

# Spindly Nossek: A Light Eater, Heavy Swinger

By MAX NICHOLS

TWIN CITIES, Minn.

Two outfielders who specialize in line-drive hitting have crashed the **Twins'** power-hitting party.

With Bob Allison in left, Jimmie Hall in center and Tony Oliva in right, the **Twins** have what Calvin Griffith calls the "best all-round outfield" in the history of the organization. They can all cover ground, throw and have hit as many as 30 home runs in a season.

It doesn't look exactly like the land of opportunity for a couple of young outfielders trying to dip into baseball's pot of gold with singles in these days of the long ball.

But Sandy Valdespino and Joe Nossek don't seem to know that.

Valdespino, standing 5-5 in his baseball spikes and weighing 170 pounds, contributed heavily to the **Twins'** first-place ride through June. He has replaced the muscular, 210-pound Allison in parts of double-headers and against certain right-handed pitchers.

And the **Twins** have seldom lost with him in the lineup. He's been batting .290 or better.

Nossek, a slender 173-pounder who is called "coffee and juice" because of his light eating habits on trips, has begun to see his name on lineup cards when the **Twins** face left-handers. He has started platooning with Hall in center field.

## An Aggressive Batter

"Nossek definitely fits into our plans," said Manager Sam Mele. "I like the way he swings the bat. He's aggressive. And he's starting to get his hits. And every time I play Valdespino, he hits and we win."

A brief slump by Allison and Hall's problems against lefthanded pitchers gave the two former Triple-A teammates their chances. And both have jumped at their opportunities.

Valdespino has earned a reputation among the **Twins** with a face that constantly seems to be laughing.

But he had to work too hard to get to the major leagues for baseball to be a joke to him.

"When I play baseball, I'm only serious," Sandy said. "I never smile when I'm at bat."

Sandy's eyes dance and his smile often breaks into a laugh when someone just says hello. It would be easy to dub him Hilarious Hi-

## Mincher Blasts Home Run Pegged as 452-Foot Drive

TWIN CITIES, Minn.—Don Mincher broke out of a hitting slump by slugging what was probably the fourth-longest home run ever hit at Metropolitan Stadium.

The drive off Detroit's Dave Wickersham cleared the right field bleachers at the Met. The top of the right field bleachers has been measured at 425 feet from home plate.

**Twins'** officials, using a logarithm method instead of a tape, guessed at the angle of the flight of the ball and came up with the distance of 452 feet—one foot shorter than an earlier blast to center field this year by Harmon Killebrew.

In 1961, Harmon hit one a record 475 feet at the Met. That one was taped. Elston Howard of the Yankees once hit one figured at 460 by the mathematical method. Mincher was 2-for-19 before he hit his homer—which helped in a 4-3 victory.

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But Sandy had to wait five years in Triple-A ball for his chance with the **Twins** this year. And his hard work started long before that.

His father died when he was nine. He started to work in an iron-pipe factory across the street from his Cuban home. By 11, he was doing the work of a man.

"My brother worked as a shoe-



JOE NOSSEK



SANDY VALDESPINO

maker," Sandy said. "My mother did washing. I went to school in the morning, worked in the afternoon and played baseball after work. But I never felt bad about having to work. And my mother always was happy, so it is natural for me.

"I think I am so big in the shoulders because of that hard work. It was a good thing for me." Tony wears a 42 coat over his frame.

## Together at Atlanta

Nossek is much different in stature—standing 6-3 with a narrow frame. They played in the same outfield at Fort Worth-Dallas (PCL) in 1963, as did Oliva, and again in 1964 at Atlanta (Int.).

Joe batted .293 with the Texas club, but he has slugged only 16 home runs in his four-year baseball career. He and Valdespino both swing with the pitch, driving outside pitches to the opposite field.

Nossek's background was different from Sandy's. He was first scouted for the **Twins** by Floyd Baker when he was in high school in Euclid, O.

"He weighed only about 150

pounds then," said Baker. "He had the good form, but he wasn't ready yet to play professional baseball. It was a good thing he went to college. He signed at about the right time."

Joe went to Ohio University for three and one-half years, then signed for a large bonus the same spring that Bernie Allen, from East Liverpool, O., signed out of Purdue University.

"I was up to about 175 pounds when I signed, but then I lost weight again playing at Charlotte (Southern) for two years and in the Coast league.

"I have never been a big eater," Joe said.

## Joe Standout in Garden

While he developed as a spray hitter, Nossek also developed quickly as an outfielder—he became one of the outstanding center fielders in the organization.

It was for his defensive ability as much as anything that he made the **Twins** this spring.

"The big step was when I learned to turn my back on a ball hit over

my head," he said. "I started learning that in 1961 with the help of Lenny Green. Last summer, it really helped me."

Nossek fell to a .238 average last summer, primarily because of a broken thumb. But he bounced back to hit .350 in the Florida Instructional League while learning to play third base.

So Joe brought to the **Twins** this ability to play any outfield position, plus a little knowledge of infield play. The **Twins** plan to move him around the diamond as a possible future second baseman. But he will also help Hall in center field.

In an exhibition against Milwaukee at Atlanta, he played shortstop to give Zollo Versailles a rest.

"He will play anywhere," said Mele. "He's an aggressive player. You have to like a player like that. And if he ever gets to play regularly, he will get his share of hits."

Nossek displayed what Mele meant by aggressiveness in two pressure-packed games against Detroit. The **Twins** were faced with losing their lead over Chicago and Cleveland if they lost both. They were behind until the ninth inning.

## Joe Beats Out a Roller

After tying the score, 3-3, in the first one, the **Twins** loaded the bases. Mele sent Nossek to bat and Nossek took four swings. He fouled two pitches off, then hit a slow roller toward second base. The winning run scored as he beat the throw for a base-hit.

"I wasn't going to be called out," said Joe. "I was going to swing the bat. I don't think I've walked 100 times in my four years of baseball." Two days later, Nossek singled home the winning run in the tenth inning for a 6-5 victory, raising his average to .315.

"Sometimes I go for a week and don't eat much," said Joe. "I just don't feel like eating sometimes. But I have a good Italian wife who likes me to eat. So I eat better when I am at home."

**Twins Tracks:** Frank Kostro, sent down to Denver by the **Twins**, was traded to Seattle for pitcher Ron Piche. . . . Cleveland became the first team to beat the **Twins** in two series this year, winning three of four at Minnesota and two of three at Cleveland in June. Cleveland and Detroit were the **Twins'** toughest opponents in the first two rounds of the schedule. . . . While the **Twins'** pitchers continued to lead the league in earned-run average, they also continued to match the **Twins** sluggers in homers. While the hitters managed 74 homers in the first 63 games, the pitchers threw 73.

# Mele Does Slick Patch Job on Twin Lineup

By MAX NICHOLS

TWIN CITIES, Minn.

Injuries struck the **Twins** so hard late in June that Manager Sam Mele had to use eight different infield lineups in eight days and go through a complete pitching rotation without Camilo Pascual or Jim Kaat.

Pascual suffered a muscle pull in his back near his shoulder during the fourth inning of a 3-1 loss at Cleveland.

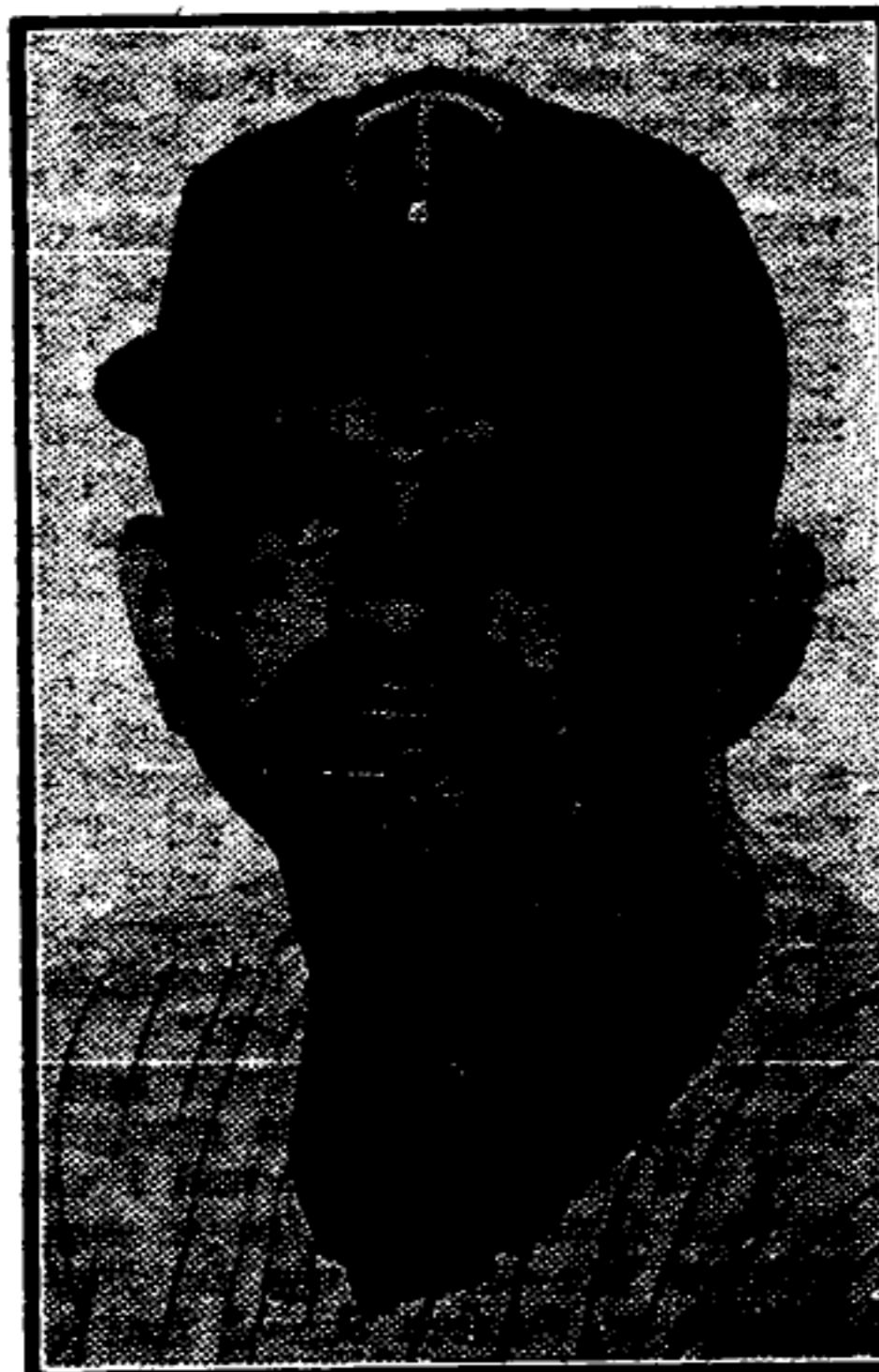
And Kaat developed a strain in his left forearm—forcing him to miss a turn.

To combat these situations, Manager Sam Mele started reliever Billy Pleis and Mel Nelson and planned to switch relievers as often as was necessary. Al Worthington pitched twice in a Sunday double-header even though he had a pulled muscle in his back.

## Relievers Do Terrific Job

"All of our relief pitchers have been pitching so well, it doesn't really matter who we start," said Johnny Sain, **Twins** pitching coach. "So why not pitch them three innings at a time and use them more often? That's what actually happens anyway."

The **Twins** got through the first day of the weekend rotation when Worthington and Johnny Klippstein followed starter Dave Boswell in a 4-3 victory over Detroit. Pleis went four innings the next day, then



CAMILO PASCUAL



JIM KAAT

gave up two runs and wound up losing. Then the **Twins** used seven pitchers in winning a double-header to keep their lead in the American League race.

Jim (Mudcat) Grant was the only healthy member of the **Twins'** Big Three. Kaat was expected back after one turn and Pascual hoped to

return after losing no more than two turns.

"I left the lineup immediately when I felt something wrong," said Camilo. "In other years, I stayed in there and hurt it worse. I think I got out before it was hurt too bad."

Mele's infield was thrown into a cramp when second baseman Jerry

Kindall was injured by sliding Moose Skowron of Chicago and then reinjured while running.

After that, Mele used three first basemen, three second basemen and three third basemen with the game but weary shortstop, Zoilo Versailles. Harmon Killebrew, Bob Allison and Don Mincher played first base.

## Killer at Hot Corner

Killebrew, Rich Rollins and Bernie Allen played third while Kindall was out. And Rollins, Allen and Frank Kostro took turns at second base.

"I don't like to juggle that much," said Mele. "When Kindall gets back in the lineup, I want him at second base, Killebrew at first and either Allen or Rollins at third."

Mele was looking for another infielder, but he and club President Calvin Griffith found few strays.

Meanwhile Jerry Zimmerman had to again fill in for catcher Earl Battey, who suffered a dislocated middle finger on his gloved hand.

Battey has been out with six injuries this year.

"Earl was just starting to hit again," said Mele. "He got a single and a double the night he was hurt. The same thing happened in Boston when he was hurt earlier this May. He was just starting to hit for power at that time."