

Doubts Gone --Tiant Earns Major Spurs

By RUSSELL SCHNEIDER
CLEVELAND, O.

His record doesn't verify it, but Luis Tiant has erased any of the doubts that might have existed about his future as a major league pitcher.

The 24-year-old righthander—sometimes referred to as the Indians' Cuban Cutie—has found it is slightly more difficult to win in the American League than he might have realized a year ago.

But the skeptics are convinced now, even though he'd won only ten games while losing nine, early in September.

For one thing, Tiant has not been very lucky.

For another, he started the season with a sore arm—which was another reason for some of the doubts about Tiant's ability to win consistently.

He can't do anything about the luck, but Looney thinks he can do something about the arm that troubled him through most of the spring.

"It feels good now," he is quick to point out. "But I do not want to pitch in the winter league unless I have to."

Which represents some sort of a concession on the part of the 5-11, 190-pounder who resembles a smaller-sized Don Newcombe. He, like so many Latin Americans, had insisted that around-the-calendar pitching had no bad effects on his arm.

He Wants a Vacation
Now, however, Tiant isn't so sure. At least he wants to try a "vacation," if he can afford one.

"That is up to Gabe Paul," Tiant said in uncertain English. "He tell me he no want me to pitch this winter either. But I have to take care of my family. What am I going to do if he won't pay me what I can make in winter ball?"

Tiant further insists his attitude is not a salary pitch. "It's just, what you say, common sense."

Whatever, it would seem to be an interesting experiment.

Tiant has pitched "around the calendar" for six years. He also has had a history of arm trouble, even though nothing of a serious nature recently.

In spring training, Tiant strained a muscle in his forearm and it hampered him until after the season started. Although he continually insisted it didn't hurt much, Tiant admitted his arm felt weak—"not good and strong"—until the middle of May.

Since then, he's been throwing well, mixing a good fast ball with an assortment of breaking and off-speed pitches, plus something that resembles Satchel Paige's famed "hesitation" pitch.

The latter has evoked howls around the league, but as long as Tiant doesn't use it with runners on base, it has been cleared by the umpires.

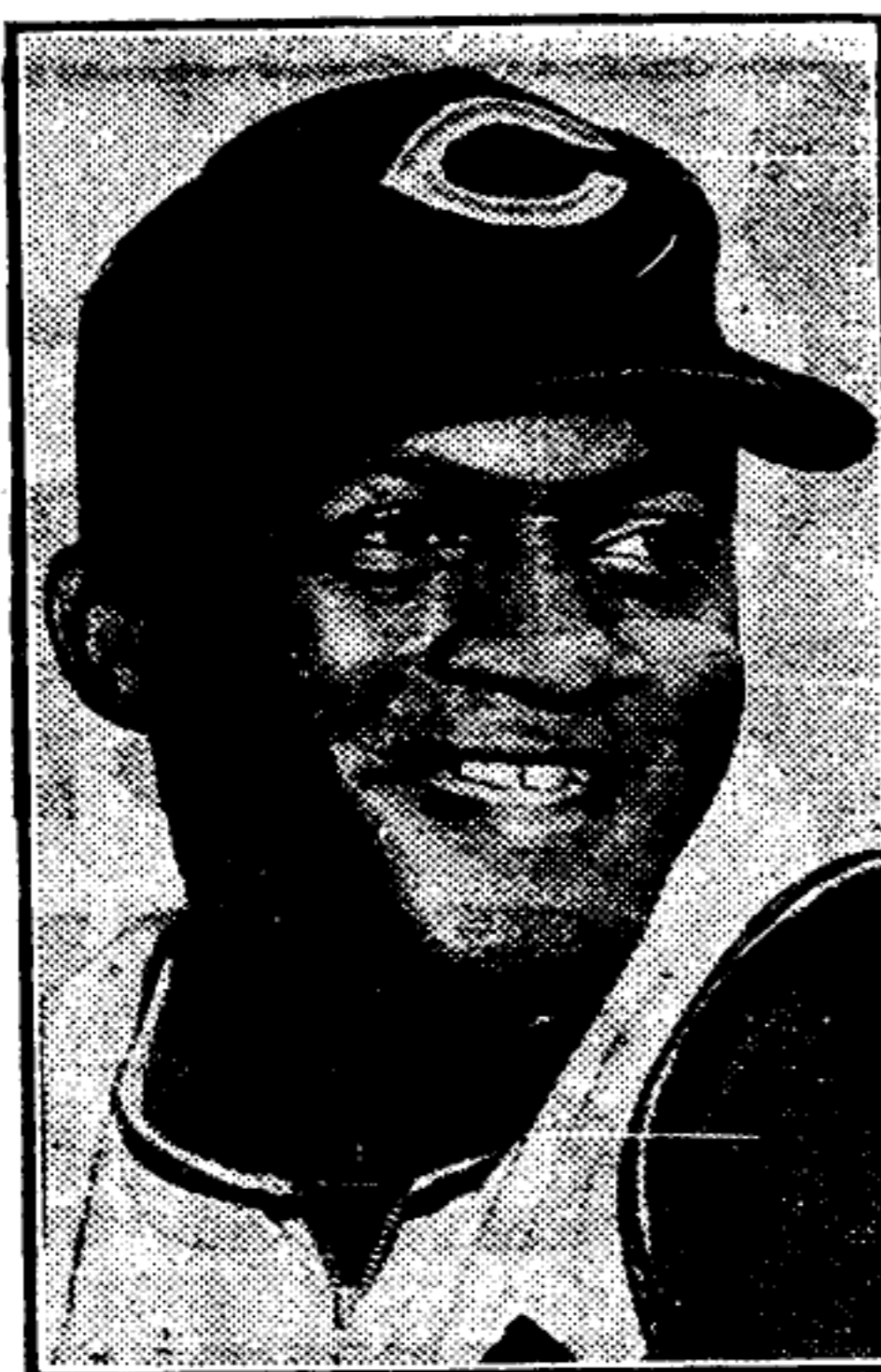
Nifty Log at Portland
The righthander was called up by the Indians in July, 1964, after compiling a brilliant 15-1 record with a 2.04 earned-run average at Portland (Coast), and was immediately handed a starting assignment against the Yankees.

Looney promptly tossed a three-hit shutout at the Bronx Bombers, then went on to win ten and lose four for the Tribe. He and Sam McDowell, who also was called up from Portland at midseason, became the Indians' best two pitchers.

Last winter, Tiant pitched at Ponce in Puerto Rico, but the reports on his progress weren't good. He was hit hard on occasion and supposedly wasn't throwing his good fast ball any more.

Looney later explained, "I concentrate on developing new pitches. Work on change-up and alla that."

Then came his sore arm in a



Luis Tiant

squad game and a week's rest. As it turned out, he needed more time because he came back and developed additional trouble. When it disappeared, however, Tiant became once again the hard-throwing, cunning righthander that he had been previously.

Tiant had good stuff in practically every one of his nine defeats, but failed five times to get over the ten-mark. It seemed he was always just one hit away from a victory, or removed for a pinch-hitter an inning before the Indians came to life to win for his successor.

Luis Proves His Point
Anyway, he's proved he belongs in the big leagues.

He hopes he can prove that it would be to the Indians' advantage to pay him enough so he won't have to pitch around the calendar in Caribbean play.

"But I no want to stay and work in Cleveland in winter, either," Tiant is quick to assert. "No like the cold. Want to go to Mexico—but not pitch."

It might be an interesting experiment.

One that could be profitable for the Indians, too.

Tribe Tidbits: Joe Azcue became the Indians' second new father in eleven days when his wife, Judy Lee, gave birth to a daughter, Chelli Jo, in Kansas City on September 2. . . . Sam McDowell's wife gave birth to a son, Timothy Michael, in Pittsburgh on August 22. . . . "Captain" Robert Manry, the Cleveland Plain Dealer copy editor who recently sailed the Atlantic Ocean alone in his 13-foot boat Tinkerbelle, was saluted by the Indians between games on their Labor Day double-header against Washington. Tinkerbelle also was on display. . . . Famed Eddie Feigner and his team—"The King and His Court"—played an exhibition before the Indians-Orioles game in Baltimore and the most interested spectators were the big leaguers. Outfielder Leon Wagner was asked to bat against the softball pitcher, but Birdie Tebbetts quickly nixed the idea. Daddy Wags wasn't too anxious to try it, anyway. . . . Sonny Siebert, now over the back and shoulder troubles that plagued him for almost a month, plans to skip the winter leagues this year and "build up my back." It's Sonny's opinion that his shoulder trouble was a result of a torn tendon he suffered during the winter of 1961-62 at Nicaragua. . . . In their first 133 games, the Indians featured 72 different batting orders and Rocky Colavito was the only player to start every game, always in the No. 4 spot. Eight Indians have been tried in the leadoff and No. 2 positions, five in Nos. 3 and 5, seven in No. 6, ten in No. 7, and six in No. 8. . . . Kansas City's Roland Sheldon was warned—and automatically fined \$50—by umpire Joe Paparella after he hit Maxie Alvis and knocked down Vic Davalillo on succeeding pitches on September 2. . . . How's this for switches? Fred Whitfield regularly uses Larry Brown's bat model, Leon Wagner uses Whitfield's, and Vic Davalillo uses Wagner's.

Rest Cure Does Wonders For Oliva's Swat Average

By MAX NICHOLS

TWIN CITIES, Minn.

It was late in August and Tony Oliva had about given up on his chances of winning another batting championship when he took a hard slide into home plate.

He was trying to score a tie-breaking run against New York. But he succeeded only in jamming the ring finger on his right hand. The next night, Tony's finger hurt so badly he had to leave the lineup. And he was out of the lineup for six more games. He was batting .311 with a swollen knuckle on his middle finger all year.

How could he ever hope to win the batting title with two bad fingers? "I don't like to leave the lineup," said Tony. "You stay out, lose your timing. It's hard to get going."

But this time, to Tony's beaming surprise, he was wrong. Never in his five-year baseball career had he been out of the lineup during the last three months of a season. He had no idea how valuable rest could be in a 162-game schedule.

When Tony came back, he immediately rapped three hits in four times at bat, including two doubles. The next night, he banged a single and a triple. He had 11 hits in 24 ABs, raising his batting average to .318 and was trailing American League leader Carl Yastrzemski by only nine points.

"I have to admit I didn't think I could do it," said Tony. "I thought maybe I hit one, two balls good, but not three or four. I thought my timing would be all off."

"But I feel good—strong. My left knee (sore for the last three months) feels good, too. It doesn't hurt. Wearing a glove on my right hand helps my finger. I can grip the bat tight without hurting it."

"It still will be hard to catch Yastrzemski. He has only about 400 times at bat. If he gets three hits in one day, his average goes way up. If I get three hits in four times at bat, my average goes up only three points."

Out One Game in '64
Oliva missed only one game all last year en route to the American League batting championship with a .323 average. He missed the game of June 4.

"The only time I ever missed a few games in a row in baseball was at Dallas (in 1963)," said Oliva. "That was in May. After I came back in the lineup in June, I played the rest of the season."

Last year, Tony started out batting .400 and dropped slowly but steadily. He was batting in the .330s in July and August, then went below .330 on September 2.

This year, Tony played in the first 128 games for the Twins. He was batting only .227 on May 22. He was up to .250 by June 1, .270 by July 4 and hit the .300 mark for the first time on July 28, when he went 5-for-5.

He batted around the .310 mark from August 17 until he was injured. He is proud of the batting title he won last year and definitely would love to repeat. But before he was hurt, he was skeptical.

"It would be very hard to beat Yastrzemski and Brooks Robinson," he said.

Rest Helped Tony's Legs
Besides coming back with his timing, Tony found out his whole body felt better after the week's rest. His legs, both battered with injuries around the knees, felt better than they had in months.

"He could be out a month and step in there and hit," said Manager Sam Mele. "It's great to have him back. He helps our lineup in so many ways. I can have runners stealing with him at bat, because he will swing and hit the ball if it is anywhere around the plate."

"He forces the pitcher to pitch to the batter ahead of him, drives in runs himself and worries the pitcher when he's on base."

Tony immediately added zip to the Twins' lineup on his rested legs. He turned a single into a double by drawing a throw behind him to first base, tried to steal home and stole second base for his fifteenth steal of the year.

"Tony's instinct is great," said Mele. "He senses when to run on a fielder."

Should Tony repeat as batting

Enemy HRs Haunt Twin Power Crew

By MAX NICHOLS
TWIN CITIES, Minn.

The Twins built a reputation first with power hitting and then with clutch hitting in dramatic victories but, surprisingly, they have been cut down by the same weapons.

Even though they carried a 6½-game lead into their final 26 games of the season, the Twins had lost nine times to final-inning home runs.

In fact, while the Twins were leading the American League in home runs with 135, they had allowed 152.

Bill Freehan of Detroit was the latest to do the drama trick against the Twins. He waited until he had two



Harmon Killebrew

strikes, with two outs in the ninth, then he smashed a two-run homer to take a 6-5 victory out of the Twins' pockets and turn it into a 7-6 Tiger win.

Early in the season, Gates Brown had broken a tie game for Detroit in extra innings with a home run to beat the Twins.

Others who have beaten the Twins in the ninth were Max Alvis, Leon Wagner and Chuck Hinton of Cleveland, John Powell (twice) and Sam Bowers of Baltimore, plus Ed Charles of Kansas City.

Tough in Cliff-Hangers

Over the season, the Twins were doing quite well in last-minute decisions. They had won 35 and lost 21 after Freehan's drive either by one run or in the final time at bat.

In home runs, the Twins were heading toward their lowest production since they started playing in Minnesota. They had hit only 11 in 25 games since starting a trip on August 10.

"I don't care how many homers we don't hit or do hit as long as we win the pennant," said Manager Sam Mele.

Harmon Killebrew, who had provided 22 homers before being injured, August 22, took batting practice for the first time the first week of September, but he still appeared a ways from recovery.



Tony Oliva

champion, he would be the first to win successive crowns since Boston's Ted Williams did it in 1957 and 1958.

He went into September with 161 hits and had a chance for a rare double. That would be winning the title and reaching the 200-hit level for the second straight year.

Only two American League batting champions ever won two successive titles with 200-hit seasons. The last time was 34 years ago.

Ty Cobb of Detroit was the first to do it. He had 248 hits in 1911 and 227 the next year.

Al Simmons of the Philadelphia Athletics rapped 211 in 1930 and 200 in 1931.

Versalles Gets Respite

Shortstop Zoilo Versalles has been allowed to rest as much as possible in pre-game warmups while missing only one game. The Twins have no shortstop of anywhere near the same ability. So Mele lets Versalles miss infield practice and such to preserve energy.

By the first week of September, he was in a seven-game hitting streak and had hit in all but four of his most recent 37 games. He raised his average of .228 on July 27 to .261.

Twin Tracks: Jim Perry won only two of ten pitching starts, but held the opposition to three runs or less eight times. As a starter since July 5, he was 5-5 in his ten decisions for a 9-5 season, overall. . . . The Twins finished the season 10-8 against Detroit, winning eight games either by one run or in the final time at bat. . . . Sandy Valdespino joined Twins Joe Nosssek, Jerry Zimmerman, Bernie Allen, Jim Hall and Mincher in driving home dramatic runs against Detroit. . . . Cesar Tovar, base-running Venezuelan, was the first of five players called up from Denver to join the Twins after the squads were expanded to 40 players. . . . Tovar batted .328 at Denver. . . . Bernie Allen was called up, but then suffered a hairline fracture of the thumb and will be out for the season. . . . Pete Cimino also was called up, but first had to get off Denver's disabled list, September 5, because of a fracture in his pitching hand. . . . Others called up were pitchers Gary Roggenburk and Dwight Siebler from Denver, plus first baseman Dick Reese from Charlotte. . . . The Twins also acquired the contract of Denver's Ted Uhlaender, who batted .340.