

The 'Unsafe Six'—Twins Finger Culprits to Go on Swap Block

By ARNO GOETHEL

TWIN CITIES, Minn.

Cal Griffith, president of the Twins, took a dip in the trading mart last winter and he's prepared to take another plunge this winter.

Shortly after watching his Twins lose two games—and the pennant—at Fenway Park, Griffith sat in his office at Metropolitan Stadium and said:

"We must try to get more hitting at shortstop and behind the plate.

"We have to get Rich Reese in the lineup.

"I don't know how we'll play our infield next year.

"We need help along the pitching line. At this time, that means in the relief department."

While souvenirs, photographs and clocks don't leave much room for handwriting on Griffith's office walls, it is evident there is going to be a considerable shake up among the Twins' playing forces before Manager Cal Ermer sends them onto the field for their 1968 opener.

Six familiar faces were in immediate jeopardy. The half-safe half-dozen included:

Shortstop Zoilo Versalles, whose uninspired play afield the last two years was compounded by a 1967 hitting drop of 49 points to .200. Actually, the 1965 Most Valuable Player of the American League batted .19966 this year, but averages are rounded out to the nearest point.

Battey .165 Hitter

Three catchers, Earl Battey, Jerry Zimmerman and Russ Nixon. Plagued by injuries that finally put him on the disabled list, Battey, 32, saw action in only 48 games and hit just .165. Valued as a receiver, Zimmerman, 33, could muster only .167 in 104 games at the plate. Nixon, 32, finished with .235 for 74 games, and also was bothered by a virus and aching back at the end, although he batted .211 as a pinch-hitter.

Veteran relief pitchers Al Worthington, 38, and Ronnie Kline, 35.

Over 59 appearances, Worthington was 8-9 with 13 saves and a 3.03 earned-run average. He returned to college three days after the season ended and is scheduled to receive a bachelor's degree in social studies in December. Kline returned to his automobile dealership in Callery, Pa., with a 7-1 record, five saves and 3.75 ERA for 54 performances.

None of the unsafe six distinguished himself in the fateful two-game loss at Fenway Park.

Versalles went 1-for-8, committed one damaging error in the first

One-Run Defeats Cooked Oriole Goose, Hank Finds

BALTIMORE, Md. — Oriole

Manager Hank Bauer was sitting in the dugout before a game one evening late in the season, studying the club's statistics sheet.

"Look here," he said, pointing with a thick finger to the bottom of the page. "If we had turned our record in one-run games around, we'd be in first place."

At the time, with four games remaining, Bauer was right. But at the end, the Orioles still would have been a bit shy of first place if their one-run record of 21-33 had been reversed.

Add 12 wins to their final total of 76 and they'd still be a notch behind the fourth-place White Sox.

Pinch-Hitters Delivered For Twins at .298 Clip

TWIN CITIES, Minn. — Led by Bob Allison, Frank Kostro and Rich Reese, Twins' pinch-hitters the past season compiled a commendable average of .298 while collecting 56 hits in 188 at-bats.

Allison was 4-for-6, including two homers and one double for four RBIs. Kostro went .319 (9-for-23) with nine singles and one RBI. Reese was .217 (13-for-41) with two homers, two doubles and 12 RBIs.

Carroll Hardy, a late-season call-up from Denver (Pacific Coast), went 3-for-6 with one homer and two RBIs.

The late Walt Bond drove in three runs with a pinch-homer and double. Rod Carew was 1-for-2 with a triple. Earl Battey went 3-for-9.

game and made an ill-chosen, late throw to the plate in the second. Zimmerman went 0-for-4, Nixon

0-for-2 and Battey didn't even get into harness.

Worthington, who at 38 has intimated he might quit the professional ranks to sign up as a collegiate coach, uncorked a couple of wild pitches that allowed one run and set up another in the finale at Boston.

Kline's first pitch in the penultimate game was lined into the center field bleachers for a go-ahead homer by George Scott.

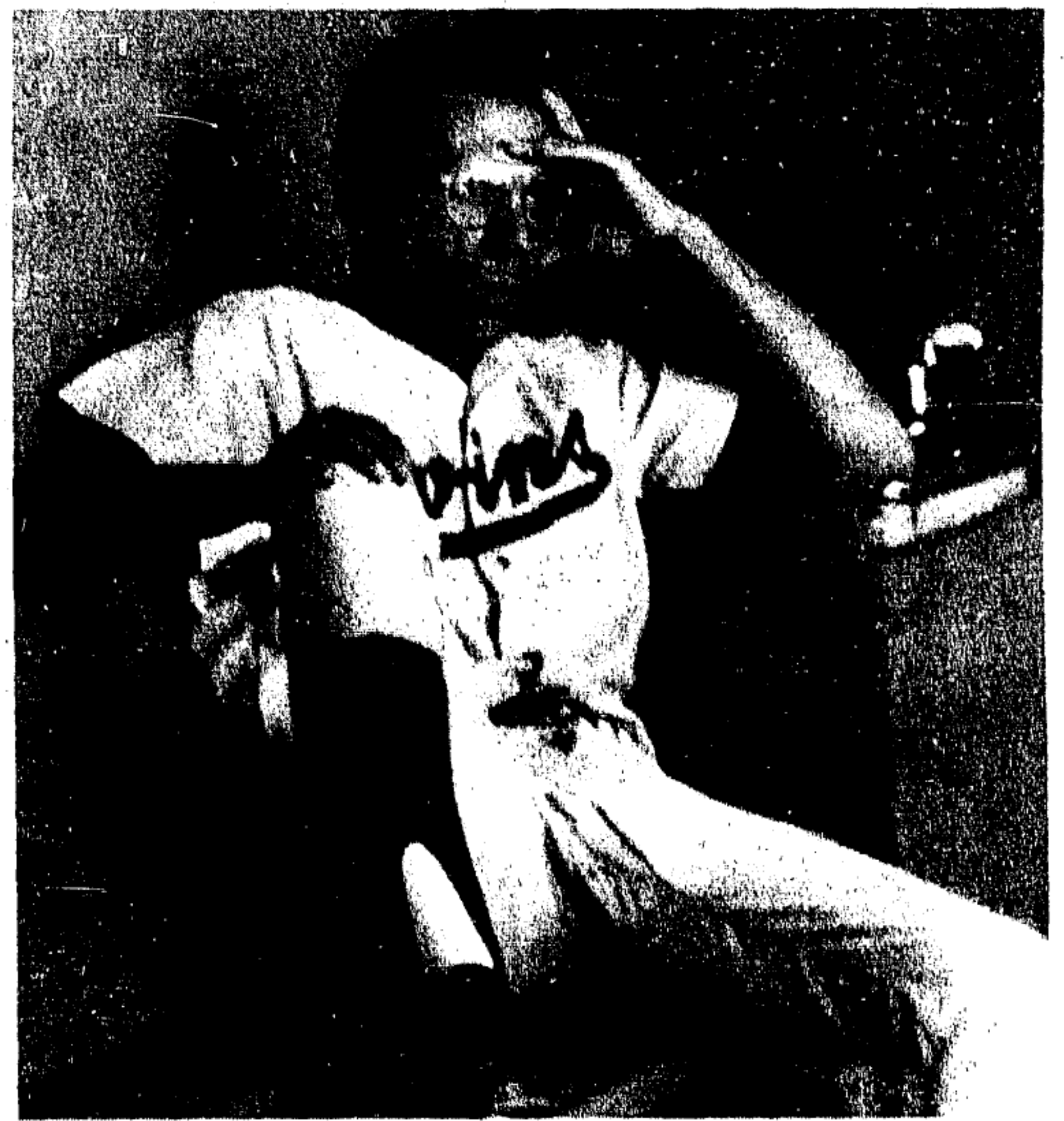
Swap Pot Boiling

"I plan to have a lot of conversation with other clubs this winter," said Griffith, "but it's difficult to find a team that has a shortstop, catcher or relief pitcher they're willing to part with who we could count on to be a help to us.

"It's a must that we get Reese into the lineup, either at first base or in the outfield."

In itself, the latter plight promises to be a spring training dilemma for Griffith and Ermer.

First, can Reese—a flashy-fielding first baseman—be converted into an outfielder competent



Zoilo Versalles . . . Off Year at Bat, in Field

enough to displace Bob Allison in left, Ted Uhlaender in center or Tony Oliva in right?

Second, if Reese is inserted at

his natural position, first base, where does this put Harmon Killebrew?

Griffith thinks this way: "Allison had a great year, so you have to consider him. Uhlaender came on like gang busters the last half of the season. And you know we can't take Oliva out."

Partially because he was injured, but equally because he was in Sam Mele's doghouse, Allison was used sparingly (70 games) in 1966, when he batted .220 with eight homers and 19 runs batted in. He made a strong bid for comeback honors this year by hitting .258 with 24 homers and 76 RBIs.

For his first 76 games through August 6, Uhlaender was a .209 disappointment. But over the last 57 games, Ted came to life with a .296 pace that placed him at .258 for the frustrating finish.

Bothered by early-season back troubles, Oliva never really got untracked and closed at .289.

Reese Tough in Clutch

A southpaw swinger, Reese hit .327 at Denver (Pacific Coast) in 1966 and .248 for the Twins this year, but pushed himself into the 1968 picture with a .317 (13-for-41) performance as a pinch-hitter.

"If Reese is used regularly," said Griffith, "then we'll have to come up with a left-handed pinch-hitter."

A possible solution, without trades, would be to put Reese on first, Killebrew back on third and iron-man Cesar Tovar at short.

But there's a complication.

Ermer has voiced sentiment about experimenting with second baseman Rod Carew at third. The 23-year-old candidate for Rookie-of-the-Year laurels is going to the Florida Winter Instructional League this month.

Twin Tales: Jim Merritt was contemplating a session in radio school during the off season. . . . Jim Kaat was a post-game analyst on the local NBC outlet during the World Series. . . . Ted Uhlaender was apprehensive about his return to McAllen, Tex., where the airport was under water as a result of hurricane Beulah. . . . Cesar Tovar, all of 149 pounds, wound up as the league leader in at-bats with 649. . . . The Twins outthomered their opponents, 131-115, and outscored their foes, 671-590. . . . They finished with a 32-26 edge in one-run decisions. . . . Their pitchers set a club record of 18 shutouts, while losing 11 in the same category. . . . In extra innings, the Twins were 4-7. . . . The Twins were 52-29 at home, 39-42 on the road.

'I'm Gonna Be Tougher,' Bauer Vows

By DOUG BROWN

BALTIMORE, Md.

It may come as a surprise, following a drop from first place to a tie for sixth, but it doesn't figure that the Orioles will tear apart the club and start all over next year.

The talent is still there, with a few exceptions, the same talent that was good enough to bring Baltimore the world championship last year. To dispose of the talent would be an impulsive and unwise move.

Player Personnel Director Harry Dalton, who will decide what moves will be made this winter, is neither impulsive nor unwise.

Several moves already have been made. Three coaches, Harry Brecheen, Gene Woodling and Sherm Lollar, were dismissed and in their places are George Bamberger, Earl Weaver and Vern Hoscheit.

Manager Hank Bauer himself must make a move of sorts. He must be tougher, although it will not be necessary for the potato-faced ex-Marine to be as tough as he looks. Bauer knows what he must do, and he knows he might lose his job if he doesn't.

They Must Be Told

"I'm gonna be tougher," he said when asked if his approach would change next year. "Maybe a few of these guys have been taking too much for granted. Maybe we're gonna have to tell a few guys what to do rather than expect them to do it."

In this observer's opinion, there are a number of Oriole question marks, some of which can only be removed via a shift in personnel. They are:

1. Frank Robinson's eyes.
2. The sore arms of Jim Palmer, Dave McNally, Wally Bunker and Marcelino Lopez.
3. Left-handed relief pitching.
4. Catching.
5. Bench.

Robinson's vision turned fuzzy after a collision with Chicago's Al Weis in late June. At the time, he was heading toward a second straight Triple Crown with a .337 average, 21 homers and 59 runs batted in.

Returning a month later, Frank batted .282, with only nine homers



Hank Bauer

and 35 RBIs. His final figures were .311, 30 and 94.

Nothing wrong with those, but Robinson's hitting definitely was affected by his faulty vision. His eyes improved steadily late in the year, but still weren't 100 percent at the end. This is a question mark that should dissolve this winter.

The Orioles no doubt will proceed on the theory that they can't count on their four sore pitching arms. However, this doesn't mean they will trade for starters.

Depth on Mound

Over the second half of the season, the starting staff was almost completely overhauled, with Gene Brabender, Jim Hardin and Pete Richert joining Tom Phoebus. So, while pitching may again be a problem, the reinforcements will be right in camp next spring if Palmer, McNally, Bunker and Lopez can't pitch.

The main Oriole need is a left-handed reliever. The answer may already be on the club—Richert. Nevertheless, the Birds may trade for a left arm for the bullpen.

Andy Etchebarren, a catcher on the 1966 champions, was a disappointment this time. He hit .215. His understudy, Larry Haney, did much better, .268. Here again,

though, the Orioles may look elsewhere for a first-string catcher.

The Orioles traded away some of their bench strength during the season—Charlie Lau, Woodie Held, Bob Johnson. Now the bench must be rebuilt. A trade or two seems to be the answer.

Over the winter, the Orioles must decide what to do with Boog Powell, the large first baseman who suffered through a wretched season. Trade him or keep him?

Despite his poor figures (.232, 15, 55), Powell is still tempting trade bait. He is only 26.

Aparicio on Block?

Others who could go in a deal are Looie Aparicio and Stu Miller or Eddie Fisher. Neither Bird shortstop, Aparicio nor Mark Belanger, hit much this year. But if one goes, it probably would be Looie. For a .231 hitter, he carries an awfully high salary.

The club has too many short relievers—Eddie Watt and Moe Drabowsky, in addition to Miller and Fisher. One may figure in a trade.

Another move Bauer has promised he'll make is one he should have made the last two years. Brooks Robinson, still the best third baseman in baseball, needs periodic breathers.

Obviously, then, while some moves should be made via trading, a few important moves must be made within the club, which is to say, by Bauer.

Bird Seed: The Orioles had only one pitcher who won more than ten games this year. Phoebus was 14-9. Closest to him was Richert, who registered two of his nine victories while with the Senators early in the season. . . . Bamberger replaces Brecheen as pitching coach, Weaver takes over at first base for Woodling and Hoscheit is Lollar's successor in the bullpen. . . . Only a late spurt enabled the Birds to finish in a tie for sixth place. They won 12 of their last 16 games and during one streak ticked off seven victories in a row, their longest winning streak of the season. . . . Despite their pitching problems, the Orioles won more shutout games (16) than they lost (14). Phoebus was the leader with four.