

Birdie Betting Blue Chips on Trio of Frosh

Tribe Pilot May Tab Alvis, Martinez and Davalillo as Regulars in 1963 Lineup

By HAL LEBOVITZ

CLEVELAND, O.



Birdie Tebbetts

Birdie Tebbetts, the Indians' manager, is going to Tucson with a poker hand containing three of a kind and an ace in the hole.

If the three of a kind prove strong enough, Tebbetts and his Indians will be dipping

into the pot at the finish. But this is a case where Birdie won't be able to bluff. He'll have to decide at the outset how good his hand is, then either go all the way with it or break it up.

The three of a kind are youngsters Tony Martinez, Max Alvis and Vic Davalillo.

They have the same look because they're all rookies. As of now, Birdie is seriously contemplating going all the way with them. Seldom does a team see three rookies become regulars simultaneously, and Birdie is not such a complete optimist that he expects this is going to happen to him.

Yet, there is a chance, and a good one, by Birdie's own admission. He has been studying the reports on these newcomers, he has seen one in action and he has been talking with scouts about the others.

Skipper Ecstatic Over Tony

Martinez is the one Tebbetts has viewed personally. Judging by his comments, it would be a wise wager that the young Cuban will be the opening-day shortstop. Birdie really has been taken with Tony, who recently was voted the most valuable player of his team, Caguas, in the Puerto Rican League.

Defensively, he apparently can do the job and do it well. We have yet to hear anyone vote "nay." Offensively, he is rated as a team man, hitting behind the runner.

This winter he has been brushing up on drag bunts, opposite-field hitting and other strategies designed to help the team and drive rival pitchers to distraction. Tebbetts gave this winter homework his full blessing.

Alvis is not unknown to Cleveland fans. The third baseman played here the final month of the season and, to put it kindly, he was not impressive.

Yet, we are told this wasn't the real Alvis.

Standout in Coast Loop

Unquestionably, he was pressing. He was thrown onto the hot corner immediately and his desire to make good rapidly could have acted against him.

At Salt Lake City (Coast), prior to his advancement to Cleveland, he was outstanding, according to reports. He hit with power and handled third with dispatch.

This is a hard-nosed young man with great determination. He's the major reason General Manager Gabe Paul traded away Bubba Phillips. At Tucson, he'll have time to settle down



Max Alvis

and show the true Alvis. Birdie then will have to decide if this muscular young fellow is ready.

Davalillo, the third rookie, plays in center field. His history is remarkable. Just two years ago, he was a pitcher. He got on base so often, however, it seemed wise to take advantage of this wonderful ability and he was switched to the outfield.

Last season, his first as a full-time gardener, he led the International League in five departments, the chief one being hitting. His latest feat was to top the Venezuelan League in batting.

Vic Still Slab Artist

Last week's issue of THE SPORTING NEWS revealed that "L'il Lillo" was given a pitching assignment in Venezuela and the southpaw tossed a winner.

Paul was asked for his reaction to this switch. We expected him to be irritated because of the danger that the outfielder might injure his arm.

Thus it came as a surprise when Paul applauded the move. He explained, "Last summer at Jacksonville, Vic pitched a few times when the club was in a jam. I can picture Tebbetts using Vic the way Paul Richards did a player or two.

"Suppose we start a righthander and he's doing a good job. Then he gets in a jam. There are a couple of men on base in the late innings of a tie game and a lefthanded hitter is up. Tebbetts doesn't want to take the righthander out of the game because he's doing so well, and the next batter is righthanded.

"He can call Davalillo in from center to pitch to the lefthanded hitter and our hurler can go out to center. When the next man comes up, Vic can return to center and the pitcher can go back to work.

"Now I'm not saying Tebbetts will do this. But I wouldn't be surprised if he did. When he managed for me at Cincinnati, he once employed a five-man infield. He's a gambler and Vic's versatility gives him a chance to do some gambling."

Held Triple Threat

Which reminds us that at the start of this piece we mentioned Birdie's ace-in-the-hole. This happens to be Woodie Held.

"He's the key man," says Birdie. "He can play at short, third or in center field and he can play them all brilliantly. So if one of the rookies doesn't make it, Woodie can step right in. Chances are he'll play somewhere."

The ace-in-the-hole, it seems, is more like a wild card.

Tribe Tidbits: The Indians' winter caravan recently went on tour. Contrary to reports which give undeserved credit to others, this method for stoking the hot stove league was devised by Nate Wallack of the Indians, the first club to put the show on the road, back in 1951. This '63 group, consisting of the manager, general manager, players and public relations men, hit the outlying communities, meeting with press, radio and TV officials for food and talk. Gabe Paul, Birdie Tebbetts & Co. opened by having lunch in Toledo and dinner in Sandusky. Writers and announcers from all the surrounding areas were invited. The next day the caravan went to Columbus at noon and Mansfield in the evening. Youngstown and Akron were on the itinerary the following day and the week ended at Buffalo and Erie. . . . Tommy John, rookie pitcher, plans to report to Tucson a week before the other hurlers and commence his own private conditioning program. . . . Mrs. Florence Jackson Gill, mother of Bob Gill, assistant to Gabe Paul, died, February 3, after a long illness. . . . Jim Grant has done such an excellent job as a ticket salesman for the Indians, Gabe Paul already has hired him for 1964 at a raise in pay. If he isn't traded, that is.

Griffith Sees Even Richer Year for Kid Whiz Rollins

Rollins Takes Up Handball to 'Improve My Dexterity'

TWIN CITIES, Minn.—Rich Rollins isn't resting on his laurels as he prepares for the 1963 season. The Twins' third baseman has become a daily devotee of handball near his home in Parma, O.

"It improves my dexterity," he said.

"I'm not a champion at it—some 52-year-old guy beat me the other day—but it should improve my hand-eye co-ordination and it stretches a lot of muscles."

Twins Lose Bid to Curb Orlando Racial Barriers

By ARNO GOETHEL

TWIN CITIES, Minn.

Integration of the Twins' players will not be effected this spring in Orlando, Fla., the club said in a prepared statement.

For several years, the Twins have sought to end the segregated housing of their players at the spring training base. Their efforts have been intensified in the last year, but to no avail.

Consequently, the Twins' six Negro players will be housed at the Sadler Hotel when they report to Orlando. The rest of the squad will check into the Cherry Plaza Hotel or, as in the case of players accompanied by their wives and children, into rented homes or apartments.

The Twins reported some progress in their integration battle, however. For the first time, the entire team will be housed in the same hotel during exhibition trips in Florida. All the Twins will travel in one bus.

Negroes Rode in Station Wagon

Previously, the Negro players shared a station wagon and were housed away from the rest of the team at most other Florida cities.

The Twins' statement said in part: "The question has been asked: Why have not the Twins moved from Orlando, considering the enforced segregation in the housing and feeding of the players? The answer simply is: The present Twins administration inherited a ten-year contract to train in Orlando, the contract not to expire until after the spring of 1964.

"The Twins intend to honor the contract.

"The Twins are eager to see the end of segregation of their players in Orlando. They are confident and hopeful that this will be accomplished before the contract expires.

"Last spring the city lifted its traditional segregation of the races in the grandstand of old Tinker Field, a giant stride forward in the opinion of the Twins."

Twin Prexy Expects Young Slugger to Improve on .298 Bat Mark Because He Is 'Intelligent and Always Calm'

By ARNO GOETHEL

TWIN CITIES, Minn.

Rich Rollins finds himself in a unique position as he prepares to join the Twins at Orlando, Fla., for spring training on February 27.

Although he was voted the Sophomore of the Year in the American League, the Twins' red-haired third baseman actually—if not technically—will be facing the sophomore jinx in 1963. He started only three games for the 1961 Twins and appeared in ten others as a pinch-hitter or runner while accumulating 17 official at-bats, but was on the major league roster for 108 days, more than twice enough to lift him from the freshman ranks in 1962.

The "sophomore jinx" more realistically boils down to a question of whether opposing pitchers and fielders have learned more about Rollins than he has learned about them.

President Cal Griffith of the Twins has no doubts about Rollins, who rose from total obscurity in 1961 to become the American League's starting third baseman in the 1962 All-Star games.

"I think he'll have a better year in 1963," predicted Griff, "because he's intelligent and calm in every situation. He's not a flash in the pan."

Ask Rollins how he feels about 1963 and he says: "That's a pretty good question. It depends on how you start. Last year, I got off to a good start."

Made Blazing Getaway

He could have said truthfully it was a sensational start. He hit safely in each of the Twins' first 12 games, going 20-for-43—which adds up to a torrid .465 average. After bouncing around the top ten for two months, he was the league's top hitter on June 19 with a .360 mark.

Despite the occasional growing pains you might expect of a young man getting his first sustained look at major league pitching, he stayed at .300 or better until he went hitless in three trips on the final day of the season to dip to .298.

It is characteristic of Rollins that he spurned Manager Sam Mele's option to sit out the last game to protect his .300 average.

Hard work? Rollins invented it. He played 50 games in the Florida Instructional League the winter before reporting for spring training. He played every inning of the Twins' first 134 games of 1962.

Having gone hitless his last seven at-bats, Rollins asked Mele if he could spend the off day in the batting cage. Mele was flabbergasted and laughingly denied the request. "Take the day off and enjoy yourself," he advised. Rollins reaped his enjoyment by getting seven hits in 12 at-bats in the next three games.

Lucky in Spring Training

Many times during his phenomenal season Rollins said, "I'd rather be lucky than good." He was both.

Luck took a hand in spring training. The Twins had only three shortstops in camp—Zoilo Versalles, Orlando Martinez and Nestor Velazquez. All three were sidelined within two days—Versalles by the mumps, Martinez by a pulled Achilles heel muscle and Velazquez by a sore shoulder.

Looking about for a shortstop, Mele gave Rookie Bernie Allen the call and



Rich Rollins

thus uncovered the first nugget that was to provide the Twins with an infield among the best in baseball. Allen delivered so well that he was moved to second base, his natural position, where he knocked Billy Martin out of a job and into retirement.

Rollins was next on Mele's emergency shortstop list. He, too, grasped the opportunity with a bearhug, flailing at a .400 clip through the rest of spring training. When Versalles returned, Rollins was put at third base and left all other hot-corner candidates in his wake.

No Time for Frivolities

Rollins impressed Mele with his constant devotion to the game and his innate intelligence. While some of his teammates acquired pre-game relaxation with card games or clubhouse lounging, Rollins boned down his bats, sand-papered the handles or oiled a glove—always working to improve his trade.

Then there was his little black book, in which Rollins religiously kept notes on opposing pitchers and hitters. A typical entry concerned Detroit Pitcher Paul Foytack:

"Always starts me off with a curve, then comes inside, then outside."

On July 23, he pasted Foytack's first pitch—a curve—over the left field fence at Metropolitan Stadium for the first two runs in the Twins' 8 to 1 victory over the Tigers.

It was one of 16 homers for the bespectacled 24-year-old and one of 12 games in which he drove in what proved to be the winning run or runs.

"I make notes about the pitchers' patterns mostly," Rollins says. "On the hitters, I like to keep track of which ones are most likely to bunt."

Mastered Bunt Plays

This helped him gain confidence at third. "I felt in command on a bunting situation," he says. "Before I was kind of leery about it."

Rollins was married on February 9 to Lynn Maher, a former United Airlines stewardess from Newport Beach, Calif., and plans to combine spring training with honeymooning.

Twin Tales: Calvin Griffith had 14 Twins unsigned when he shifted his negotiating headquarters from the Twin Cities to Orlando, Fla. . . . Traveling Secretary Howard Fox preceded Griffith to the training site. . . . Assistant Farm Director George Brophy also visited Orlando to complete the Twins' purchase of the Orlando franchise in the Florida State League. . . . Outfielders Jim Lemon and Bob Allison have been given special permission to report with the batterymen on February 20, seven days ahead of the rest of the squad. . . . Lemon is anxious to get his left shoulder in shape following surgery last fall.

Twin Good-Will Tour Logged 51,666 Miles



Herb Heft

TWIN CITIES, Minn.—Twins' Publicist Herb Heft claimed all sorts of records for the club's good-will ambassadors during the winter.

According to Heft, they covered 51,666 miles—more than twice the distance around the earth (circumference 24,902.3 miles).

The Twins' tours visited 98 communities in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa and the Dakotas. The functions, mostly dinners, attracted 25,771 people, not counting the 10,000 who lined the streets in Devil's Lake, N. D., on October 25 for a parade honoring the team.

Participating in the tours were Players Lenny Green, Rich Rollins, Vic Power, Lee Strange and Zoilo Versalles; Tom Mee and Don Cassidy of the public relations department; Ticket Manager Charlie Lavender, and Trainer Doc Lentz. Spotted in addition were Broadcasters Ray Scott, Herb Carneal and Halsey Hall, Scout Billy Martin and Pitcher Jack Kralick.

GOETHEL.

Mantle, Wills Name Schools to Share Pepsi-Cola Awards

NEW YORK, N. Y.—Mickey Mantle of the Yankees and Maury Wills of the Dodgers have announced their selection of schools which will receive \$500 scholarships donated in their names by the Pepsi-Cola Company.

Mantle designated his hometown Commerce (Okla.) High School, while Wills named the Winston-Salem (N. C.) Teachers College as his choice.