

# Upswing in Changes of Batting Stance

## Thomson in Musial Coil, Rosen Levels His Swish

Giants' Slugger Says He Only Has Closed His Feet;  
Speaker Declares Switches Should Be Made in Youth

By HAL LEBOVITZ

TUCSON, Ariz.

Some batters, during the course of a career, change their stance as often as Bluebeard changed wives. The discussion of stance-switching came up while the Giants and Indians were engaging in Grapefruit League warfare. Two hitters had obviously altered their styles in the space of a year.

"When we played the Giants last spring Bobby Thomson stood up there like Joe DiMaggio," noted the Indians' manager, Al Lopez. "Now he looks like a righthanded Stan Musial."

The Giants saw a difference in the Indians' Al Rosen. "He's brought his bat way down," observed one.

Thomson, however, became irate when it was suggested he changed from an imitation of DiMaggio to a mirror-image of Musial.

"That's the bunk," he exploded. "When I had my open stance, with the bat up and my feet apart, I always kept hearing and reading about how I copied DiMaggio. Now they say I'm trying to be a Musial. Nuts!" ejaculated the usually unperturbed Giants' third baseman.

"You can't copy other people," he declared emphatically. "Not in this game. You do what you think is best. All this copying is kid stuff."

### One Extreme to Another

"It's pure coincidence if I once resembled DiMaggio and now Musial. I started out with an open stance. I wasn't very successful, so late last season I decided to change. Since the open stance didn't seem to work in my case I went to the other extreme, closing it with a crouch. It was just a case of going from one extreme to the other.

"I find I have more luck with the closed stance. (Using it he homered dramatically in the final inning of the National League playoffs to win the pennant for the Giants.) In fact, I'm experimenting right now with an even greater crouch."

And as a parting shot, Thomson thun-

### Duke Snider Moves Back From Plate to Help Swing

MIAMI, Fla.—Duke Snider, whose batting average dropped from .321 in 1950 to .277 with the Dodgers last year, is altering his position in the batting box. He believes that by moving farther away from the plate he will be able to get a better swing.

Snider said: "Remember, I'm not copying anybody. I want that understood by all."

Rosen isn't being labeled an imitator. But he does give Ted Williams an assist in the revamping of the Rosen style.

"I used to hold my bat high when I faced the pitcher," recalls Rosen. "I was successful with this stance in both the Texas League and the American Association. I always was a .300 hitter with it. And in the majors I hit for distance but not frequently enough. I began to experiment, and found I was uppercutting too much.

"I was able to get hold of some slow motion movies of Ted Williams batting, and I studied them continuously. I marveled at his level swing and tried to duplicate it. I don't stand at the plate the way he does. I find I can level off better, personally, by holding the bat close to my shoulder. Some-

times I even rest it on my shoulder as a reminder.

"But I admire the levelness of Wil-

iams' swing. I'm positive all batters do. I certainly hope I can emulate it," says the articulate Rosen.

Tris Speaker, a great hitter in his time and more recently a tutor at the Indians' spring batting school, has this to say about copying the style of great hitters:

"It depends upon when you make the change. A youngster, for example, can mimic anybody. A golf caddy will mimic the golf pro's swing perfectly.

"On the sandlots, many kids try to copy their idols. A few years ago hundreds of Cleveland youngsters stood up there the way Lou Boudreau did. In my time they were all trying to copy Babe Ruth."

### Okay for Kids to Mimic

"I've seen many pros try to mimic DiMaggio's simple stance. I haven't seen anybody, other than Joe, successful with it, though.

"I feel, that as a youngster, it's all right to mimic. A youngster just starting out can do it with some degree of naturalness.

"I never try to get an adult to change his hitting style. When I'm working with a hitter my sole purpose is to find his flaws and correct them.

"My thought is, a fellow who tries to copy another's stance late in his career would not be successful."

He explains Bobby Thomson's success after changing with, "Every hitter has a certain amount of natural ability and talent. Bobby's may have been retarded by the open stance."

Hank Greenberg, the Indians' general manager and labeled by authorities as a self-made star, is all for the hitter who discards his own style for another's.

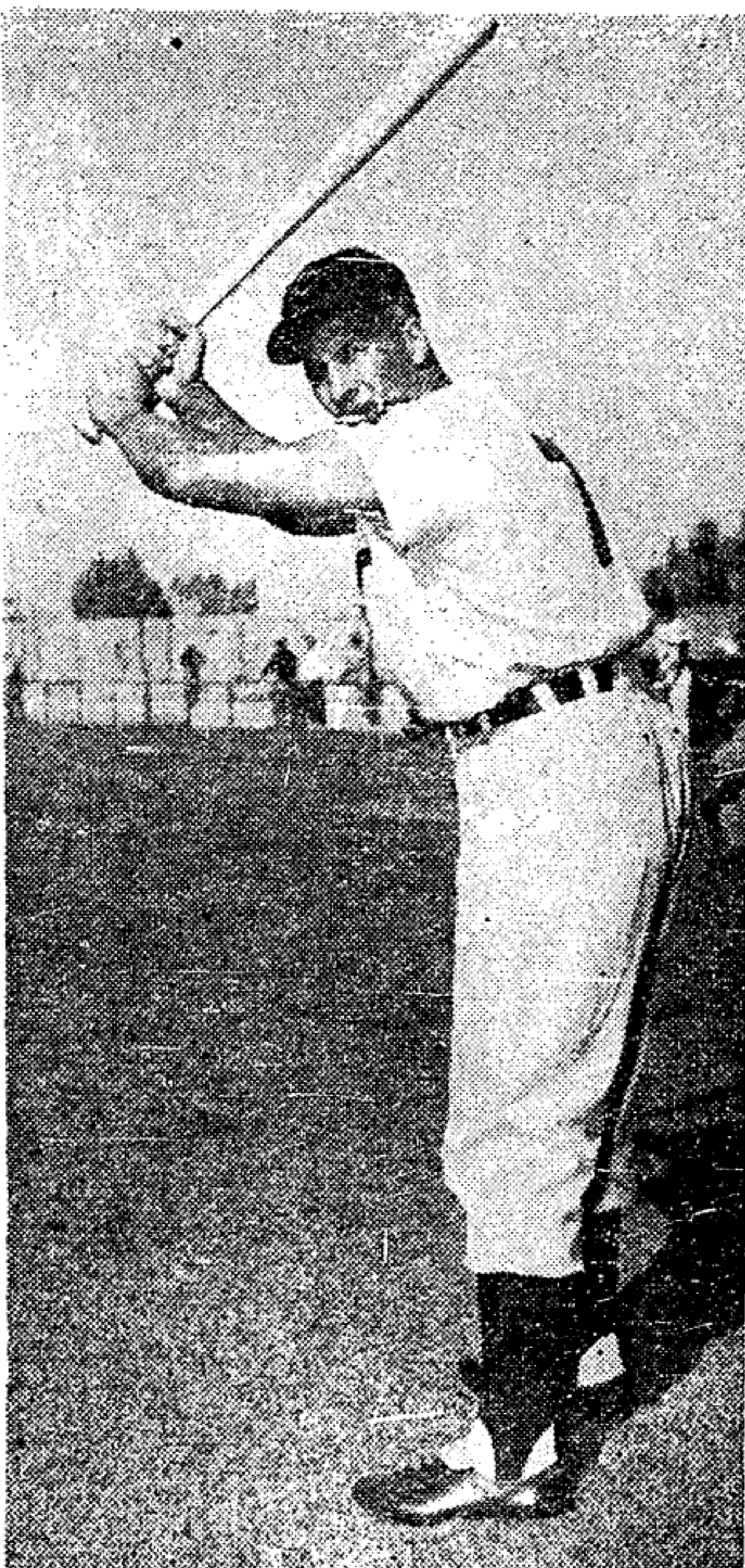
"Why does a guy change?" he asks and then answers himself: "Because he isn't successful with his own stance. He sees somebody else hitting well, so he tries to copy his form. I see nothing wrong in that. When a guy finds himself unsuccessful it's only common sense that he attempt a change."

The stance-switching discussion caused Coach Tony Cuccinello to recall some imitators in the past.

"Les Bell, with the old Cards, copied Rogers Hornsby," remembered Tony. "Of course, he wasn't quite so extreme. But Bell was successful imitating him.

"Nobody ever copied Al Simmons' bucket style, I would say. George

## Al Hoping to Repeat Production of '50



ATTEMPTING to regain the form that made him one of the most dangerous hitters in the American League in 1950, Al Rosen has changed his batting style. Rosen's old stance at left, with arms held high. This spring he has brought his bat to his shoulder (right) to level his swing.

### 'He Could Stand on Head, Anything Okay,' Says Leo

TUCSON, Ariz.—Leo Durocher is keeping his own counsel when it comes to Bobby Thomson's new batting stance. "I'm not saying a thing," the Giants' manager explains. "Last year he hit about .390 during our stretch drive and who am I to change him? At that pace, I don't care if he hits standing on his head."

Fisher copied Babe Ruth to such an extent that he used to tell the pitcher to wait until he got into Ruth's exact position. He hit about .345 for the Giants, but they let him go because he wasn't a Ruth in the field."

Red Kress, now managing Daytona Beach, remembers how Lew Fonseca, when he piloted the White Sox, "tried to make myself and Johnny Hodapp copy him. He messed us both up. In Johnny's case he was getting about 200 hits a year before Fonseca tried to get him to change.

"But Jackie Hayes, the White Sox second baseman, who hadn't been a good hitter, copied Lew's style as soon as Fonseca became the manager. And Jackie had a great year."

Barney McCosky, one of the few active major leaguers possessing a lifetime average above .300, readily admits he was a copy-cat.

"I copied Charley Gehring," he says frankly. "Gehring was my idol. When I was a kid in Detroit I'd go to the ball games and watch only him. I wouldn't pay much attention to the game. When I was 11 years old I was trying to imitate his stance.

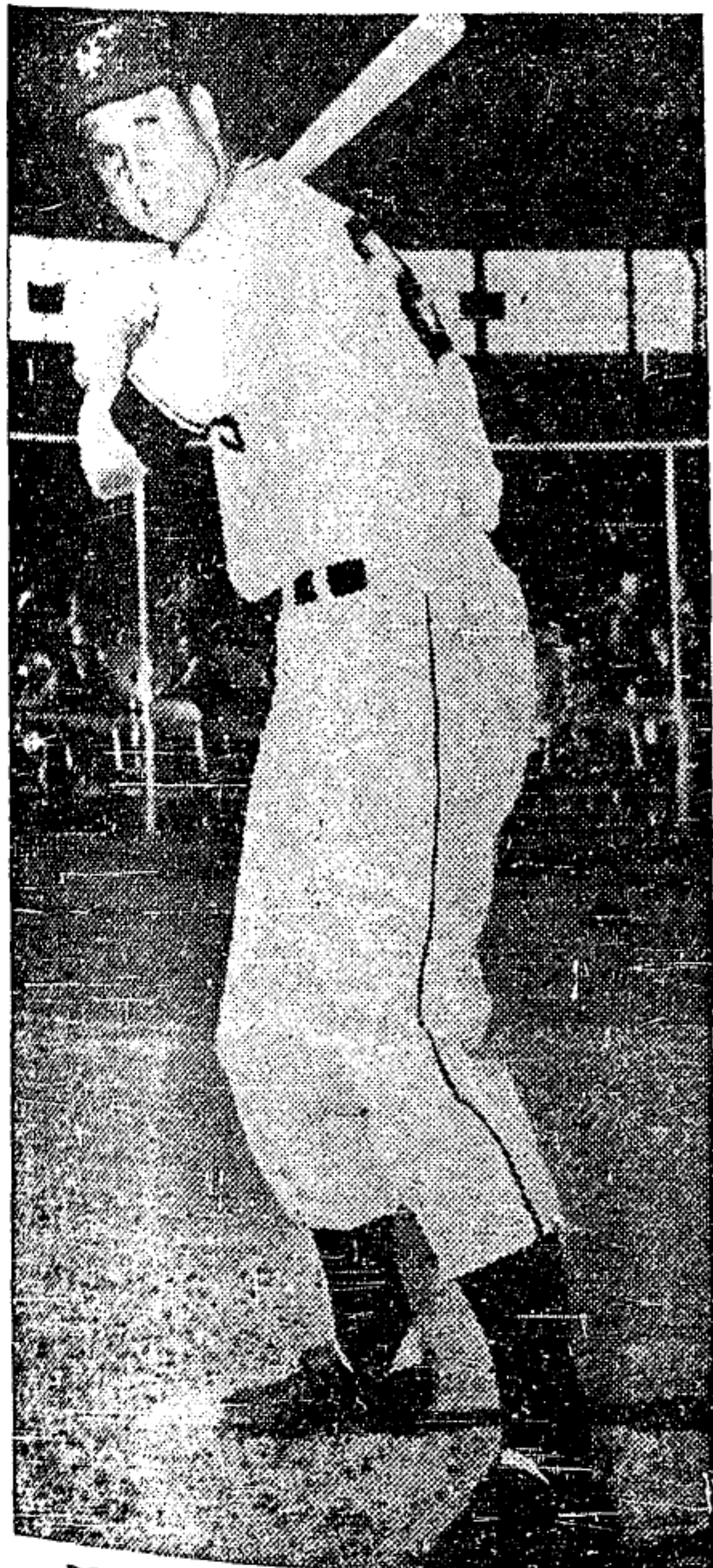
"Then when I came up to the Tigers at the age of 21 Charley worked with me. My stance was so nearly a duplicate of his that a Detroit paper once ran photos of our batting postures with our uniform numbers blanked off. The caption read: 'Which is Charley? Which is Barney?'"

"Gehring said the only way he could tell the difference was that my hips were slimmer.

"I firmly believe my hitting success resulted from copying Gehring."

All right, is it wise to be original or a copy cat? You kick it around, Chum.

## Bobby Now 'Righthanded Stan'



BOBBY THOMSON of the Giants this spring is using a stance that closely resembles Stan Musial's coil. Thomson (right) is keeping his feet closer together, and is bending his knees into more of a crouch. His former batting stance is shown at left.