

A Limit to New Leaf

Leo Shuns Gayety for Books, But He's Same Lippy on Field

By HERBERT GOREN
Of the New York Sun

HAVANA, Cuba.—The new Durocher has come in for considerable prominence this spring, but just to set the records straight, he is still the old Durocher on the field—no more subdued, no less fidgety, just as likely to pick on an umpire or gamble briskly as any other manager in baseball.

"In uniform, he's the same lion," says Eddie Stanky. "He hates to lose as much as any of us."

That desire to win obsesses Durocher even in exhibition games that mean nothing. Leo may seem casual and disinterested at times, but it's only a front. There was one game in Panama in which a team of dusky semi-pros had stopped the Dodgers without a hit for five innings, and Leo wasn't fit to sit beside. Inside he was boiling.

Durocher's philosophy on the field is as it always has been. "I don't care how we win," he said only the other day. "Ten years from now, they will look at the records and they will say: 'Dodgers won so many or lost so many.' Nobody will question the records. Nobody will want to know how the games were won. Nobody will ask how we played the game. The answer is: 'Did we win or did we lose?' That's all."

To appreciate fully the change that has come over Durocher, you have to remember his desires and habits as they used to be when a ball game was over. The gambling casinos were Leo's favorite haunts. He



THE NEW DUROCHER and his bride, Actress Laraine Day, sitting in the bleachers at Havana watching the Dodgers work out.

came and went with friends who were not ball players, and he gambled heavily, but not at any one game for too long a time.

"Play it fast," Durocher advised, "and get out."

Durocher preferred to put the whole roll on one spin of the roulette wheel rather than drag it out indefinitely. Leo figured the percentages were not stacked so heavily against him if he stayed briefly. Winning and losing is always a matter of percentages with Durocher, and he applies those theories on the field. That's one form of gambling Commissioner Chandler can't take from him.

Early to Bed, Early to Rise

The new Durocher has quit gambling, however, and he checks in early and gets up early. In Panama he lived in officers' quarters, and established with him were four newspaper men. Leo was congenial company except that he was always squawking about the late hour in which the newspaper men called it a night. Durocher himself was in bed by 10 p. m., and up by 7 a. m.

Durocher doesn't imbibe much, if at all. He is what you would call a social drinker, and not much of that. He has not lit a cigarette for four or five months. He shuns dances, parties and even dinners.

The 1947 Durocher has joined the Book-of-the-Month Club. Right now he is polishing off the last chapters of "Lydia Bailey," Kenneth Roberts' latest opus. Leo has been devouring all the best sellers, maybe with an eye to finding a story that would fit Laraine Day's screen talents.

In Panama, Durocher called his bride in Santa Monica, Calif., at least twice a day, sometimes four times. The average tolls came to \$100 a day. Leo affectionately calls her Rainey. To improve his appearance, Durocher has shed at least ten pounds since coming down to Havana.

The reformation of Durocher includes a 16 mm. movie camera, and Leo is fixing his lens on wildlife and geographical oddities in the new lands he is visiting. In Panama, Durocher one day crossed the Isthmus in the company of Col. D. J. Richardson. Suddenly Leo spotted something that looked as if it had the head of a rabbit, the body of a squirrel and the tail of a monkey. It was an aguana.

"Stop the car!" hollered Durocher.

The driver pulled over to a side of the road through the jungle, but before Leo could hop out and train his camera on the iguana, it was gone.

Col. Richardson, to assuage Durocher, ordered two men to bring back a live iguana. Instead, they came back with a sloth, and Leo had a field day. He was like a kid with a new toy, and it wasn't the camera, but the sloth that made him feel that way.

Fan Uses Prize to Follow Dodgers

BROOKLYN, N. Y.—If further testimony were needed of Brooklyn fans' undying devotion to their Dodgers, consider the case of 28-year-old Thomas Fassulo.

Appearing on the "Break-the-Bank" radio program over the American Broadcasting System, Fassulo won \$2,100 by answering correctly two questions on baseball. He then promptly announced he

would use the money to fly to Havana, Cuba, and watch the Dodgers before they returned to this country, and to buy tickets for all the Ebbets Field games he could see.

Fassulo answered correctly the queries on who holds the National League home run record—Hack Wilson—and who almost pitched a one-hitter in the '45 World's Series—Claude Passeau. PAUL GOULD.

Ruth Suggested for Role of Baseball Ambassador

PATERSON, N. J.—A campaign to have Babe Ruth named "baseball ambassador of good-will at a salary commensurate with the importance of the job" was launched by the Paterson Evening News, March 24. The paper made the proposal on Page 1 and printed a coupon which it asked its readers to sign and mail to Commissioner A. B. Chandler. The coupon asked Chandler to name Ruth to this post.

Declaring that "ever since the Bambino's retirement from the game, baseball has done nothing for him except to give him tears," the News urges other newspapers to follow suit with similar campaigns. It was suggested that Chandler set April 27 as the occasion for announcing his appointment to the post. That day has been set aside by baseball to honor Ruth.

The News is also printing cards to be mailed to Chandler.

PAUL GOULD.

Wallaesa at Short? It's Up to Sox Fans



Jack Wallaesa

Bing to View Buc Opener

PITTSBURGH, Pa.—Bing Crosby will attend the Pirates' opener at Forbes Field, April 18, against the Reds, the Bucs' vice-president and crooner has informed General Manager Hamey.

John Galbreath, one of the Pirate co-owners, hopes to have Crosby in tow in Columbus, O., April 13, when the Buccos play the Columbus Red Birds. Galbreath lives in Columbus and plans a big party at his farm for the players.

With Crosby in the stands and Hank Greenberg in left field, the Pirates hope to set an attendance record for opening day at Forbes Field.

Herman Gets Pleasant Reply to Pirates' Pitching Questions

Preacher Now Back in Shape; Rookie Southpaw Nagy Certain to Stick

By CHARLES J. DOYLE
MIAMI BEACH, Fla.



Preacher Roe

Ed Basinski, Billy Cox and Frankie Gustine—and the power that can be mustered from his outfield.

His catching is more than satisfactory, with Clyde Klutz, Bill Salkeld and Rookie Leroy Jarvis all fighting for the No. 1 spot. Vinny Smith plans to check in June 1 with sound underpinnings to give added strength to the catching department.

Herman has seen more from the Pirate pitchers thus far than he had been led to expect. For instance, Preacher Roe, a standout in 1945, but troubled with recurrences of a concussion in 1946 when he was sent home early, appears to be the Roe of old. The veteran star's fast ball still retains the old zip and his curve is breaking as sharply as ever.

The southpaw department of the Corsairs is strictly on the bright side. Rookie Steve Nagy has given off a powerful impression and since the Corsairs have so much money tied up in him, Nagy is certain to stick. Ken Heintzelman, who can't seem to post a fancy won-and-lost record for some unexplainable reason, and the veteran Fred Ostermueller are the remaining southpaws.

Vets Pitching Like Colts

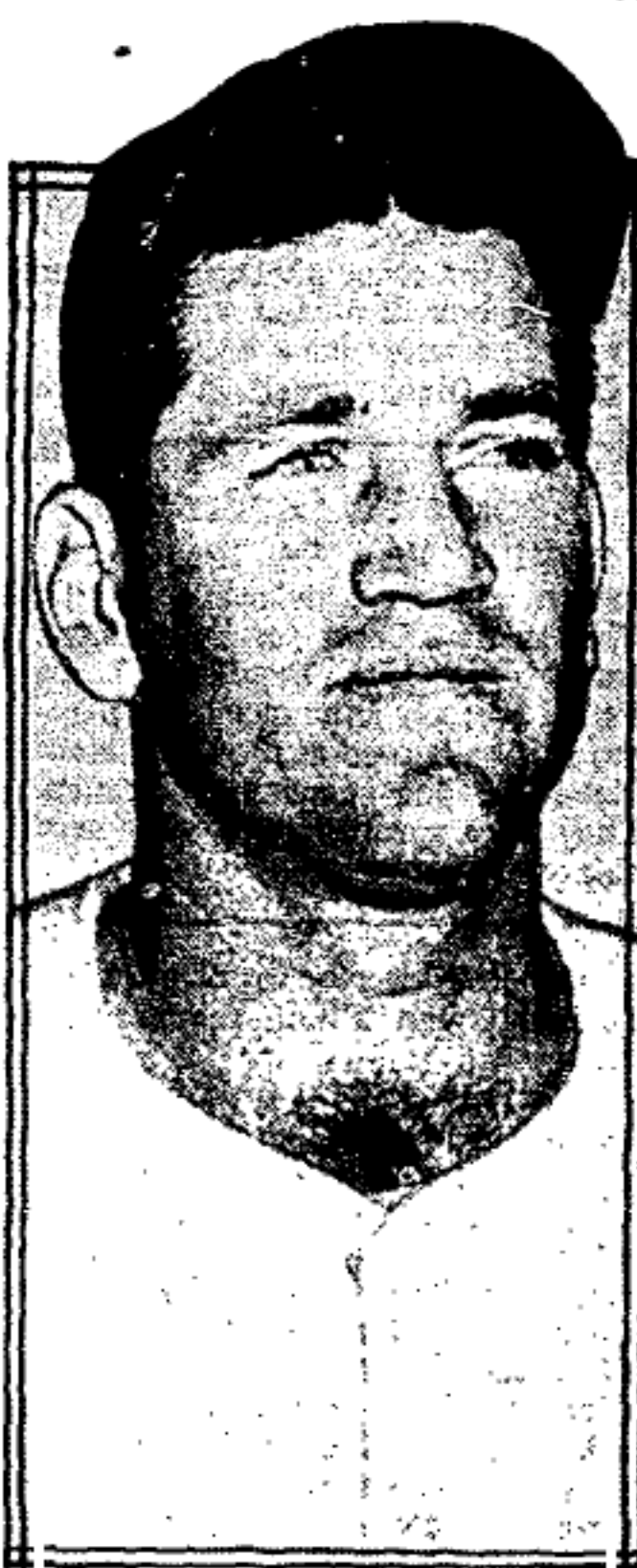
Both Heintzelman and Ostermueller have looked good, especially the latter. Osty teamed with two other real vets of the staff—Rip Sewell and Art Herring—to blank the A's on five hits the other day. The combined ages of the three solid citizens is almost 120 years.

On the righthanded side, Hugh Mulcahy, Nick Strincevich and Ernie Bonham have looked better than the rest, with Edson Bahr, a sophomore, certain to crowd any of the boys for a regular starting role.

Herman is tinkering with the idea of moving Ralph Kiner to center field, and shifting Jim Russell to right. Hank Greenberg, of course, stays in left. Kiner ran into some difficulty pegging to the bases from right field and seems more at home in center.

The right field wall at Forbes Field might pose quite a problem for Kiner,

Rookie of Year?



Wally Westlake

but Russell has had some experience with that sector and has handled his chores there very well.

Probably the most promising recruit in the Pirate camp is Outfielder Wally Westlake, one of Casey Stengel's boys from Oakland of the Pacific Coast League. Westlake batted .315 with Oakland last year and in his brief appearances with the Bucs this spring he has been hitting around the .500 figures.

Herman started a team against the Braves, March 23, that appears to be the one that will open the season against the Cubs at Chicago, April 15, barring the pitching selection, of course. Fletcher, Basinski, Cox and Gustine will work the infield, Klutz catching and Greenberg, Kiner and Russell in the outfield.

Greenberg was sidelined for a few days with a sore arm. It was nothing serious, but Trainer Doc Jorgensen deemed it wise to rest the flapper.

The Pirates shaved the pitching staff, March 21, when they sent Hiram Bithorn to the White Sox on waivers. Bithorn has been troubled with a sore arm in camp. The Pirates picked up Hi on waivers during the winter from the Cubs.

Shibe Park Wolves Kill Jack's Chance at Similar Role With Athletics

By MILT WOODARD
PASADENA, Calif.

The future of Jack Wallaesa as shortstop successor to Luke Appling is going to depend, no end, upon the native cordiality of White Sox fandom.

Wallaesa could easily move into the shortstop slot this year, thus leaving third base to the custody of ageless Mr. Appling. However, Jack had the same chance with the Athletics just a year ago, but the Shibe Park wolves would not let him make the best of it.

"I had a bad day with the Athletics early in the spring," Wallaesa recollected, "and the Shibe Park wolves started howling. The more they howled, the more I pressed. Eventually, they had me where I was missing balls I should have put in my hip pocket, or else throwing 'em into the grandstand."

Unquestionably, the wolves of Shibe Park are among the roughest in the American League. Almost any rookie unless he has an exterior shell as hard as the concrete of Coulee dam, is bound to crack under such heckling, and Wallaesa was no exception.

"I'll Never Be as Bad"

"But I'll never be as bad as last season," he explains with confidence. "Now I know I did the worse thing possible by pressing, and it will never happen again."

As fans are measured, Wallaesa this season will be playing before the most tolerant in the game. There probably is less heckling of players, home or visiting, in Comiskey Park than anywhere in the majors, and they'll give any youngster a full opportunity to prove himself.

Manager Ted Lyons also is most tolerant toward the tightening up of an athlete, especially at shortstop, and has launched a planned program to place Wallaesa at ease. The Sox boss well remembers the tenseness of another shortstop, and what happened once he started loosening up.

"That Appling must have lost a dozen games for me when he was breaking in," Lyons recalled. "I'd be pitching a shutout or have a one-run lead when—phoo—Appling would kick one into the outfield or throw the ball into the dugout. But look at old Luke today—shortstops in baseball."

In view of the wolf row at Shibe Park, Wallaesa admits he was the happest man in baseball when sold to the White Sox. He knew Appling couldn't go on forever—contrary to existing conditions—and figured he could learn more shortstopping from the Sox veteran than he picked up previously in 26 years of life.

Physically, Big Jack has it. He's six-foot-four, and weighs 205 pounds.

With physical qualifications on his side, and the fans of Chicago expected to assist with any mental problems, Wallaesa could be the man of the White Sox year.