

Come What May-- It's Been Beautiful Year in Beantown

By LARRY CLAFLIN

BOSTON, Mass.

No matter what fate awaits the Red Sox in the closing days of the great American League pennant race, recognition is due many of the players for their accomplishments in this year of baseball revival in New England. Such as:

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER—Carl Yastrzemski, with runner-up spots to Jim Lonborg and George Scott.

Yastrzemski has an excellent chance of being named MVP for the American League. There can be no doubt he was the most valuable player on the Red Sox this year.

In hitting, fielding and throwing, Yaz was outstanding. Considered the best left fielder in baseball, he was battling to lead the majors in both home runs and runs batted in, as well as batting over .300.

Lonborg most certainly is the team's most valuable pitcher. His 20 victories stamp him as a candidate for the Cy Young Award. Several players and managers have called him the A. L.'s best pitcher, and his value to the success of the Red Sox cannot be exaggerated.

Scott sort of sneaked up on people this year. With a spurt of base-hits in September, he found himself challenging Yastrzemski for the team lead in batting.

Scott's home-run output was down from his rookie season, but so were his strikeouts. His fielding was superb as usual and his manager said he was even better in the field than was Gil Hodges.

ROOKIE OF THE YEAR—A vote for center fielder Reggie Smith, with second baseman Mike Andrews close behind.

Smith started slowly in the spring and there were times when Manager Dick Williams must have wondered if he were right in keeping the youngster in the lineup day after day. But Williams was rewarded when Smith started to play like the future star Williams believes he will become.

Reggie Buttons Lips of His Critics

Smith was the subject of many an argument in Boston this summer. Some people felt he should be benched because he wasn't hitting and because he had trouble judging fly balls. Even his celebrated arm didn't help much in the early part of the season.

Now, there are no more arguments. The Smith cult can say, "I told you so."

Smith looks so good now that Bostonians believe he will be one of the top players in baseball in a year or two. He is, in the minds of Red Sox fans, a solid candidate for A. L. Rookie of the Year, although Minnesota's Rod Carew probably will win it. But a comparison of their figures does Smith's case no harm.

Andrews had more experience than Smith when they came up together and it told early in the year. Dependable in the field, Andrews got a lot of big hits for the Red Sox and established himself as their regular second baseman. He will be a fixture in the Boston infield for the next few years if his tricky back doesn't ruin his career.

BEST DEALS—The Jerry Adair trade must rank as No. 1, with the Gary Bell trade second. This choice was not easy because the Boston front office made a lot of intelligent and beneficial moves this year.

There can be no doubt in anyone's mind that the acquisition of Adair saved the Red Sox from falling out of the pennant race in midseason. Almost as soon as Adair came to Boston for pitcher Don McMahon, shortstop Rico Petrocelli was hurt. Adair saved the club by playing steadily at short for a month.

When Petrocelli returned, Adair's value was so high in the manager's estimation that he kept Adair in the lineup almost every day, either at third base or second base. Adair, despite playing for a long period of time on a bad leg, delivered many key hits and was solid on defense.

The Bell trade was almost as important, and perhaps more important in many people's minds. At this writing, Bell had an 11-6 record for Boston and he was pitching better than ever down the stretch.

MOST UNDERRATED PLAYER—Adair, again. Who else?

Plenty of Nominations for 'Biggest Win'

BIGGEST VICTORY—An 11-inning, 2-1 win over Chicago on Tony Conigliaro's two-run homer? Or maybe the Sunday the Sox came from eight runs behind and beat the Angeles, 9-8? Or Lonborg's magnificent performance in Detroit in late May when he fanned 11 and beat Dennis McLain, 1-0?

MOST DRAMATIC MOMENT—Billy Rohr's one-hitter in Yankee Stadium in April, when Elston Howard singled with two out in the ninth inning to break up the no-hitter and Jacqueline Kennedy hugged her son, sharing the despair and disappointment that almost everyone felt.

TOUGHEST LUCK—Conigliaro, who suffered a broken shoulder blade when Johnny Wyatt hit him with a pitch in March and a broken face when Jack Hamilton hit him with a pitch in August.

BIGGEST SURPRISE—Seeing thousands of people jamming Boston's Logan Airport to welcome the team home after a ten-game winning streak.

Yes, it was quite a season in Boston, no matter what happens to Red Sox pennant chances in these final days of the great race.

Boxing Bunts: Tom Yawkey, whose appearances in the press room on Fenway's roof have been rare in recent years, has been dropping in almost every day and chatting with newsmen. He is even taking his meals there occasionally. . . . The smallest crowd since June 1 came on a Thursday afternoon when only 12,000 showed up to see a game against Kansas City. . . . For the second time this season, George Scott left third base too soon on a fly ball and was called out after the rival infielders appealed. Both times Scott cost Reggie Smith a sacrifice fly and, of course, a run batted in. . . . A crowd of 28,000 saw Jim Lonborg win No. 20. It didn't come easily because Catfish Hunter pitched brilliantly for the A's that night before Lonborg won it, 3-1, on his own triple.



CARL YASTRZEMSKI and Reggie Smith, beacons in Boston baseball this season and prominent candidates for A. L.'s Most Valuable Player and No. 1 rookie, respectively.

Don't Mention 'Impossible' If You're Discussing Oliva

By ARNO GOETHEL

TWIN CITIES, Minn.

During one tense week in the Twins' run for daylight in the four-way scramble for the American League lead, Tony Oliva had injury added to insult.

He suffered a two-stitch cut in his left eyelid and superficial bruises on both knees in a September 13 collision with the right field fence at D. C. Stadium. Seven days earlier, a reporter had ruffled Oliva's pride by suggesting the two-time batting champion might be satisfied to settle for a .290 average this season.

"How about it?" Oliva was asked. "Do you think you'll be able to hit .290 this year?"

Tony-O bristled. Then he responded with a question of his own.

"What do you mean .290? What's the matter with .300?"

At the time, the American League batting king of 1964 and 1965 and runner-up in 1966 was hitting only .271 and had drawn the collar his last eight trips. Besides, he was nearing 500 at-bats and only 23 games remained. Under those circumstances, he was told, it was mighty difficult to raise the average the necessary 29 points to reach .300.

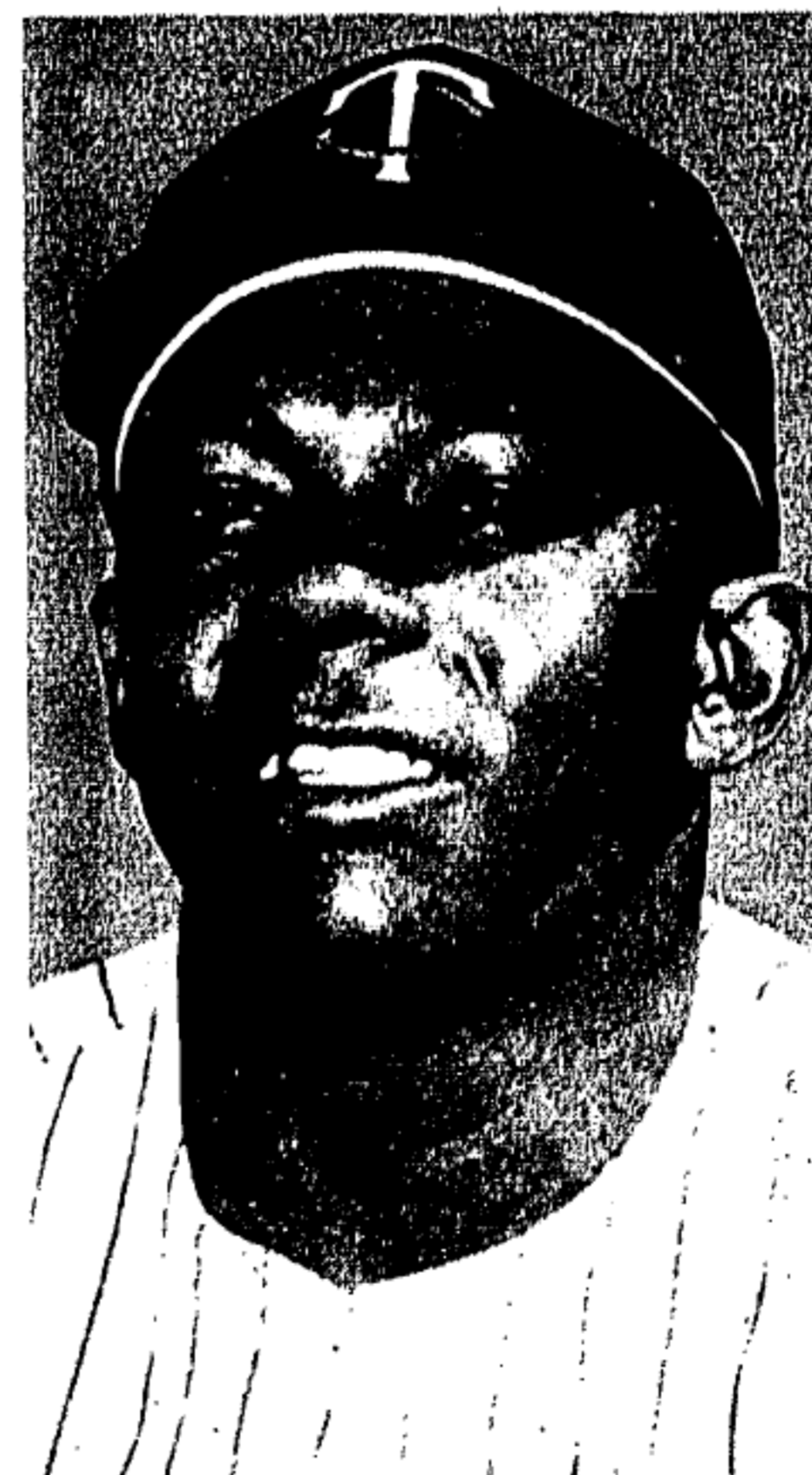
Tony Supplies No. 1 Need

"What I need," said Oliva, "'is a hot streak. I've been getting a couple of hits now and then, but always I cool off and go without a hit in one or two games."

Oliva got what he needed—a sizzling streak.

That night, he doubled twice in four trips against the Orioles for a gain of two points. In the opener of a double-header the next day, he added a single to another pair of two-baggers in four trips, jumping four more points to .277.

Then came his most torrid performance of the season. He opened the nightcap with a line single in the first inning. When the game ended, the Twins had lost, 5-3, but Oliva had added singles in the fourth, sixth, eighth and ninth for his first perfect 5-for-5 of the



Tony Oliva

season. Suddenly he was up to .284.

He singled his first two trips on September 9, setting a club record of nine hits in a row, before Bill Dillman struck him out in the fifth inning, three hits shy of the major league record for consecutive hits. Oliva was walked intentionally his last two trips, finishing with 2-for-3 and another three-point rise to .287.

Three-Hit Salvo

And still he wasn't through with his assault against Oriole pitching. In the windup of the five-game series, he hit for three-fourths of the cycle with a single, double and triple. The 3-for-5 day jumped him to the .290 level that had appeared out of reach only five games earlier.

During that series, Oliva staged an incredible 15-for-21 surge that had resulted in a 19-point jump. The streak continued with one hit in two official trips against the Senators the following day and

he reached his season's peak of .291. Tony-O connected once in nine trips over the next two games, tapering off to .289.

Then came the jarring collision with the D. C. Stadium barrier on September 13. Shagging a double by Fred Valentine, Oliva rammed the barrier head-on.

Despite the force of the crash, Oliva regained his feet long enough to retrieve the ball and fire it to second base. It was an important recovery, since it allowed only one run to score while holding Valentine on second and Paul Casanova on third. Casanova later scored, but the Twins won, 3-2, to remain in a deadlock for first place.

Ermer Salutes Tony

"That was the ball game right there," lauded Manager Cal Ermer.

It was Oliva's second losing battle with a fence this season. On June 16, he was knocked out of action at Cleveland. Two days later, he returned with a three-run pinch-double that gave the Twins a 4-2 triumph.

Twin Tales: Jim Wiesner, visiting clubhouse boss at Metropolitan Stadium, became a father for the second time when Thomas Gerald Wiesner was born September 6. . . . After 72 games on foreign fields, the Twins finally reached the .500 level on the road. . . . Oliva at one stretch hit five doubles in as many hits over five games and was fighting teammate Cesar Tovar for the league lead in the two-bagger department. . . . Boston's Carl Yastrzemski and Jim Lonborg were the only unanimous choices on the Twins' all-opponent team, which was rounded out with Don Mincher, Dick McAuliffe, Brooks Robinson, Jim Fregosi, Paul Blair, Frank Robinson and Bill Freehan. . . . Outfielder Pat Kelly, called up from Denver, struck out in his first major league appearance as a pinch-hitter on September 11. He's a brother of Leroy Kelly of the Cleveland football Browns.