

Twins Build Flag Dream on Hurling and Defense

By MAX NICHOLS

TWIN CITIES, Minn.

It was late at night and Sam Mele looked worn from a four-day trip with the **Twins** to Caracas, Venezuela.

The **Twins** manager was still on the runway, walking away from the airplane, when a reporter asked him about the **Twins**.

"We played bad baseball," Mele said. "Just plain bad baseball. And it wasn't just 12 errors in four games that I'm talking about.

"Our base-runners were picked off base. Outfielders missed cutoff men. Pitchers balked, one with a man on third base. We just messed up routine plays.

"Some players complained about the field in Caracas. But Kansas City had to play on the same field and didn't play near as badly.

"I'll tell you how bad it was. If we were home, we would have worked out after every game."

Working out after exhibitions became Mele's theme this spring. His statements weren't just the result of a long trip that left him tired. He drove the **Twins** hard.

Fundamentals Important

"Every player who makes mistakes stays after the game for special practice," Mele said. And he was making two major points:

1.—With less power and more pitching than ever under Mele, he wants a well-drilled team on fundamentals, a tight defensive club to squeeze maximum effect out of the veteran mound staff.

2.—There were statements last fall that the players wanted Mele to be more of a "take-charge" manager than he was in 1966. This was his way of taking charge of the club.

"With the pitching we've got, it's important that we win all of those 1-0, 2-1 and 3-2 games that we can," said Mele. "Pitching is 75 percent of the game only if the fielding is there to make it that much of the game.

"So every player who makes fundamental mistakes stays after the game to work on his mistakes. And I feel that day-by-day we have been reducing our mistakes."

Mele feels the Orioles have to be the team to beat in the American League "if their pitching problems can be solved." But he says that both the **Twins** and the **Tigers** are



Ted Uhlaender

capable of catching Baltimore. And he gives the White Sox a chance because of their depth in pitching talent.

The **Twins** have more pitching than Baltimore and less power—especially since **Minnesota** traded Jim Hall and Don Mincher to California for Dean Chance and also added reliever Ron Kline to the roster.

Sam Wants Tight Defense

Mele would like to build a defense that's just as tight as Baltimore's. And he figures he can have a good start with catcher Earl Battey in peak condition already, Zoilo Versalles at shortstop, Cesar Tovar at second base and Ted Uhlaender in center field to provide a strong middle.

But in trying to build that defense, Mele has run into problems with the hitting of Uhlaender and rookie third baseman Ron Clark.

"If Uhlaender can learn to hit the ball with more authority and just hit .250 or .260, he'll help us," Mele said. "He covers a lot of ground in center field—makes hard plays look easy."

Uhlaender holds a big key for **Minnesota**. If he makes it, then Tovar can stay at second base. Mele can choose between solid-

hitting Rich Rollins and glove man Clark at third base, and the lineup is set. Bob Allison has taken over left field with a good spring performance.

Harmon Killebrew possibly has had his best spring ever, with no injuries and no moving around from one position to another. He has been stationed at first base with no changes. Tony Oliva, of course, as a former batting champ and a .300 hitter, is no problem in right field.

"Killebrew could have the best season of his career," said **Twins** President Calvin Griffith, after Harmon hit his sixth homer of the spring. "He looks terrific at first base, and he's had no problems with his swing. He's in great shape."

With Hall and Mincher gone, the **Twins** have only Oliva and Uhlaender as lefthanded hitters. For that reason, the **Twins** have looked for lefthanded-hitting outfielders in trade talk.

Rollins Clutch Swatter

As it stands, Mele must try to replace Hall and Mincher with a comeback from Allison and the speed of Allison, Tovar, Versalles and Uhlaender. If Rollins returns to the regular lineup, he can be expected to take up the slack in driving in runs.

"I'm not worried about my defense," said Rollins. "When I was a rookie and in my second year, I just concentrated on my hitting and let the rest take care of itself. That's what I'm doing now."

Coach Billy Martin and Mele went along with him completely. "We just told him to relax and be a competitor," said Martin.

If Uhlaender fails to make it this year, things can get pretty well upset for the **Twins**. Mele might try to move Tovar to center, and that would leave a hole open at second. Frank Quilici and rookie Rod Carew are being considered in that case. But Quilici is a righthanded hitter, and that would leave Oliva alone with the lefthanded bat.

All this means the **Twins** are thin in another important area—the bench. Walt Bond is the veteran of the pinch-hitters. The rest are relatively inexperienced—Andy Kosco, Sandy Valdespino, Rich Reese, Quilici and Clark.

It's plain that the **Twins** are

Fans Seeing Grass Again After 80 Inches of Snow

TWIN CITIES, Minn.—After more than 80 inches of snow in the Twin Cities this winter, most of the white stuff had melted off by April 1 at Metropolitan Stadium.

Of course, groundskeeper Dick Ericson and his crew gave it a hand by hauling much of it away in trucks. But Minneapolis and St. Paul fans were seeing grass and sidewalks for the first time in months during the final week of March.

built more around pitching than ever before.

The Twin pitching staff is a rival to those of the White Sox and Indians for the title of best in the A. L.

Last year, the White Sox led in earned-run average with 2.68. The **Twins** were second at 3.13. But even Chicago Manager Ed Stanky has lauded the **Twins**.

"The **Twins** definitely are a contender because of the addition of Chance and Kline," Stanky said.

Six Veteran Starters

The Twin staff starts with Jim Kaat, Chance and Jim Grant, all former 20-game winners. Dave Boswell, Jim Merritt and Jim Perry give Mele six veteran starters to choose from. Rookie Jim Ollom, 20-game winner from Denver, started late and his progress was interrupted by the death of his sister.

Twin Tracks: Early Wynn, **Twin** pitching coach, became a grandfather on March 29 when the wife of his son, Early Joe, gave birth to a baby daughter. . . . Merle Harmon, **Twins** broadcaster, became the father of a girl after four boys. . . . The **Twins** drew 5,200 for a night game with the Yankees in Orlando, the largest crowd since the new stands were built in 1963.

The **Twins** didn't move above the .500 mark in exhibitions until they had played 19 games. A year ago, they finished 13-15 in the Grapefruit League. . . . The **Twins** cut to 32 players when they dropped pitchers Jerry Crider, Jerry Fosnow, Danny Morris, Moe Oeier and Bill Whitby, plus infielders Neil McPhee, Craig Nettles and Greg Werdick from the squad. Werdick had to be returned to the Cubs for \$4,000. He was drafted for \$8,000 in December, but could be kept without waivers only if he stayed on the Twin squad.

Unhappy Grant Gets Hook After Pitching 5 Frames

ORLANDO, Fla. — Pitcher Jim Grant, who must come through if the **Twins** are to contend for the pennant, was unhappy as the club entered the home stretch of the exhibition schedule. Grant sounded off after he was allowed to pitch only five innings in a 6-1 loss to the Braves here, April 1. He was pounded for eight hits and five runs.

"I needed the work," Grant complained. "I went six innings the last time out and only five this time. That's not progress."

Manager Sam Mele said he'd intended to let Grant work at least seven innings. "But he threw enough in five innings to account for seven normal frames," Mele maintained. "We had to look at some of our other pitchers, too."

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Twin Wardrobes Start to Show Ponderosa Cut

By MAX NICHOLS
ORLANDO, Fla.

It's the latest thing for the **Twins** to go "Western" this spring and their womenfolk just might follow.

The **Twins** lockers are beginning to look like they belong to the cast of Gunsmoke, with new pairs of hand-tooled western cowboy boots showing up. And one day a pretty blonde dressed up like Dale Evans joined the **Twins** wives at Tinker Field.

It all started when rookie Ron Clark started coming to the park in his jeans, his \$90 boots and western-cut shirts. He's no show-off. Clark wears his duds like he just tied his horse out front at the box office.

And he almost just did. The rookie third baseman is a former rodeo bronc rider from Ft. Worth, Tex. The blonde in the stands with the western frills is his wife, Sandy, and she's from Ft. Worth, too.

"Only I don't ride the way Ron does," said Sandy. "The last time I was on a horse, I fell off."

Sandy "Slid Right Off"

"It was at my uncle's place. My uncle had a mare that was pretty wild. But Ron rode her bareback and then insisted that I ride. I slid right off the back end."

Sandy and Ron were married when she was a sophomore in high school and he was a senior. She started wearing western clothes during the school's annual "Ranch Day."

Evidently other **Twins** like them, too. Bob Allison was one of the first to get a pair of boots through Clark.

"Ron has been ordering boots, shirts and hats for them," Sandy said. "And Dave Boswell was talking about getting his wife some."

Clark says he "never got hurt much" on those broncs. "One time I had three cracked ribs after a Brahma bull threw me."

Ron's got a 30½-inch waist and broad shoulders—giving him that lean Texan look. He even dips snuff, instead of chewing tobacco or bubble gum.

Twins Shutting Off the Power

CALVIN R. GRIFFITH—President
MRS. THELMA HAYNES—Vice-President

HOWARD J. FOX, JR.—Traveling Secretary
SABATH (SAM) MELE—Manager

| PITCHERS— | Bats | Thrs. | Hgt. | Wgt. | Date and Place of Birth | 1966 Club | IP. | W. | L. | ERA. |
|-------------------|------|-------|------|------|-------------------------------------|------------|-----|-----|------|-------|
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| Boswell, Dave | R | R | 6:03 | 185 | Jan. 20, 1945, Baltimore, Md. | Minnesota | 169 | 12 | 5 | 3.14 |
| Chance, Dean | R | R | 6:03 | 204 | June 1, 1941, Wooster, Ohio | California | 260 | 12 | 17 | 3.08 |
| Grant, Jim | R | R | 6:00 | 195 | Aug. 13, 1935, Lacombe, Fla. | Minnesota | 249 | 13 | 13 | 3.25 |
| Kaat, Jim | L | L | 6:04 | 227 | Nov. 7, 1939, Zeeland, Mich. | Minnesota | 305 | 25 | 13 | 2.74 |
| Kline, Ron | R | R | 6:03 | 210 | March 9, 1932, Callery, Pa. | Washington | 90 | 6 | 4 | 2.40 |
| Merritt, Jim | L | L | 6:02 | 180 | Dec. 9, 1943, Altadena, Calif. | Minnesota | 144 | 7 | 14 | 3.38 |
| Ollom, Jim | R | L | 6:04 | 210 | July 8, 1945, Snohomish, Wash. | Denver | 247 | 20 | 8 | 3.43 |
| Perry, Jim | L-R | R | 6:04 | 195 | Oct. 30, 1936, Martin County, N. C. | Minnesota | 10 | 0 | 0 | 3.60 |
| Roland, Jim | R | L | 6:03 | 190 | Dec. 14, 1942, Franklin, N. C. | Minnesota | 184 | 11 | 7 | 2.54 |
| Siebler, Dwight | R | R | 6:02 | 195 | Aug. 5, 1937, Columbus, Neb. | Denver | 87 | 3 | 11 | 5.28 |
| Worthington, Al | R | R | 6:02 | 205 | Feb. 5, 1929, Birmingham, Ala. | Syracuse | 76 | 3 | 8 | 4.26 |
| | | | | | | Minnesota | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0.00 |
| | | | | | | Minnesota | 50 | 2 | 2 | 3.42 |
| | | | | | | Minnesota | 91 | 6 | 3 | 2.47 |
| CATCHERS— | | | | | | 1966 Club | G. | HR. | RBI. | Avg. |
| Battey, Earl | R | R | 6:00 | 225 | Jan. 5, 1935, Los Angeles, Calif. | Minnesota | 115 | 4 | 34 | .255 |
| Nixon, Russ | L | R | 6:01 | 200 | Feb. 19, 1935, Claves, O. | Minnesota | 51 | 0 | 7 | .260 |
| Sevcik, John | R | R | 6:02 | 210 | July 11, 1942, Oak Park, Ill. | Charlotte | 94 | 3 | 31 | .232 |
| Zimmerman, Jerry | R | R | 6:02 | 185 | Sept. 21, 1934, Omaha, Neb. | Minnesota | 60 | 1 | 15 | .252 |
| INFIELDERS— | | | | | | | | | | |
| Carew, Rod | L | R | 6:00 | 170 | Oct. 1, 1945, Gatun, Panama | Wilson | 112 | 1 | 30 | .292 |
| Clark, Ron | R | R | 5:10 | 165 | Jan. 14, 1943, Ft. Worth, Tex. | Denver | 146 | 16 | 94 | .294 |
| Killebrew, Harmon | R | R | 5:11 | 210 | June 29, 1936, Payette, Ida. | Minnesota | 5 | 0 | 1 | 1.000 |
| Quilici, Frank | R | R | 6:00 | 170 | May 11, 1939, Chicago, Ill. | Minnesota | 162 | 39 | 110 | .281 |
| Reese, Rich | L | L | 6:03 | 190 | Sept. 29, 1942, Leipsic, Ohio | Denver | 145 | 8 | 54 | .256 |
| Rollins, Rich | R | R | 5:10 | 185 | April 16, 1938, Mt. Pleasant, Pa. | Minnesota | 138 | 11 | 74 | .327 |
| Tovar, Cesar | R | R | 5:09 | 155 | July 3, 1940, Caracas, Venezuela | Minnesota | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0.000 |
| Versalles, Zoilo | R | R | 5:10 | 160 | Dec. 18, 1940, Havana, Cuba | Minnesota | 90 | 10 | 40 | .245 |
| | | | | | | Minnesota | 134 | 2 | 41 | .260 |
| | | | | | | Minnesota | 137 | 7 | 36 | .249 |
| OUTFIELDERS— | | | | | | | | | | |
| Allison, Bob | R | R | 6:04 | 220 | July 11, 1934, Raytown, Mo. | Minnesota | 70 | 8 | 19 | .220 |
| Bond, Walt | L | R | 6:06 | 215 | Oct. 19, 1937, Denmark, Tenn. | Denver | 122 | 18 | 74 | .316 |
| Kelly, Pat | L | L | 6:01 | 185 | July 20, 1944, Philadelphia, Pa. | Charlotte | 113 | 3 | 55 | .321 |
| Kosco, Andy | R | R | 6:03 | 210 | Oct. 5, 1941, Youngstown, Ohio | Minnesota | 57 | 2 | 13 | .222 |
| Oliva, Tony | L | R | 6:02 | 190 | July 20, 1941, Pinar Del Rio, Cuba | Minnesota | 159 | 25 | 87 | .307 |
| Uhlaender, Ted | L | R | 6:02 | 190 | Oct. 21, 1939, McAllen, Tex. | Denver | 43 | 5 | 21 | .341 |
| Valdespino, Sandy | L | L | 5:08 | 160 | Jan. 14, 1939, Havana, Cuba | Minnesota | 105 | 2 | 22 | .226 |
| | | | | | | Denver | 72 | 8 | 39 | .321 |
| | | | | | | Minnesota | 52 | 2 | 9 | .176 |

JIM LEMON—Coach

BILLY MARTIN—Coach

EARLY WYNN—Coach