy on the bottom who was holding up everybody else.

"Somehow I never quite pictured myself in that spot," he said at the time, "but I've been there the last couple of weeks and it's been kind of embarrassing.

"But," he promised, "before it's all over, I'll be up there where I belong."

It wasn't just an idle comment. Since shedding his "strong man" tag, Singleton's climb has been as steady as it has been unspectacular.

He had hitting streaks of 11, 10 and eight games, connected safely in 23 of 26, and was hitting at a .311 clip as the final week of August approached.

SINGLETON'S overall average climbed to .261, putting him within 10 points of team leader Mark Belanger. Even more significant was the fact that as a lefthanded hitter, which is about 75 percent of the time, he is rolling at a .286 clip.



Ken Singleton

"It's hard to explain why my average is so low righthanded (.192)," Singleton said. "In the past, I've generally hit about the same from both sides."

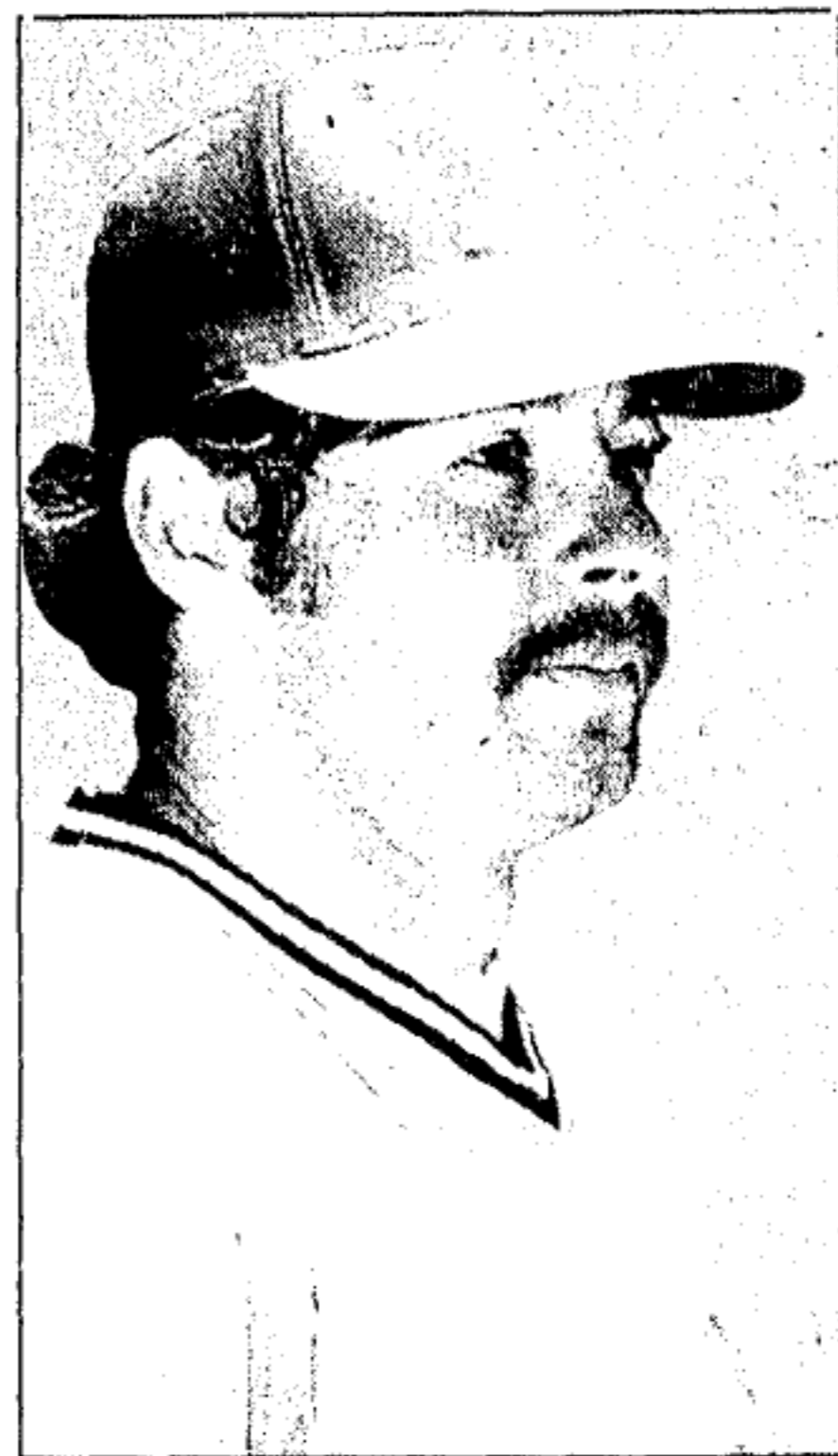
Part of the reason, undoubtedly, is that the Orioles have been a predominantly righthanded-hitting team both years that Singleton has been in Baltimore, and thus he hasn't seen much lefthanded pitching. "It seems like we go long stretches without seeing any lefthanders, and then you run into guys like Frank Tanana, Vida Blue, Bill Travers and Sparky Lyle and it's not easy to help your average against those guys."

SINGLETON'S steady rise was in tune with the Orioles' attempt to get back in the East Division race. Despite the fact that they were nine games behind the Yankees in the loss column, the Orioles continued to base some hope on the fact that they have five games left with the leaders, a team they had beaten six straight times, and seven out of 10.

But that kind of domination is too much to expect over a team that has the pitching strength, and overall depth, that the Yankees possess.

"I'd like to get within five games and see what we could do," said Jackson. "It would be good for enthusiasm and excitement—although I don't imagine the Yankees feel that way."

Oriole Notes: Jackson and May were playing leapfrog for the club lead in home runs and runs batted in. The first baseman held slender leads in both departments, 22-21 in homers and 75-72 in RBIs. Both were close enough to challenge the league leaders in each department. . . . When the Orioles beat the White Sox in a doubleheader August 14, a wild brawl developed in the seventh inning of the nightcap when Jackson went to the mound after Clay Carroll. Jackson had homered in each game, with his grand-slam providing a 6-5 win in the second contest. He was hit by a pitch after his homer in the opener, and was irritated when Ken Brett pitched him tight in the following game. When he hit his grand-slam off Brett, Jackson yelled and gestured every step of the way around the bases. On his next at-bat, Jackson spun to the ground when Carroll's first pitch was in the area of his chin. On the next serve from Carroll, Jackson, who had been hit in the face by a pitch from Dock Ellis July 27, let his bat go and then started for the mound. He was intercepted by catcher Jim Essian, who applied a bear hug that took Jackson to the ground. At least four separate battles broke out and the brawl raged for 10 minutes before order was restored. Jackson and Lamar Johnson were the only players ejected.



Gene Tenace

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