

Hall's 'Tired Bat' Pumps New Life Into Twins

By MAX NICHOLS



Jimmie Hall

TWIN CITIES, Minn.—Just when it seemed a scoring and hitting drought was about to endanger the **Twins'** big American League lead, Jimmie Hall walked up to the plate.

After more than a month of hitting problems, the **Twins'** center fielder picked the precise moment Manager Sam Mele needed him most. The **Twins** were behind, 2-1, in the first contest of a two-game series.

A sweep by Chicago would have reduced the lead to three games and made a race of it the rest of the way.

But Hall blasted all that thinking into the oblivion of the right field bleachers in Comiskey Park. He picked out a "hanging curve" by Chicago pitcher John Buzhardt and smashed a two-run homer for a 3-2 victory.

Their lead assured, the **Twins** then swept the series. By the end of the week, they had virtually sewed up the pennant with an eight-game lead and only 18 games to play.

Jimmie Hobbled on Sore Knee

"I had a tired bat all through August," said Jimmie. "It was hard for me to swing right and hard for me to run on my right knee (injured and aggravated in July). I was beginning to think what I needed was to put my bat in a whirlpool bath."

The most important part of all this was that Manager Sam Mele felt he could now count on Jimmie adding strong punch to the **Twins'** attack the rest of the pennant race.

"Hall has been hitting the ball over toward third base and shortstop," said Mele. "That means he is swinging better. With him hitting, we've got a good chance to score more now."

And the center fielder continued his hitting, rapping three hits and an-

other home run in the second game at Chicago, then whacking a two-run single and four hits in two victories at Boston.

Before his game-winning homer off Buzhardt, Hall had not hit a home run since August 2, the day Harmon Killebrew suffered his elbow dislocation.

A Long Wait for That 19th Home Run

Jimmie hit a game-winner that day, too. He limped up to home plate on his sore knee and pinch-slugged a ninth-inning home run to beat Baltimore.

That was his eighteenth round-tripper, and No. 19 didn't come for 107 more at-bats.

"The rest I've had during the last month certainly didn't hurt me," said Jim. "I've been in the lineup enough to keep my timing. But I needed the rest I got. I think rest helps any player as long as he isn't out too long."

Hall was batting and running at a .325 pace up to the All-Star break. He had run out more than 15 infield hits by that time. But from that point until that September 8 time at bat in Chicago, he batted only .243. And significantly, he wasn't running well enough to avoid double plays much of that time.

"I said at the time I was batting .325 that Tony Oliva probably would wind up with that average and I would be down where he was (about .287)," said Hall. "I'm not that good of a hitter. But I would like to hit better than .290."

"I don't really care about the average. I just want to bat in some runs and help the club. That's what we need right now—runs."

Twins' Lead Slashed From Nine Games to Five

The **Twins** definitely were in need of some offensive punch up to that time. They had combined all of their power for only 11 home runs in 27 games before that day. They had lost seven of 11 games, and their lead had dwindled from nine games to five.

Five times within two weeks, they lost by one run. And only a few days before, Buzhardt and Joel Horlen of the White Sox stopped them on a total of ten hits and two earned runs in two games—including a two-hit shut-out by Horlen.

The day after Hall's big homer, the **Twins** blasted Horlen out of the box in the second inning.

"One thing," said Jimmie. "I hadn't been missing the ball and striking out during August. I just wasn't hitting the ball good. And I couldn't run out a hit."

"But a few days ago, I ran out a hit and scored a run at Kansas City—the best I had run in a long time."

Jimmie was right. In 77 times at bat, he struck out only nine times, even though he managed only 21 hits.

Because Jimmie was not hitting at his best, Manager Sam Mele was using the lefthanded hitter against only righthanded pitchers during August.

Nossek Replaced Hall

"When Jimmie's not swinging right, he just can't hit the lefthanders," said Mele.

"Therefore, I had to use Joe Nossek out there."

The lowest Hall's average reached was .291—the day he hit his big homer.

It was his third game-winning home run of the year and the fifth time he had driven home the winning run for the **Twins** in late innings.

Twin Tracks: Harmon Killebrew took long strides toward returning to action, taking his best swings since his elbow dislocation at Boston. Several times he hit drives that bounced off Fenway Park's 37-foot high wall in pre-game batting practice. It was the first time he had been able to pull the ball effectively. . . . "It feels better, much more loose," said Harmon. "But there still is a little pain on my follow-through. I'll be back before the end of the year. I've always felt I would make it back and I will." . . . Tony Oliva and Boston's Carl Yastrzemski, the only two .300-hitting regulars in the American League, met in their final head-on clash with Yastrzemski leading, .326 to .315. Yaz had one chance to stop a hit by Oliva, but the line drive bounced off his glove for a double. Oliva led in runs batted in at that point, 92 to 64, and in runs scored, 103 to 69. Yastrzemski led in doubles, 41 to 38, and in home runs, 17 to 16. Zoilo Versalles was second to Yastrzemski in the league with 40 doubles. . . . Jim Merritt, in his first relief appearance, struck out eight Boston batters in three and two-thirds innings. . . . Camilo Pascual got his first victory since June 8 when he turned back the Red Sox at Boston.

With Hometown Team

'My Lucky Day,' Says Kindall of Swap to Twins

By JAMES ENRIGHT

CHICAGO, Ill.

Santa Claus had just finished making his rounds in 1955 when the University of Minnesota basketball team flew to Raleigh, N. C., to compete in the Dixie Classic at North Carolina State.

It was a routine flight for all but two passengers—a member of the team, and a roving sports writer who doubled as a basketball official. After an introduction, the athlete said:

"I like basketball very much, but my best sport is baseball and I'd like to make it a career. My baseball coach (Dick Siebert) has told me all about the American League.

"Since it's my understanding that you cover the Cubs, I'd appreciate it very much if you'd provide me with a fill-in on the National League. Some day soon, I'd like to sign a baseball contract. Before I do, I'd like to personally evaluate all the different organizations just in case any of them express any interest in me."

Gophers Won Diamond Title
Minnesota didn't win the Dixie—then the kingpin of all holiday basketball classics—but the Gopher baseball team did win the College World Series in Omaha some six months later. One of the stars of this Minnesota conquest was a young second baseman—shortstop named Gerald Donald Kindall.

Short weeks after this success, Wid Mathews, then the personnel director of the Cubs, called me aside and said:

"I'd like you to make a call to Winona, Minn., and talk to Jerry Kindall. He's playing summer baseball there and works part-time at the YMCA.

"He has some news to report and

(Continued on Page 22, Column 3)

Minnesota's Miracle Worker-- Veteran Trainer George Lentz

By MAX NICHOLS

TWIN CITIES, Minn.

"Freeze it, Doc."

That's been the battle cry of the **Twins** this year in their limping, banged-up march toward the American League pennant.

It's not quite as punchy as the "let 'er rip" shouts of the 1951 New York Giants in their miracle pennant drive. It's not even as rah-rah as the **Twins'** official fight song, "We're Gonna Win, Twins."

But the miracle of the **Twins** this year has been that they came back after injuries that disabled every regular at least once and catcher Earl Battey 13 times.

The man who has taped, wired, banded, rubbed and even talked the **Twins** back into the lineup over and over has been George Lentz. The **Twins'** trainer is a veteran of 20 years in major league baseball and 14 years in the National Football League.

"I've never seen so many injuries to key players on a team of any kind as I've seen on this club," said Lentz. "But they never complain. These guys are a real bunch of competitors."

Whenever a player suffers a severe bruise, such as Battey and his umpteen hand injuries from foul tips, Lentz "freezes" it with ethyl chloride, which stops internal bleeding and helps the bruise to heal more quickly.

Lentz, 50, is a short, talkative, even boisterous man who loves to throw verbal needles around. He likes to take them, too. He handles his men with a lashing tongue and a careful hand.

Earl, George Very Close

"We spend so much time together," Battey once said, "that you and I ought to take out a marriage license, Doc."

When he wants to get a player on his work table for pre-game treatment, Lentz is likely to say: "Get in there before I tear you up." Another time he will hide, lean back and prop his feet up while drinking a Coke.

"Say, Doc," Battey once said. "There's a baseball game going on out there tonight. You've got to put me together so I can play." Lentz, in his best "I'll-tend-to-you-when-I-get-good-and-ready" voice, shouted back: "I'm drinking a Coke right now. Get outta here."

But Lentz always has them taped up and rubbed down in time.

"They wouldn't like it any other way," said Lentz.



GEORGE LENTZ

"They are on my back all the time and I'm on theirs. It's all in good fun. I wouldn't have lasted in this job very long if I had been thin-skinned. We rip each other all the time, but we never get personal."

When Jim Grant reported in July that his knees were sore and the only thing that helped them in other years was rest, Lentz said:

"I know how to take care of that. Grant will pitch three days from now in Boston."

Grant Keeps Winning

Three days later, Grant pitched. For two months, his knees were wrapped in cloth bandages. But he won eight of nine games.

When Harmon Killebrew suffered his elbow dislocation, it was Lentz who held the arm while they carried Killebrew to the dressing room on the stretcher—keeping the elbow from getting worse. And Lentz has worked daily to treat the arm—giving Harmon a chance to return before the end of the season.

Bob Allison returned two weeks earlier than expected from a bone fracture in his wrist, using Lentz' cold packs on the sore arm after every game.

Lentz started out in the 1920s working at Williamsport in the New York-Penn League. In the 1930s, he studied at Catholic University and at George Washington University. He has been a boxer and he ran a YMCA health club for seven years.

In 1945, he joined the Washington Senators, and he came to Minnesota with the Griffith organization in 1961. He worked for the Washington Redskins and also has worked for George Washington U. football teams. He may be the first to "freeze" his way to the World Series.

Twins Outrun Chisox

TWIN CITIES, Minn.—Minnesota outran, rather than outslugged, the White Sox en route to the American League pennant this year.

The **Twins** had more go-go than the White Sox, once known as the Go-Sox. In beating Chicago 11 times in their 18-game series, the **Twins** stole ten bases to one for Chicago. And going into the final two weeks, the **Twins** had stolen 78 bases to 49 for the Sox.

In home runs, Minnesota's ace for the last five years, Chicago outslugged the **Twins**, 17 to 14, in their head-on duels. Ironically, the only Chicago stolen base was a theft of home by Don Buford to beat the **Twins** in a one-run decision.

"I'll still take speed over power," said Chicago Manager Al Lopez. "But we don't have that much speed any more."