

# Free-Agent **Draft** Launched Without a Hitch

## Even Critics Impressed by Smooth Start

By CLIFFORD KACHLINE  
NEW YORK, N. Y.

Like the Gemini space program, Organized Baseball's first venture into the free-agent player **draft** got away to a remarkably smooth start. The blastoff was perfect and all of the technicians behind the great innovation, from Commissioner Ford Frick on down, expressed satisfaction with the launch.

With the first phase of the program—the actual drafting—now completed, attention already has turned to the second stage: The signing of the players who were picked. After all, the clubs merely drafted for the right to negotiate with certain youngsters.

While the percentage that is signed will in some measure indicate the effectiveness of the experiment, full evaluation of its success or failure must wait the third phase. This won't occur until late in the fall or possibly early next year and will consist of measuring one or both of two factors:

1. Has the program saved clubs money in bonuses?
2. Has it helped the over-all structure of the game, notably the minor leagues?

### 320 Picked in Six Hours

Even the skeptics among sports writers and broadcasters were impressed with the precision with which the first free-agent **draft** was run off during two day-long sessions at the Commodore Hotel here, June 8-9. Frequently a procedure so revolutionary—for baseball, at least—encounters numerous snags.

As a consequence of the smooth operation, the 20 major league organizations drafted 320 players in approximately six hours the first day—a pace of almost one per minute. And another 506 were chosen in roughly nine hours the following day for a total of 826 selections.

The first organization to quit drafting was the Boston Red Sox, who stopped on June 9 after selecting 20 players. Next to halt were the Philadelphia Phils, with 33 names.

"I think the commissioner and his staff should be congratulated for the manner in which the meetings were conducted," commented John McHale, president of the Braves. Other club officials echoed the sentiment.

### Frick Paves the Way

Many of the potential bugs in procedures were ironed out at a meeting which Frick held with the general managers of the major league clubs at the Roosevelt Hotel the evening preceding the **draft** sessions.

When Frick called the opening selection meeting to order at 9:30 a. m., June 8, the east ballroom of the Commodore was jammed with almost 200 persons. Each major league club was represented by five or more officials, while a number of scouts and minor league officials attended.

The news media were represented by several dozen writers as well as numerous photographers.

After a few preliminary remarks, Frick turned the proceedings over to Secretary-Treasurer Charles Segar and the historic first free-agent player **draft** was officially underway.

Under the rules, each major league club was entitled to just one selection, with the clubs drafting in the reverse order of their 1964 finish. Since it was the American



COMMISSIONER FORD FRICK (background) raises the gavel, signaling the start of the first free-agent **draft** at the Commodore Hotel in New York, June 8. In the foreground are

Hank Peters, Kansas City Athletics; Eddie Robinson, Houston Astros; Johnny Murphy, New York Mets, and George Selkirk, Washington Senators.

### Sorry, the Wrong Name—Dodgers Pull a New Card

NEW YORK, N. Y.—Only one minor mixup developed during the first day's **draft** meeting and that produced both a laugh and further indications of a Dodger-Angel rivalry.

In the third round of Class A selections, Farm Director Fresno Thompson of the Dodgers announced the choice of Jack Glover, lefthanded pitcher from Birmingham, Ala., for Salem (Northwest). However, immediately after giving particulars on the player, Thompson said he had the wrong card and took Edward Leon Everitt, pitcher from Marshall, Tex., instead.

About ten minutes later, the Dodger organization had another chance but took some other player. The Angels, choosing next for Davenport (Midwest), then claimed negotiation rights to Glover.

League's turn to lead off, this gave the Athletics the No. 1 pick.

As expected, General Manager Hank Peters selected Robert (Rick) Monday, highly-touted 19-year-old outfielder from Arizona State University. The muscular young slugger was rated the top prospect by most organizations.

Monday, a sophomore at Arizona State, rejected a \$20,000 bonus offer from the Dodgers following graduation from high school in Santa Monica, Calif., and was expected to command a fancy bonus from the A's. It was generally agreed the price might top \$100,000 and possibly even go to \$200,000.

A lefthanded hitter with a swing reminiscent of Duke Snider, the 6-3, 195-pound Monday batted .366 this

year for Arizona State. Nearly half his hits were for extra bases.

The Mets received second choice and President George Weiss grabbed Leslie Rohr, a 19-year-old lefthanded pitcher from Billings, Mont. Rohr, who was about to graduate from West High School in Billings, is considered the best high school pitching prospect in the country.

Possessing an overpowering fast ball and unusual poise, Rohr "should be a major league pitcher within three years," predicted Bing Devine, Weiss' right-hand man.

The third turn went to Washington. General Manager George Selkirk, selecting for the Senators, reeled off a name with a familiar ring—Joe Coleman, Jr., of Natick (Mass.) High School. Young Coleman, whose dad pitched for the Philadelphia Athletics, is 17 and a righthanded hurler as was his father.

### Barrett Picked by Astros

Houston was fourth, and Farm Director Eddie Robinson's selection on behalf of the Astros was Alex Barrett, 18, a shortstop from Winton, Calif., who attended Atwater High School.

The Red Sox, next in line, made a start toward a future brother outfield combination by picking Billy Conigliaro, brother of Tony. A product of Swampscott (Mass.) High School, the 17-year-old outfielder stands six feet, weighs 175 and, like brother Tony, is a righthanded batter and thrower.

The major league round of selections, in sequence, continued with these results:

Cubs—Richard James, 17, pitcher from Coffee High School, Florence, Ala.

Indians—Raymond Fosse, 18, catcher from Marion (Ill.) High School.

Dodgers—John Scott Wyatt, 17,

## Frick, Staff Draw Applause For First-Class Draft Setup

NEW YORK, N. Y.—The arrangements for the first free-agent player **draft** drew high praise all around. The setup was worked out by Commissioner Ford Frick and his staff.

Each major league club was assigned a table with space for up to eight persons. The American League clubs' tables were in a row, the National's in a row beside them.

While Joe McKenney and Dave Grote, public relations directors of the two leagues, handed the portable mikes from table to table, Frank Slocum of the commissioner's staff directed the preparation of films with information on each selection. These films were then flashed upon a large screen in the front of the ballroom for the benefit of the other clubs, press, etc., while the next selection was made. Bill Walsh and Joe Moreno of Vizmo Productions, Inc., prepared the films and manned the projector.

### Frick's Staff Prepares Detailed Data on Draftees

In addition, mimeographed sheets containing full data on each selection were prepared while the sessions were in progress. Jim Gallagher of the commissioner's staff and Bill Cutler of the American League office directed the preparation of this information.

While the **draft** was in progress, Don Avery, director of research for the National Association, kept a running account of the selections. At the conclusion of the sessions, it was announced that the National Association would send to all clubs by June 11 an alphabetical listing of all the draftees, so that scouts would be able to determine the eligible players who were overlooked in the **draft**.

shortstop from Bakersfield (Calif.) High School.

Twins—Ed Leon, 18, shortstop from Tucson, Ariz., who attended Arizona University.

Pirates—Douglas Dickerson, 17, outfielder from Ensley High School, Birmingham, Ala.

Angels—James Spencer, 17, first baseman from Andover High School, Glen Burnie, Md.

Braves—William R. Grant, 18, first baseman from Watertown (Mass.) High School.

Tigers—Gene William Lamont, 18,

catcher from Hiawatha High School, Kirkland, Ill.

Giants—Alan Gallagher, 19, third baseman from Daley City, Calif., who attended Santa Clara University.

Orioles—Scott McDonald, 18, pitcher from Marquette High School, Yakima, Wash.

Reds—Bernardo Carbo, 17, third baseman from Livonia High School, Garden City, Mich.

White Sox—Kenneth Plesha, 19,

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