

Beaten One Day, Bouncy Next—That's Finley

By RON BERGMAN

OAKLAND—As he walked down the courthouse corridor, leaving behind a trail of mumbled no-comments, A's Owner Charlie Finley looked for all the world like a beaten man.

He had just lost another battle to retain his best pitcher, Catfish Hunter, when an Alameda County Superior Court judge had refused to overturn an arbitrator's decision.

But the next day, there was Charlie O., chipper as ever, the object of an "exclusive" interview by a local television sportscaster.

In one of those well-rehearsed informal moments following the filmed interview, an anchorman news reader asked the sportscaster what he thought of Finley.

AND THE sportscaster replied that while he didn't know what to expect at first—maybe a real bad guy—he found Finley to be "a fair man; hard, but fair." Then he announced that 25 A's games would be televised next season on that very television station. Talk about your coincidences!

Meanwhile, four of the better-known members of the world champion A's were pondering fairly hard, or perhaps hardly fair, contracts calling for the same amounts as last year.

What did they expect for helping to win a third straight world championship? A raise or something? The fair portion of the 1975 contracts, of course, was that plenty of room was left for negotiating.

Third baseman Sal Bando, offered the same \$100,000 as last season, said he was considering refusing to sign his contract and then challenging baseball's reserve clause in an attempt to go elsewhere in 1976. The three other players—Reggie Jackson, Ken Holtzman and Gene Tenace—were equally unhappy.

ANOTHER coincidence was the appearance of Neil Papiano of Los Angeles as Finley's attorney in the Hunter case. Papiano has represented Marj Everett in her attempts to buy the A's from Finley. Papiano minimized the connection.

"Charlie isn't terribly anxious to sell the team," Papiano said. "They (Everett and Finley) have not talked for a long time. I got to know Charlie through her and

that's how I got to start representing him."

Finley told newsman Ed Schoenfeld, a frequent contributor to THE SPORTING NEWS, that people were making too much out of the Papiano connection.

"There's no truth to it," Finley

said about news reports speculating Mrs. Everett was still actively pursuing the A's. "The club is not for sale."

BANDO SAID HE wasn't upset at first when he received his 1975 contract at Christmastime.

"I said to myself, well, okay, he's

been busy with Catfish," Bando said. "Then I started hearing that some guys got raises, which leads me to believe that he did put some thought into it."

"It always boils down to this. I'm tired of fighting him and he's not worth fighting anymore."

All four A's went to salary arbitration last year. All except Tenace won. The A's led the majors with nine cases in the first year of arbitration. Chances of repeating look good. And then a 162-game schedule. The games will be superfluous.

Twins Offer Killer Player-Coach Post

By BOB FOWLER

TWIN CITIES—Twice a month, Calvin Griffith, Frank Quilici and other Twins executives meet with members of the media. Their purpose is to develop better rapport with their press corps, a group the Minnesota front office believes has turned negative in recent years.

The first session was somewhat routine. In fact, its highlight occurred when newspaper reporters who covered spring training in 1974 were blamed for contributing to the club's record low attendance figure by ripping the team for its 5-22 exhibition record. That seemed to be a strange way to develop better rapport.

However, the second meeting proved much more noteworthy. Following are some of the questions and answers from that event.

QUESTION: What is the status of Harmon Killebrew?

Griffith: We have offered Killebrew a position as hitting instructor and pinch-hitter. He definitely would have to accept more than a 20 percent cut in salary (estimated at \$92,000 last year), like Frank Howard did a few years ago to stay

with Detroit.

Quilici: His job was to hit home runs and drive in runs and that kept his average down. Still, he has been an excellent student of the game and hitting and he should be

an excellent coach. Plus, he was our best pinch-hitter last year and it would be great to have him up there in the eighth or ninth innings when we needed a key hit.

Griffith: He's thinking over the



Harmon Killebrew . . . Thinking It Over

Bumbry's Latin Bat Makes Oriole Hit

By DOUG BROWN

BALTIMORE—The figure fairly leaped from the statistics sheet. Al Bumbry, by darn, was hitting .359 for LaGuaira in the Venezuelan League.

Now, the Venezuelan League is not to be confused with the American League East, but after the wretched 1974 season Bumbry had with the Orioles, a .359 average can be nothing but a delight.

Before he left for Venezuela last fall, Bumbry tried to explain what came over him, what transformed him from the .337-hitting A. L. Rookie of the Year in 1973 into a confused, frustrated .233 hitter in 1974.

"There's no need to hang my head, because we won the division title and that smoothed the road," he said. "Still, it was rough. I've always been a .300 hitter. I expected to hit at least .300 my second year."

HE DISCOVERED early in the season, however, that opponents were defending him differently and exploiting his weaknesses. He never was able to cope.

"It's hard to believe it could take an entire season to make adjustments," he said. "Of course, I didn't play much from August on, but that was understandable because (Don) Baylor was hitting."

"What the other teams did, they played me deeper in the outfield, taking away the extra-base hits I got out there in 1973, and played the infielders in, taking away the leg hits."

"They didn't throw me the pitch-

es I had been hitting to left field, either. But the biggest thing, I guess, is that of all the off-speed pitches they threw me inside, 80 percent were out of the strike zone and yet I still swung at them."

AS THE SEASON wore on, Bumbry played less and less as Manager Earl Weaver transferred his trust to Baylor. He appeared in only 94 games.

"Then, when I did get into the lineup against a righthanded pitch-

er, I was trying desperately to make an impression," Bumbry said. "That made me fight the pitches. I was reckless. I was swinging at anything. And after they get one strike on you, it's tough to be selective."

There was one cheerful note for Bumbry in 1974, however. He married a girl named Lynda, a college graduate who majored in English. She hopes to write for a newspaper or magazine.

"When I was single, I'd go home and there was no one to talk to," he said. "That made things seem even worse than they were. It helps to have someone to encourage you."

Or to share the joy of hitting .359—even if it is in the Venezuelan League.

Bird Seed: Newcomer Lee May was the first Oriole to sign his contract. It is the second year of a two-year agreement he had with the Astros calling for about \$90,000. . . . Among the celebs saluted at Baltimore's Tops In Sports banquet were Lefty Gomez, Yogi Berra, Mike Schmidt and Jim Palmer. . . . The Orioles' basketball team, 48-2 over five years, opened a 14-game season against faculty and recreational outfits. The club is led by Paul Blair, who averaged 31 points last winter. . . . Other Orioles in the Venezuelan League: Don Hood, 2-4 with Aragua; Wayne Garland, 5-5, 1.73 ERA, with Magallanes; Baylor, .255 with Magallanes.



Al Bumbry



Charlie Finley

offer now, but I believe he'll accept because he's talked with other clubs and they aren't offering as much money as we are.

QUESTION: Does that mean Tony Oliva again will be the DH? Griffith: As you know, we attempted to trade Tony during the winter meetings, but couldn't get what we wanted in return. If we could make a deal for him now that would benefit our team, we would do it.

Question: What would you want in return?

Griffith: We'd look for a short-stop who could hit more and who had a little more range than Danny Thompson. Or a defensive outfielder who is experienced.

Question: To play center field?

Griffith: Yes. We have Lyman Bostock, who hit .333 at Tacoma (Pacific Coast) and is excellent defensively. He'll get a shot in spring training, but he hasn't proved himself at the major league level and we'd prefer experience there.

QUESTION: What about Steve Brye or Larry Hisle?

Griffith: Fielding percentages are deceiving. We felt there were a lot of balls last season that fell in right center, left center and short center for hits that should have been caught.

Question: With Brye, Hisle, Steve Braun, Bobby Darwin and Bostock, or an experienced center fielder, aren't you overstocked with outfielders?

Griffith: We have a surplus and could change that with a trade. That's the advantage of having the new interleague trading period for the final two weeks of March. Teams can now go to spring training, see what they need and make a deal to help themselves.

Quilici: That will make spring training more interesting because you'll be able to see players' attitudes and how much they want to play then.

QUESTION: Is Rod Carew still being considered for center field, or first base?

Quilici: Right now, we don't have a better everyday second baseman than Rod. Jerry Terrell does a great job for us now as a spot player and we'd like to keep him in that role. Plus, I believe Rod will get straightened around next season and become the defensive player he can be.

Question: Will there be more emphasis on winning this spring?

Quilici: Yes. We had to do a lot of experimenting last spring. We won't have to do that during this exhibition season.

Griffith: Yes. We feel now that how a team does in spring training affects fans' interest early in the season. We don't agree with that. When we were in Washington, we won the Grapefruit League every spring and finished last. But it seems to be important to others.