

Speedy Willie D Sees His Third Straight .300 Year Coming Up

By BOB HUNTER

VERO BEACH, Fla. — Willie Davis thinks he's headed for his third successive .300 season and that he still is the fastest man in baseball.

"For one base, going from home to first, I'd have to say Lou Brock is the closest to me," answered the Dodger center fielder when the question was posed before an exhibition game.

"There are other fast ones going that first 90 feet. But once I get those 30 yards behind me, my legs really are flying. Forget it."

Atlanta has a newcomer, Ralph Garr, who showed he also can fly low when he played against the Dodgers recently, but Willie still manages to retain his lightning.

"I don't take on much weight," explained Davis. "I guess that's the reason. I'm wiry and small boned, so I don't have to worry about pounds."

Golf Course Conditioner

"During the winter, I do a lot of walking on the golf courses. Before I started putting out this spring, I did a lot of running and exercising."

Davis figures he has an excellent chance to hit .300 for the third successive season, with one of his aids being the speedy synthetic turf, which he thinks is made to order for his type of hitting.

"The ball skips through those infields," he pointed out, "and line drives slash past the outfielders for extra bases."

"I'm also hitting the way I should have been all my life, using a light bat and a base-hit swing rather

than going for the fences.

"Since I've done this, I have doubled my salary, so you know I'm happy."

"The fact I'll be hitting ahead of Richie Allen also should be to my benefit, because they can't afford to walk me with that big bat coming up."

Of course, Willie never walked much, anyway, but now he should get more pitches he can handle.

All-Out Competitor

As one of the veterans who had a big year, Davis was excused from the rigid early schedule of the spring, but that didn't keep Willie the Wisp from going all out.

He dove on his chest to complete a dazzling catch in a squad game, taking a chance he didn't have to take.

"In any game, a guy has to do what he thinks he can do," explained the fleet center fielder. "He owes it to himself and to his teammates. I was feeling great, and I knew I could make the play, so I went ahead and made it."

"You can get hurt not going all out, too, you know."

In the first exhibition game, he again proved his point, scoring from second on Allen's 410-foot sacrifice fly to deep center, even though there were none out at the time.

Willie completed the rare play with a slide that beat the relay by a couple of feet, and the Dodgers had completed a 5-4 come-from-behind victory over the Braves.

It was a first for Allen, who never before had scored a man from second with a sacrifice fly—but then

he never had a Willie Davis flying in front of him, either.

Willie could bat second this season, although he favors the third spot, where he hit most of the last two years, and would like to hit just in front of Allen.

And it could be that way, perhaps, with Maury Wills leading off, followed by Davis, Allen, Wes Parkers and Duke Sims.

Line Drives: Walter Alston has made up his mind to play Allen in left field. Allen and Willie Crawford usually are the first on the field. One morning they were in the batting cages before 7 o'clock, rode the 9:30 bus to West Palm in their uniforms and played in the game. . . . In his major league debut, 20-year-old Doyle Alexander got Henry Aaron on a called third strike. . . . The club is the fastest in years. . . . Bobby Valentine is three weeks ahead of schedule in recuperating from a leg injury. He increased his therapy so much he figured to be playing by late March. . . . Bruce Ellingsen, a 20-year-old lefty, suffered facial fractures when struck by a drive off the bat of Tom Haller. . . . John Carey, veteran scout and head of the Arizona Instructional League entry who assists Alston each spring, had to go to New York for abdominal surgery.

Quote from Alston: "This is the deepest team I've ever had, position for position." . . . The Dodger-town golf clubhouse was burglarized of \$7,500 in merchandise one night, and 48 hours later a concessions stand was looted of \$5,000. . . .



Willie Davis and Dodger President Peter O'Malley.

The clubs will have newly-designed uniforms. . . . Walter O'Malley wrote a letter to Sandy Koufax, suggesting, "We could use a good lefthanded pitcher." The future Hall of Famer still is the property of the Dodgers. . . . The Tokyo Giants

received a warm welcome at the Vero Beach airport, then next day were saluted in formal ceremonies. They held clinics each night, with lecturers including Maury Wills, Bob Shaw, Dixie Walker, Al Campanis and Alston.

Willie's Weight in Check and Buc Hopes Bulge

By CHARLEY FEENEY

BRADENTON, Fla.—A few years ago, Willie Stargell wrote on a white piece of paper the goals he set for the season.

He was thinking in terms of 100 RBIs and homers.

For 1971, the Bucs' lefthanded slugger, who led the club with 31 homers in 1970, has a modest goal. It doesn't key on home runs, ribbies or batting average.

"I want to have a healthy year," said Stargell, who just turned 30. "I figure if I can stay healthy, I'll be able to play 150 to 155 games. The homers, ribbies and everything will take care of themselves."

Stargell is enjoying a peaceful spring. Nobody is bugging him about his weight, which has been known to go over 230 pounds at times.

"Everything is going real well this spring," Stargell said. "I feel great and you know something? I couldn't really tell you why I feel so good. It's just a good feeling."

Stargell's weight is around 225 now and his legs, he says, feel better than they have in years.

Costly Muscle Pull

"If I can avoid those muscle pulls, it will be a big plus toward playing every day," he said.

A few years ago, Stargell didn't play every day because it was suspected that he could not hit lefthanders.

Stargell laughed when he recalled the days he did not start against southpaws.

"The way I feel when I'm hitting, I can hit most any pitcher,

and when I'm not hitting, I won't hit anybody," Stargell said. "It doesn't make any difference what arm they use to throw the baseball."

Stargell's average was .264 last year. He batted .260 against right-handers and .273 against lefthanders.

During the winter, there were rumors that Stargell might be traded.

"The trade talk never bothered me," he said. "If it happened, it happened. I don't believe in worrying about something until it happens. You get a guy with a cold who thinks he has cancer. The guy worries with no reason."

There was reason to believe that the switch from the old Forbes Field to Three Rivers Stadium would help Stargell.

Fences Closer Now

"I thought the ball would carry better than it does in Three Rivers," Stargell said. "The ball doesn't carry there, especially at night."

Nonetheless, the fences are shorter at Three Rivers and when Big Willie connects, he has a good chance of reaching home-run land.

Pitt-burgers: When Richie Hebner belted two homers against the Tigers, it revived talk that Hebner may go for the fences this year. "I'd rather see Hebner stick to his regular style of hitting," Danny Murtaugh said. "He is a line-drive type of hitter and he has been successful. I don't want him to change." It was Buc G. M. Joe Brown who said he felt Hebner could hit from 20 to 25 homers. Hebner hit 11 homers last year and eight as a rookie. . . . Ex-Yankee catcher Charlie Sands was an early spring standout. He banded two homers and three singles in his first six trips. Sands' chances of making the club were slim. Murtaugh plans to open the

season with Manny Sanguillen and rookie Milt May as his only two receivers.

Trade rumor: Bob Veale is headed for the Tigers. Joe Brown says he hasn't talked with the Tigers about Veale, but a Tiger official has been making inquiries about the 35-year-

old lefthander. . . . Jackie Hernandez has problems with his right knee and, if it develops into something serious, the Bucs could be in trouble for an opening-day shortstop. Hernandez reinjured the knee March 5 and had it drained five days later.



Willie Stargell . . . His Only 1971 Goal Is to Stay Healthy.

38,000 See Bucs in Panama

By CHARLEY FEENEY

BRADENTON, Fla.—Some 38,000 fans, some paying as high as \$6 for a box seat, watched the Pirates play three games in Panama City on March 12, 13 and 14.

Financially, it was a successful trip for the Bucs, who were guaranteed about \$12,000, plus expenses which included air travel, hotel rooms and meal money.

On the field, the Bucs won the last game, 8-0, to avert being swept by the Panamanian All-Stars.

Veteran righthander Pete Ramos shut out the Bucs, 1-0, on March 13. The Bucs lost the opener, 3-2.

Manny Sanguillen, playing before his hometown fans, banded five hits, including a homer, in 11 trips.

The big surprise of the trip was the fine play of 19-year-old Panamanian Renaldo Stennett, a Buc farmhand who played for the All-Stars and contributed at bat and in the field to the two All-Star victories.

Stennett, an outfielder converted into a second baseman, batted .326 for Salem (Carolina) in 1970.

"The way Stennett played in Panama gives us reason to believe he can make our Triple-A club at Charleston," Pirates' G. M. Joe Brown said.

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The numbers then do the deciding. But what if Weaver didn't get the urge to check the records in the first place?

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Buford charged out and smacked seven hits. "That was the most I ever had in a doubleheader," he said. Meanwhile, Rettenmund reached base five times on three walks and a pair of hits.

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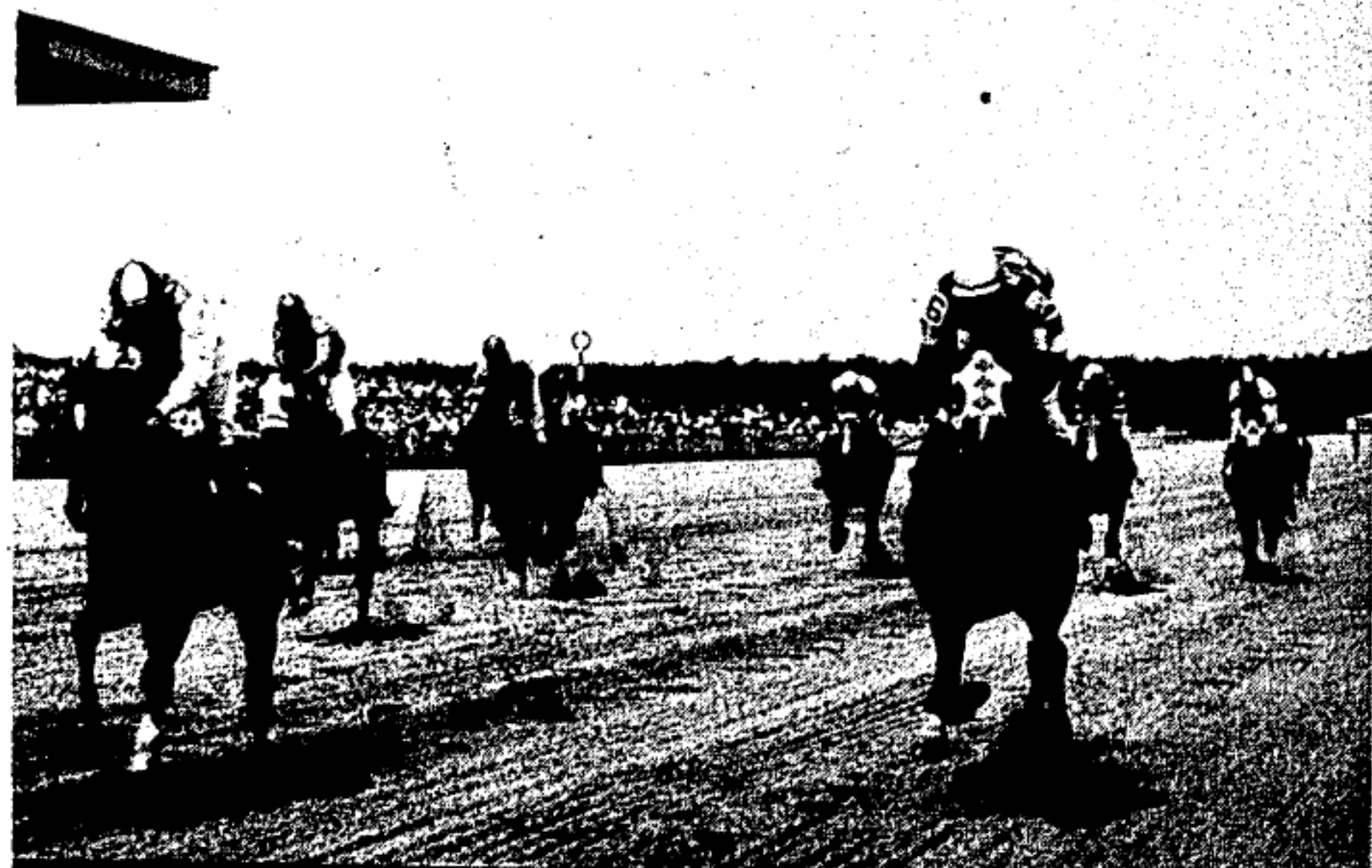


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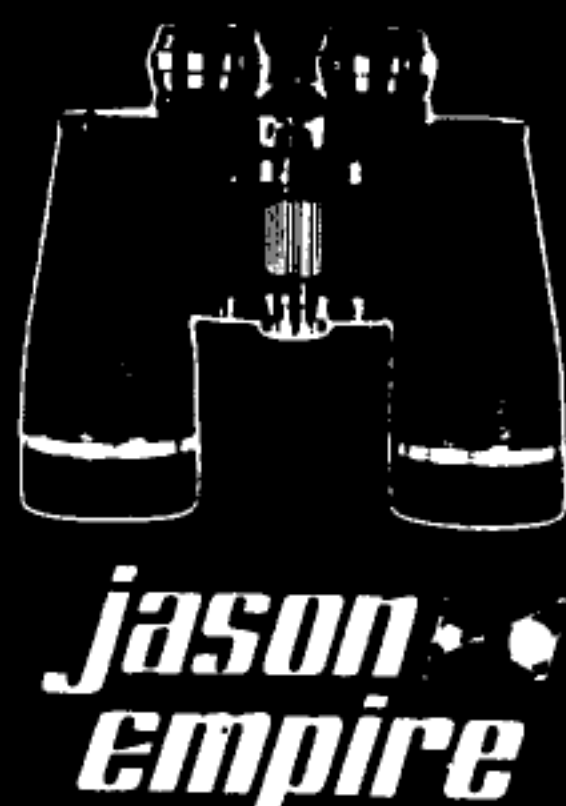
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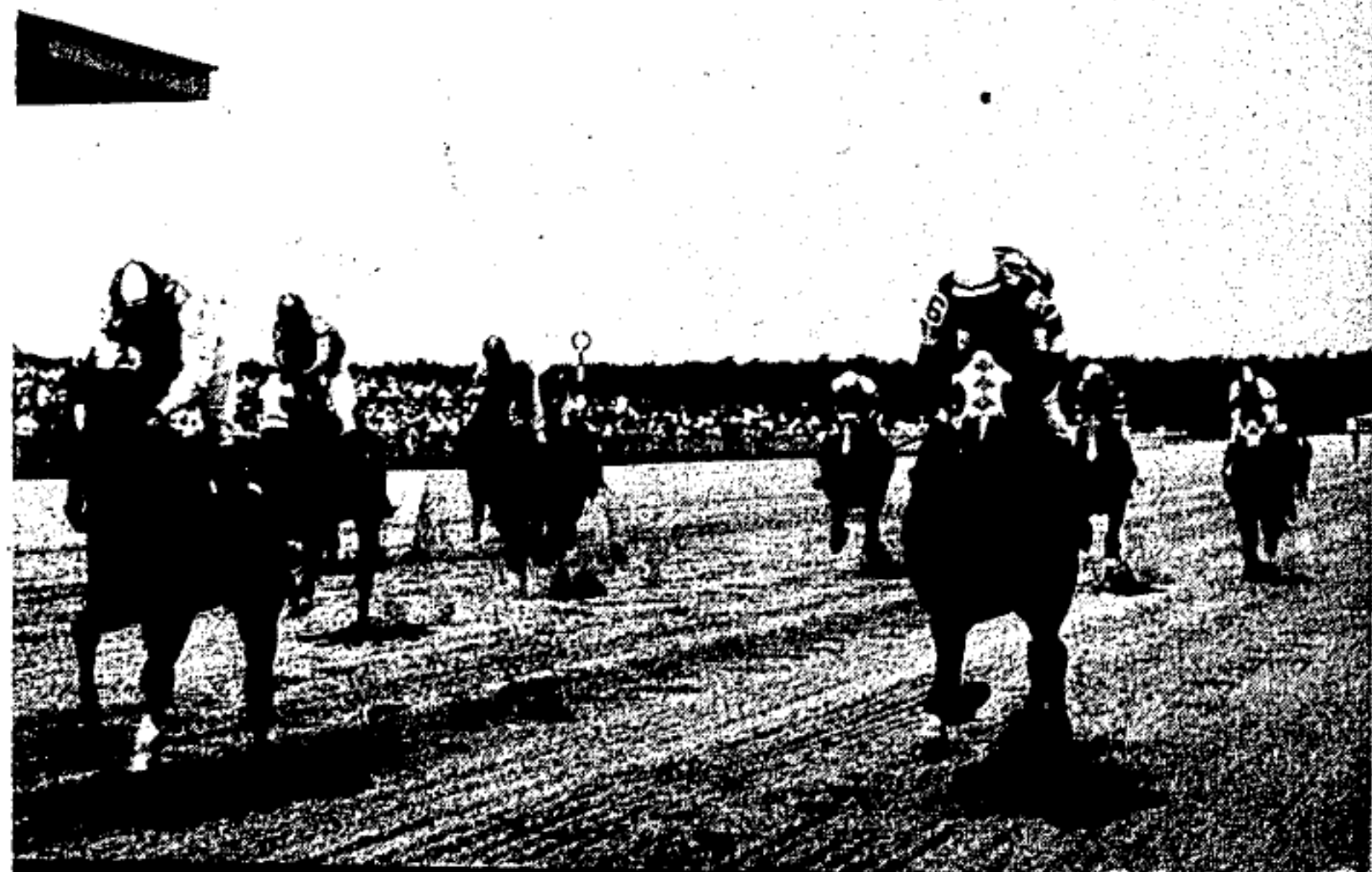


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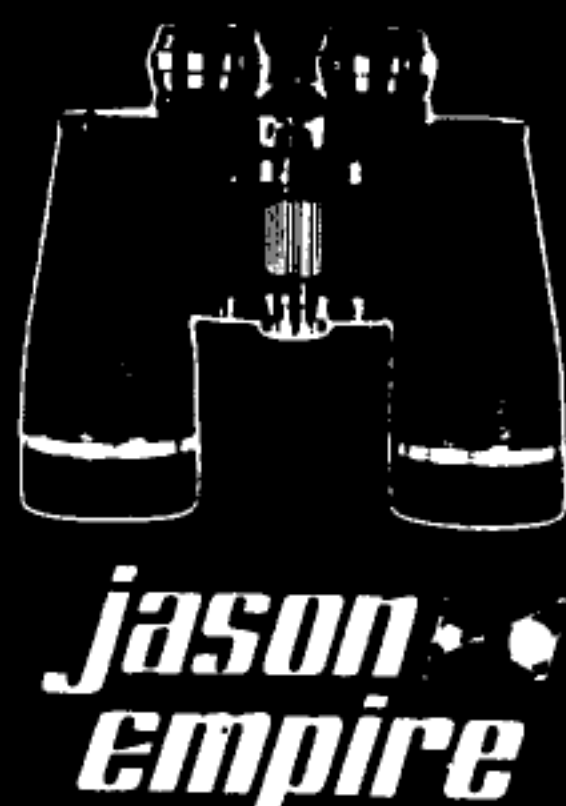
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