

# Just a .217 Hitter, But Zim Puts Vim In Galloping Twins

By MAX NICHOLS

TWIN CITIES, Minn.

While Earl Battey once again represented Minnesota as the All-Star catcher for the American League this year, six injuries have forced him to share almost half the load for the Twins.

And Jerry Zimmerman, who quietly sat in the back seat behind Battey the last three years, has just as quietly shouldered the burden as it fell on him. The results have been disquieting for the rest of the league.

When Zimmerman catches, the Twins seem to win. It's almost as if he has transferred the pennant-winning ways he learned with the 1961 Reds to the Twins. He caught 39 of the first 70 Twins games and Minnesota won 31 of them to hold the league lead for 28 days. "I've said before," said Manager Sam Mele, "that Zimmerman is the best receiver in the American League.

"He doesn't hit for a high average, but he helps you in other ways with his bat, moving runners around.

"Jerry hits the ball often somewhere and he swings the bat aggressively."

Zimmerman has hit no better than his lifetime .217 batting average indicated. But he has managed to help the Twins with his bat, twice driving in winning runs in close games.

## Caught in Spite of Injury

When the Twins were backed up against the wall because of injuries in a four-game series against Detroit, Zimmerman caught both ends of a double-header, despite a pulled muscle in his back.

"It's just a little sore between the shoulder blades," he said. "It will be all right."

Battey has caught 131 games or more for the last five years. So this is the biggest chance Zimmerman has had to contribute to the Twins' cause and he wants to take advantage of it.

"He wants to play," said Mele. "And it's one of the reasons we are winning. With the rest of our scoring power, we are not hurt



Jerry Zimmerman

too much as long as Zim is around to do the job defensively.

"We've been winning our close games this year because we have been able to hold the opposition until we can score. It's the first year our pitching has been that good and Zimmerman is very good at handling the pitchers."

The 30-year-old catcher from Milwaukee, Ore., had to jump right into the lineup at the start of the season when Battey had a sore shoulder. It was during the first two weeks that he singled home the winning run in the tenth inning of a comeback victory at Detroit.

"I've gotten some good hits at times," Zimmerman said. "I played quite a bit for the 1961 Cincinnati team (76 games). And I hit pretty well for the Twins a couple of years ago. But I can't remember any one game in which I drove home the winning run like this."

## He Never Complains

It was a 43-degree night with cold winds. And Zimmerman had spent most of the game warming up pitchers in the bull pen while some of the relief pitchers waited in the clubhouse. But, as usual, there were no complaints from Zimmerman.

Only a week later, he singled home what proved to be the winning run in a 4-3 victory over Chicago. But his biggest night actually came early in June when he slugged the first triple and first home run of his major league career.

His triple bounced through Boston right fielder Tony Conigliaro and started the scoring in a 6-3 victory. Three games later, he slugged a 400-foot homer against Washington.

And when reporters trooped in to ask him about hitting his first homer in five major league seasons, he appeared irritated.

"Of course I've hit home runs before," he said. "I hit 32 in the minors. Look at the records. Everyone hits home runs now and then if they play enough."

Jerry had played for two seasons

## Twins Top Tigers 6 Times With Late-Inning Surges

TWIN CITIES, Minn. — Six times the Twins have beaten Detroit in 11 games this year, and in all six the Twins have come through with the deciding runs in the final innings.

Joe Nosssek drove home the winning run twice within four games against Detroit to cap the unusual chain of events. He singled home Jim Grant with the winning run in the ninth inning of a comeback, 4-3 victory and then singled home Rich Rollins in the tenth inning of a 6-5 triumph.

It all started early in the season when Jerry Zimmerman singled home the winner in the tenth. Jimmie Hall then delivered a tenth-inning sacrifice fly and a twelfth-inning winning triple against the Tigers. Between Nosssek's blows, Don Mincher broke a 4-4 tie with a two-run, final-inning homer.

During their first 70 games, the Twins won 11 and lost nine one-run decisions.

for Minneapolis in the American Association (1958 and 1959) without hitting one out of Metropolitan Stadium. So this was his first homer at the Met in six seasons. His last homer of any kind had come in 1960, when he played for Seattle (Coast).

Three times this year, Zimmerman has rapped three hits in one game. He has long been considered an accurate bunter by Mele and it was agonizing for Jerry to miss six of seven bunt attempts in June. His last one broke up a suicide squeeze play.

## Played With Sore Back

"I know that bothered Zim," Mele said. "Because he is a good bunter. I got a lot of mileage out of his bat last year by having him move runners and squeeze in runs. He just had a couple of bad nights."

This happened when Zimmerman was playing in spite of the sore back, but he would make no excuses.

The 6-2, 185-pounder is well known among the Twins for his dry wit. He and road roommate Don Mincher exchange needles that would make a stranger wince.

Probably largely because of this, the catcher is among the best-liked players on the club. When he has a good night, everyone sends the reporters to his locker "to be sure and talk to Zimmy."

It is difficult to say just how much a catcher contributes to the success of a pitcher. Twins pitchers, unwilling to hurt anyone's feelings, say they like pitching to both Battey and Zimmerman.

"We are very fortunate," Camilo Pascual once said, "to be able to pitch to two good catchers like Battey and Zimmerman. Very few pitchers can say that on other teams in this league."

## Pair of Newcomers

At any rate, the Twins' relievers have been more successful this season than in any other year.

Johnny Sain, Twins' pitching coach, has had a lot to do with this, of course.

The Twins held the lead from Memorial Day until they lost, 17-4, to Chicago on June 28. And during these days on top of the league, the starters were able to finish only four games.

So, day after day, one pitcher after another came in to help stop the opposition. Al Worthington, Jerry Fosnow, Billy Pleis, John Klippstein, Dick Stigman, Jim Perry and Mel Nelson made a total of 61 appearances in 28 games during that time, compiling an earned-run average of 2.52.

They won seven games and saved six in 16 victories. Worthington led the way with a 1.07 ERA in ten appearances while winning two and saving one. Stigman saved three.

The whole chain of events hit a climax in a four-game weekend series against Detroit—the one in which Zimmerman caught with a

# Tony Injures Knees Banging Into Outfield Walls, Sliding

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started bothering Tony again this spring and promised to continue to be painful all season. He hurt it for the first time last May. But Tony shrugs off this and his knee injuries.

"My right knee was hurt for the first time last spring when I ran into a fence in Florida," said Oliva. "I hurt it again in Baltimore last year and had to leave a game. Then I got it hurt this year sliding into a base and running into the fence in Los Angeles.

"My left knee was hurt in Baltimore this year. And I hurt that one again sliding home against Boston."

## Oliva Shakes Up Catcher

That slide home scored the winning run in the ninth inning. And Oliva had to bang into the catcher and knock the ball out of his hand to do it, which gives you an idea of why the Twins think so highly of him.

Allison and Killebrew both were having their hitting troubles as the Twins moved into July, but the Twins are getting used to Killebrew hitting his 40 homers and Allison his 30 in spite of slumps. Neither has ever gone through a whole season without one.

After 77 games, Allison had 12 homers and had been rested for several games. Mele was using Sandy Valdespino to spell Allison and Don Mincher to replace Killebrew.

"I don't like the way Harmon has been swinging," said Mele when he took Killebrew out against Cleveland for one game. "And neither does he. He has been reaching for the ball. And he's starting to strike out more."

Killebrew was well behind his 1964 home-run timetable. He had 30

## Twin Quartet Boasts Total Homer Production of 532

TWIN CITIES, Minn. — The Twins' three regular outfielders and first baseman Harmon Killebrew had slugged a total of 532 major league home runs before this season—most of them in 15 seasons as regulars.

Killebrew had 272 after six seasons as a regular, Allison 170 in the same years. Hall had 58 in two seasons and Oliva 32. It averages out to almost 35.5 homers per regular season.

sore back. Relievers Pleis and Nelson each started one of the games. And the bull-pen staff pitched 25 of the 37 innings while the Twins protected their half-game lead with three victories.

**Twin Tracks:** The Twins have come from behind to win 16 games this year, 13 with relief pitching holding the opposition while the hitters did the job. . . . Jimmie Hall took the club leadership in runs batted in with 44 while slugging his fourteenth homer. He drove in five runs against Chicago. . . . Sandy Valdespino has started platooning almost regularly with Bob Allison in left field. . . . Billy Pleis became a 20-game winner when he won his fourth game of this season by beating Detroit in the second game on June 27. This gave him 20 in his five-year career. . . . The bull pen continued its outstanding work in a three-game sweep at Kansas City. After Jim Grant went the route, relievers pitched 13 of 20 innings in the second two games. Johnny Klippstein pitched perfect ball in the last four innings of the finale, then the Twins regained sole possession of first place on July 5. . . . Dave Boswell pitched his longest stint, eight and one-third innings, in beating Boston for his fifth victory. . . . Camilo

## Jimmie's Sizzling Bat Paced Twins' Drive to First Place

TWIN CITIES, Minn.—Jimmie Hall raised his batting average from .272 to .335 in the most torrid hitting streak of the Twins' drive into the leadership of the American League by mid-June.

The center fielder rapped 24 hits in 50 times at bat for a .480 average while hitting safely in 12 of 13 games during that streak. Included were four doubles and three homers, including an inside-the-park home run at Minnesota's Metropolitan Stadium.

It was the second inside-the-park homer for the Twins this year. Zoilo Versailles hit one earlier at Yankee Stadium.

by the first week of July last year and went on to win his third straight league home-run crown with 49. He started this season meeting the ball well and hitting more straightaway for singles and doubles.

"I'm going to run this year with my big men hitting," Mele said. And he did. The Twins had the hit-and-run and steal sign on more than ever before in moving out in front of the league.

Allison was the club's runner-up in stolen bases with seven—hurling his powerful body into fielders trying to tag him.

## Rest Helps Killer

Until mid-May, Allison and Killebrew both were hitting more than .300. Killebrew's strikeouts were down from 44 to 24 and Allison's from 37 to 28 in comparison to the same point of the 1964 season. Then Killebrew went 0-for-14 and 3-for-38. He struck out six times in three games before being taken out of the lineup.

When he returned, he slammed a three-run homer off Sonny Siebert of Cleveland in his first time at bat.

"There is a fine line that sometimes gets confused," Mele said. "I don't want Killebrew and Allison to cut down on their swings so much they take away from their ability. I don't want them poking at the ball. But I want them to concentrate more on taking a good cut at pitches that they might not normally be able to pull. I want them to hit that outside pitch hard more often."

"I'll take a lot of those homers chopped up into singles and doubles."

## Zoilo Snaps Slump for Dad, On His First Visit to States

TWIN CITIES, Minn.—Zoilo Versailles, Sr., 50, watched his son play shortstop for the Twins for the first time, July 5, against the Red Sox.

Zoilo, Jr., broke an 0-for-27 slump with two singles and a run batted in as he was announced on the American League All-Star squad.

The shortstop's father left Cuba with permission and arrived in Minnesota on July 4. He will live with his baseball-playing son in Bloomington, Minn.

"The last time I saw Zoilo play was five years ago," said the proud 150-pound, 5-7 father. "That was in Cuba. This is my first visit to the United States. I have seen snow only in the movies."

Pascual and Jim Kaat both went back on the injured list after pitching despite ailments. Kaat's soreness in his left forearm returned after two starts and Pascual had to leave in the third inning of his first start with his pulled back muscle aggravated.

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