

BASEBALL BEHIND THE BAT

Come Catch With Battey

By **TOM BRIERE**
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KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Catcher Earl Battey is the Twins' "quarterback" on the baseball diamond.

Take a catcher's view of the Twins' pitching through Battey's mask and pad.

Best fast ball — "Jim Kaat, for speed and movement. The ball sinks. Kaat and Al Schroll throw the heaviest and sinking ball on the staff."

Best curve ball — "Camilo Pascual. He's easy to catch."

Best slider — "We don't have many slider pitchers, but Jack Kralick throws a good one at times. The slider is thrown with a stiff wrist, unlike the wrist snap for the curve. The slider comes in at a three-quarter angle; the curve can be thrown flat sidearm or a down drop from over the top. The slider is released like passing a football, or turning a door knob."

Best screwball — "Ray Moore and Kralick — the ball breaks in and down."

Best change-up — "Camilo Pascual throws a good straight change, also changes speeds on his assortment of curves. Kralick changes up well."

Best knuckler — "Kralick, but he watches where he uses it."

Best control — "Kralick and Bill Pleis."

Toughest to catch — "Danny McDevitt."

Wildest — "Kaat."

What is your system of signs to the pitcher?

"One finger fast ball, two fingers curve, three slider. I wiggle my finger for a change up on the fast ball or curve."

What are flaps?

"A series of signs. They are sometimes used by

touching the inside of both legs and the crotch."

How about switching signs with a runner on second in a position to steal your signs and tip the batter?

"We flash a series of signs—one, one, two. It could be the second sign—fast ball. Some have been known to add the subtract but that's too much mental geography. Often, key by the inning. First inning, it will be the first sign in a series. Second inning, second sign in a series, third inning, third sign in a series. Then in the fourth inning, start over again on first sign, etc. Some batters don't want to get tipped off on the pitch, others do."

How many mitts do you

use during a season?

"About six. I rotate 'em all year—infield practice, game, etc. I have a light glove I use when I'm tired, a heavy glove when I'm strong."

Do you talk to the batters? "Some that I know I do, but I don't guess you'd call me a conversationalist. I don't do it in an attempt to upset or confuse the hitter."

Do pitchers accept your signs?

"Most of 'em do. Of course, they all have the liberty to shake me off. We usually come to a common understanding. All of the shake-offs aren't for real, some are used to decoy the batter and start his mental process imagining over-time."



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