

Joe Lahoud . . . Reason to Wonder.

Lahoud Bypassed Once More in Bid For a Regular Job

By LARRY CLAFLIN

BOSTON, Mass.—The trials, tribulations and frustrations of Joe Lahoud never seem to end. Maybe they never will end until he is traded to some other team which will give him the job he seeks so badly.

There never seems to be a job for Lahoud in the Boston outfield. This season is no different. He eats his heart out every day on the bench while others play.

"It's a hard thing to go through, but I am not going to pop off about it," said Lahoud. "I guess all I can do is wait my chance and be ready when it comes."

The Boston outfield has Carl Yastrzemski in left, Billy Conigliaro in center and Reggie Smith in right. Lahoud is, at best, the No. 4 outfielder, and even that position has been threatened by Mike Fiore, who had a sensational spring for the Red Sox.

What Lahoud resents quietly is the fact that he was not even considered for a starting job before spring training started. Naturally, he did not expect to be listed as a challenger to Yaz or Smith, but he would have liked a chance to battle young Conigliaro for the third job.

Lahoud has good recommendations. He had an excellent year at Louisville in 1970. He batted an even .300, drove in 93 runs and hit 17 homers. Hidden among his statistics are 116 bases on balls, a high figure for a young hitter.

Lahoud Would Swap

"He is a selective hitter," assessed Tiger scout Jack Tighe, who is high on Lahoud's bat.

At 24, Lahoud has begun to wonder if he ever will make it as a full-time major leaguer. He has reason to wonder. His confidence in himself is gradually being weakened by not playing.

"I get pitches to hit that I know I should hit out of the ball park, and I can't do anything with them because I have been to bat so few times this spring," Lahoud said without bitterness recently.

Ironically, while Lahoud was dying to play, his rival Conigliaro told a Boston reporter that he was unhappy because he had been playing too many innings in exhibition games.

"I'd like to swap places with Billy," said Lahoud.

Barring injury to a regular outfielder, Lahoud's only chance to become a regular is for Conigliaro to fail. Then, Manager Eddie Kasko might restore Smith to center field and try Lahoud in right. However, that is not a likely happening.

Lahoud takes a constant ribbing from his cronies on the team about

sitting on the bench and about the strong possibility that he will not even play in Boston this year. However, while the players kid Lahoud, they do not hear major league scouts—as the reporters do—predict that Lahoud one day will be a regular, if not in Boston, then elsewhere.

"But, when?" asked Lahoud in frustration. "When will I get to play? I'm getting older every day."

One thing Lahoud fears is that he will be traded to another club which will not start him.

Prefers Boston Bench

"I would not mind leaving the Red Sox if I could be a regular," he explained. "But, the last thing I want is to be traded to another team which won't use me. If I'm going to sit on the bench, it might as well be in Boston."

Lahoud has been with the Red Sox since 1966, when he was signed by scout Bots Nekola out of New Haven College in Connecticut. He is a bachelor who lives with his parents in Danbury, Conn., where they make so many hats.

Nobody can say for sure if Lahoud will hit, even if he plays regularly. But he has a good eye at the plate and shows pretty good power. He runs fairly well and has a strong arm.

"Just give me a chance," pleaded Joe, but it does not seem likely he will get it in Boston.

Bosox Bunts: Doug Griffin, the rookie second baseman, missed more than a week with a bad back. He and Luis Aparicio have played together very little this spring. . . . Ray Culp looked like the best Boston pitcher, which should surprise no one. . . . In an effort to strengthen their catching department, the Red Sox obtained Duane Josephson from the White Sox in a swap for relief pitcher Vicente Romo.

Fiore had six homers in his first 22 times at bat in brief exhibition appearances. He was being used at first base and in left field and many Red Sox players think he will wind up sharing first base with George Scott before long.

Phil Gagliano will stick with the Red Sox if only because there is a shortage of infielders. Gagliano has hit well this spring. . . . Carl Yastrzemski suffered a mild hamstring pull, one of his rare injuries. However, he played the next day with the thigh taped heavily by trainer Buddy LeRoux. If Yaz is getting tired of seeing southpaws, who can blame him? Seven lefties started against the Bosox in nine games. . . . Pitcher Jim Lonborg was sent out. Will he return?

Chris Speier: Giants' Backyard Prize

By PAT FRIZZELL

SAN FRANCISCO, Calif.—"It's great to be young and a Giant," Larry Doyle said many years ago.

Chris Speier, Steve Stone and George Foster know this is true.

These three rookies not only have made the 1971 San Francisco roster, but figure significantly in the Giants' designs on a pennant.

Speier, only 20, won the opening-day shortstop job with his proficient, aggressive and consistent play.

The impressive infielder from Alameda, Calif., right in the Giants' backyard, is in only his second season of Organized Ball.

Stone, 23, earned the No. 3 starting spot on the pitching staff, passing up much more experienced candidates.

The chunky righthander out of Kent State University was a teammate of Speier at Amarillo (Texas) only a year ago. Stone is in his third season of Organized Ball.

Foster, 22, landed the No. 4 outfield job, meaning he'll play when Willie Mays rests.

From the Los Angeles area, Foster came up to the Giants briefly in September of 1969 and 1970, so it isn't all quite as new to him as to Speier and Stone.

Everybody in the Giants' spring camp has talked about Speier's sure-handed fielding and true throws.

A Confident Youngster

Amazingly mature and confident for his age, Speier simply refused to fade after producing two hits in the very first exhibition game.

Stone and Foster are important in the Giants' 1971 program, but only Speier of the trio was scheduled to start the opener at San Diego.

"It's almost unbelievable," said Speier, who used to sit in the Candlestick Park bleachers on Sundays and watch many of the Giants who now are his teammates.

"I felt last fall, after just one season in the Texas League, I might spend another year in the minors.

"But I worked very hard in the Arizona Instructional League and then for a month before camp this spring.

"I went to spring training with the intention of making the club.

"Charlie Fox gave me a chance. This helped my confidence. He really has given me confidence now by telling me I'm in the regular lineup."

Speier credits Hal Lanier, who has moved over to second base and is doing well there, with assisting him immensely and unselfishly.

Hal Offers Help

"Hal has helped me ever since I first met him and even before that, in a way," said Chris.

"I used to watch Lanier play at Candlestick Park a long time ago, even when he first came up and I was pretty young.

"I'd go on Sundays to double-headers with friends. I'd study Lanier's play at short.

"I first met Hal last September when I worked out with the Giants for a week after our Texas League season ended. We got along well right away.

"I'm not sure I could help another guy that much if he was trying to take my job from me."

Lanier explained: "A lot of guys helped me when I was a rookie. I haven't forgotten that.

"And we're all together. If I help Chris, I'm helping our ball club."

Others have helped Speier, too. "When Willie Mays is in center field, he tells me where to play against certain hitters," the youngster said. "When a man like that tells me something, I listen."

Speier's father started him playing ball at the age of six.

"Dad wasn't a ballplayer himself," Chris said. "In fact, he and my mother met on a tennis court. She was a Pacific Coast doubles champion.

"But my father tried to teach my three brothers and me the fundamentals of all sports.

"I played tennis—won a tournament when I was 11. At Alameda High School, I thought basketball was my best sport."

Speier's name is German, pronounced "Spire," not "Spear."

Stone Controls Curve

Stone and Foster will be heard from often before the season has progressed very far, judging from spring portents.

"I've become a better pitcher because I've learned to get my curve over the plate," said Stone.

"Pitching is 70 to 75 percent mental. Everybody up here has ability. Success is mainly a matter of applying yourself mentally."

Stone advanced from Amarillo to Phoenix in mid-season last year—and

compiled a 1.70 earned-run average in the Pacific Coast League.

Foster, who batted .308 for Phoenix, is quietly capable.

Giant Jottings: Alan Gallagher produced six hits in one day against the Padres at Yuma—a triple and two singles in a morning "B" game, a double and two singles in the afternoon varsity engagement. The Giants won both. . . . Bob Heise started at third base on successive days and played impressively. The former Met pounded out two doubles and handled eight chances flawlessly against the Athletics in his first third-base start. . . . The Giants had to travel 14 innings to edge the Lotte Orions, 5-4, for their third consecutive conquest of the battling Japanese team. . . . Dick Dietz was walked by Shigeiki Ikeda to force home Speier with the winning run.



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Speier Eager to Improve Impressive 1972 Log

By PAT FRIZZELL

SAN FRANCISCO, Calif.—Chris Speier, voted the National League's No. 1 shortstop in THE SPORTING NEWS' poll of players last summer, is looking forward to his third season as a regular with the Giants.

Well he should, for everything seems to be on the upswing for the 22-year-old Alameda Rifle. He led the club in hitting last year, boosted his fielding average while leading the league in assists with 517, played in the All-Star Game and became a drawing card with his vacuum cleaner coverage and slingshot arm.

Speier was the second Giant regular to sign his 1973 contract. Last year Chris was first. This time Willie McCovey beat him.

"I HAD A COUPLE of sessions with Jerry Donovan," Chris said, "and then we got together on my contract. I had a figure in mind and the Giants equaled it. I'm not so hard to please. I got a good raise and I'm satisfied."

Speier, along with a dozen other young Giants, couldn't wait for spring training in Arizona and has been working out at Candlestick Park three times a week since mid-January.

"We're getting a little head start this way," said the exceptional infielder from Alameda, Calif., across the bay from San Francisco. "We take ground balls, do a little hitting. It ought to help us."

"I'm hoping very much for a good season and a much better one for our club. If we get off to a good start, I think they'll have trouble catching us. We have a young team, and we all learned a lot last year. Yet we have experience, too, with guys like McCovey and Bobby Bonds."

"OF COURSE, how we do probably will depend more than anything on some of our veterans and whether they can come back from injuries. I mean Juan Marichal, Sam McDowell and McCovey. If they're healthy, we'll be very tough. Everyone says Tom Bradley was a fine pitcher with the White Sox and will help us."

Speier was dismayed at the Giants' fall to fifth place after their division championship in 1971, his rookie campaign. He remarked disconsolately at season's end: "It's no fun to go out there and lose, whatever you hit or however well you play. It doesn't speak very

well for a club when the kind of batting average I had, .269, can lead it."

Speier expects to improve on both his offensive and defensive contributions, no matter how impressive they were last year.

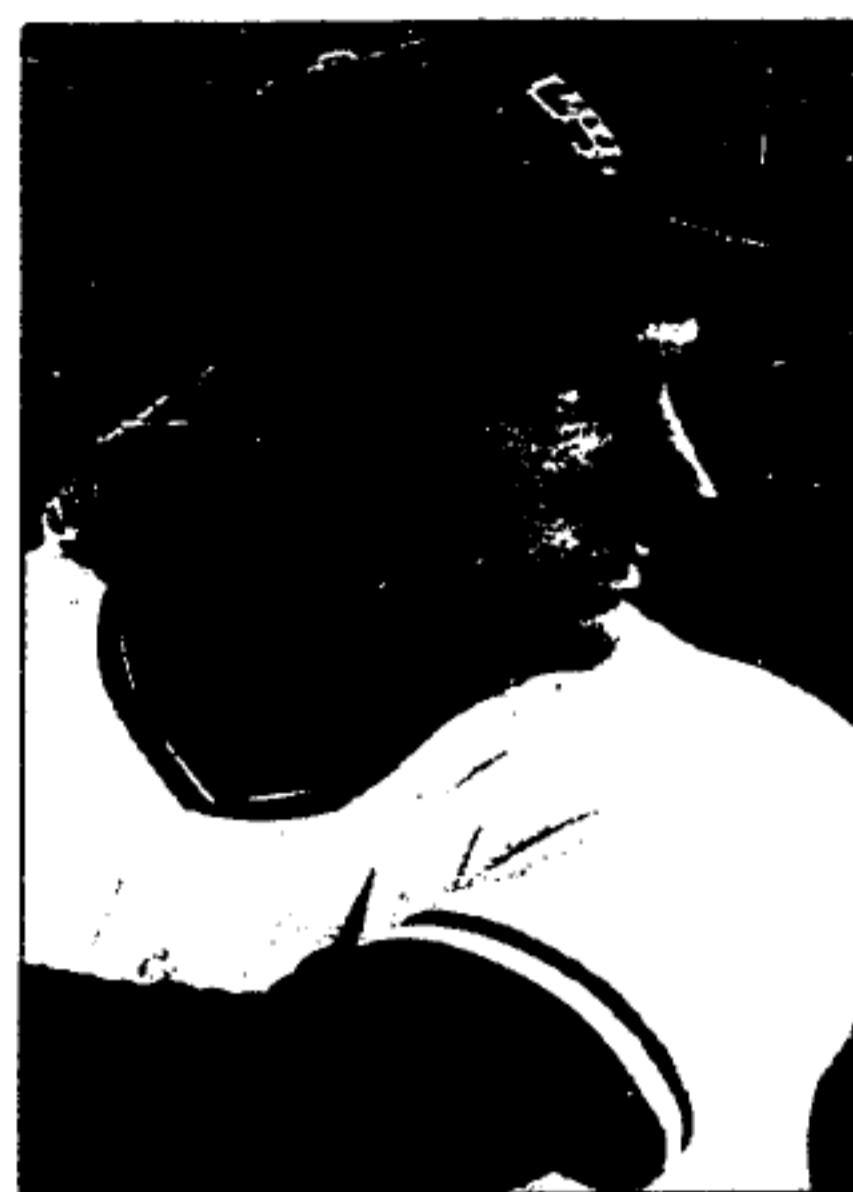
"I THINK Tito Fuentes and I are the best double-play combination in the league," Chris said. "We both were disappointed we didn't turn over more double plays last season. If we get the ground balls, we'll come up with the double plays."

"I don't think we failed to do the job more than three or four times when we had good double-play opportunities. We simply had fewer ground balls than in 1971. It's a matter of being in the right place at the right time."

AS FOR HITTING, Speier has some positive thoughts.

"I'd like to hit for a higher average. I know I have some power, but I'm primarily a line-drive hitter. What I need to do, most of all, is cut down on strikeouts."

"If I can just reduce my strikeouts (he had 92), I'll automatically get more hits. I still want to be an aggressive hitter but you've got to get wood on the ball or there's



Chris Speier

nothing that you accomplish.

"Our whole club struck out much too often (964 times). It's very important for us to cut those strikeouts. It's hard to believe we had fewer strikeouts than in 1971. We must have had more with runners on base in 1972. It seemed as if

every time you looked up, one of our guys was striking out."

Speier's batting average was up 34 points from the .235 he batted as a rookie, when he astonished sidelines by jumping to the status of a major league regular after one season with Amarillo (Texas). His 15 home runs, almost as many as were poled by the rest of the National League shortstops combined, were nearly double his eight of 1971. In the field, Chris reduced his errors from 33 to 20 while playing in 150 games. He boosted his fielding average to .974.

Speier, married last October 14, spent the winter with his beautiful new wife, Aleta, in an apartment at San Mateo, Calif., down the peninsula from San Francisco, across the bay from Alameda, where he grew up. The couple was married in Medford, Ore., where Aleta's parents reside, and they spent a dozen days in Medford at Christmas.

Speier was an outstanding basketball guard at Alameda High School before moving on to the University of California at Santa Barbara for a year. Then he transferred to Laney College of Oakland, a junior college, thus was eligible to sign when the Giants picked him, fortunately in the

January, 1970, free-agent draft.

"I've played a little tennis with my wife this winter," said Chris, skilled at the racket game. "I haven't played any golf. The weather hasn't been too good."

"AND I'VE been trying to sell insurance, as well as represent the Giants at a few dinners. Insurance may not be the thing for me permanently, but I'm very impressed with the company I work for and can work at this while playing ball."

Giant Jottings: McCovey and Bonds served as assistant disk jockeys on a San Francisco radio station's early-morning show. . . . Temporary seats installed in right field for San Francisco 49er football games have been removed at last. . . . Speier, Fuentes, Ron Bryant and Jimmy Davenport, ready for his third season as skipper of the Giants' Phoenix (Pacific Coast) farm club, attended the annual two-day all-sports program at Santa Rosa, north of San Francisco. . . . George (High Pockets) Kelly, native San Franciscan who recently was elected to the Hall of Fame, is the first baseman to whom a number of older California fans have compared Dave Kingman, the Giants' 6-6 University of Southern California alumnus.

Met Slapstick Rerun May Put Cleon in Center

By JACK LANG

NEW YORK, N. Y.—Cleon Jones in center field? The Mets fans saw that act back in the slapstick days of the early '60s and didn't think it was funny. It would be less funny 10 years later if they have to see it again.

But that's the thinking of some people connected with the club. . . . Jones in center field surrounded by John Milner in left and Rusty Staub in right.

Fortunately, as he headed south, it was not in Manager Yogi Berra's mind. He has seen Cleon have trouble enough in left without being foolish enough to move him over to center.

Nevertheless, on the day that Jones inked his 1973 contract—and typically, failed to show up for the ceremonies—General Manager Bob Scheffing included Cleon in the list of candidates for the vacant center field job.

"IF JONES makes up his mind and wants to play it," the G. M. remarked, "he can play it."

Seated close by was Ed Kranepool, the oldest Met in length of service and one whose status this year revolves indirectly around where Jones plays.

"The guy can do the job in center. . . . if he wants to," Kranepool insisted.

"It's up to him to want to play it."

Of course, if Cleon does have the desire, Kranepool may have a steady job again.

IN KRANE'S mind, the Mets' best outfield would include Milner in left, Jones in center and Staub in right.

But Eddie has selfish motives. Milner in left would open up first base for Kranepool.

Berra put a quick damper on that by announcing Milner as his

first baseman at this time. The Hammer hits home runs, but he can't throw worth a darn in the outfield. Yogi plans on using him where he'll hurt the defense the least.

"He does have quick hands," Yogi added by way of defending his decision.

THERE WERE five signings in one day at Shea and the media was treated to a club promotional movie as well as a steak dinner. Felix Millan was introduced as the newest second baseman; Milner showed up in white boots on a day when temperatures outside barely reached 20; Kranepool was around shaking hands with everyone like the good restaurateur that he is, and Tug McGraw was popping buttons on his chest and calling it the biggest day of his life after signing what the Mets claim is the highest salary ever paid a relief pitcher.

But Jones was conspicuous by his absence.

Met Musings: On Mays, Yogi said he would just have to wait and see how Willie's knees hold up in spring training. There is a strong feeling that Mays will open the season with the Mets and retire sometime during the year. . . . Art Richman and Dick Winik have put together a fine promotional film for the Mets that has some great moments in tribute to the late Gil Hodges. It is available free to clubs and groups within a 100-mile radius of New York. Those interested should write to Richman, Shea Stadium, Flushing, N. Y., for scheduling.

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'DH to Cut Yank Hill Staff to Nine'—Houk

By JIM OGLE

NEW YORK, N. Y.—As if competition for Yankee pitching jobs didn't figure to be tough enough, Ralph Houk tightened the screws by declaring he was figuring on going with only nine pitchers instead of his normal 10 in 1973.

"I feel that the designated hitter will increase the number of complete games, certainly keep starters or relievers in action longer," Houk said on the Yankees' winter caravan. "I don't see the No. 10 pitcher getting enough action to warrant having him around. An added hitter would be much more beneficial."

"The designated hitter is a new position and a 10th player on a team. I have no plans to name any one man as my DH, but probably will switch around depending on the park and the opposing pitcher."

"AS I SEE the DH right now," Houk continued, "I figure I can use him in many ways. For instance, I can rest my regulars where needed and still keep their bats in the lineup. In line with that, I can keep Bobby Murcer or Roy White out of the field to rest but in the lineup."

"Detroit appears to benefit most from the new rules. Billy Martin will have Frank Howard, Al Kaline, Gates Brown, Duke Sims and

Willie Horton as possibilities. Personally, I plan to spot my DH in the No. 5 spot most of the time, then carry only nine pitchers."

Houk was talking to an enthusiastic group of writers and broadcasters in Ellie Howard's home bailiwick of Teaneck, N. J., as the week-long tour of Yankeeeland ended. Optimism was the key word everywhere the group stopped. Graig Nettles' first official appearance as a Yankee was one of the features.

"FOR THE FIRST time in years," Houk declared, "I feel we can win our division by playing up to our ability, not over it. We came close last year and surprised a lot of people. Now I think the trades we made this winter will allow us to make up the difference."

"Nettles and Matty Alou are big additions for us. All I know of Nettles is that he was always a very tough foe. I'm not expecting him to deliver 40 homers and 120 RBIs. I will be very happy if he plays as well for us as he did against us. Graig did a lot of damage in a Cleveland uniform."

"If Matty does as much for us as Felipe has done since we acquired him, I will be more than satisfied. Matty figures to be our right field-

er and he usually is good for 200 hits a year, which has to help our offense. Felipe will see plenty of action, especially with the DH rule coming."

"I AM GOING to rebuild our pitching staff, especially the middle men, and anyone in camp will have a chance. You know that Mel Stottlemyre, Fritz Peterson, Steve Kline, Mike Kekich, Sparky Lyle and Lindy McDaniel will be around. That leaves a lot of competition for three jobs, but we have a lot of fine young arms moving up."

The Yank brought Nettles in from California for the week-long journey and Graig was at Teaneck along with Ron Blomberg, Ron Swoboda, Kekich and Howard. Nettles, who had a personality clash last year at Cleveland, proved to be a most happy Yankee.

"I'm not going to discuss what happened last year," Nettles said. "It's best to forget about it. I asked them to trade me, then just sat back and hoped they would. If I could have picked the spot I wanted to be traded to, it would have been the Yankees."

"I have been working out ever since I heard the news. I'm in great shape and I just can't wait for the season to start."

Houk spent a busy week, with several dinners added to the Yankee caravan. In fact, Ralph's winter visit was his longest in several years and he was weary when he returned to his Florida home.

Yankee Doodles: Gene Michael figures to hit ninth for the Yanks this year, but he'll have a lot of shortstop company in that spot. . . . Swoboda appeared quite trim, and cracked: "When I got my contract, I stopped eating." . . . Stottlemyre is getting a jump on spring training, showing up in Miami in late January. "I think this is going to be our year," Mel said, "and I'm going to be ready." Mel will do some instructing at baseball schools in the area and also look for a home. . . . Add ex-Yankee Stan Bahnsen to the growing Florida baseball colony. He purchased a home in Pompano Beach. . . . Houk was happy to learn that Lyle's injured ankle is coming along on schedule. . . . Phil Rizzuto and Frank Messer were emcees at the Yank caravan's Jersey stop. Bill White continues as the third member of the broadcasting triumvirate and appeared at other spots on the junket.