

Griffith Stamps 'Big-Time' Tag on Pilot Mele's Work

'He Showed Us in Spring Training He's a Major League Leader'-Calvin

By TOM BRIERE
TWIN CITIES, Minn.

One of the "most improved" **Twins** of 1962 is Manager Sam Mele.

Sincere, serious-minded Sam has made a studied effort to become a big league manager sans minor league experience and Owner Calvin Griffith of **Minnesota** claims Mele has succeeded.

Griffith returned from spring training singing Mele's praises. "Sam proved to me in spring training he's a big league manager," said Calvin.

"Never saw a better camp. Sam stressed fundamentals; he worked with individuals. He delegated authority to his coaching staff—the pitchers to Gordon Maltzberger, the infielders to George Strickland and Floyd Baker, the catchers to Ed Fitz Gerald.

Nightly Staff Huddles

"Sam held staff meetings almost nightly. I had more conferences with my manager and coaches than ever before.

"Sam is honest; he's firm, and he has the players' respect."

Mele took the reins from Cookie Lavagetto on June 23, 1961, with no managerial experience. He admitted he had things to learn, but he showed aptitude for the job and finished the season with 45-49. The **Twins** were 500 under Mele's hand until losing the final four-game series to Detroit.

Sam learned by trial and error

Wins Spurs



Sam Mele

and this season is more confident. He is more decisive in his moves, especially in handling pitchers.

This coaching staff is his. Strickland, a friend from Sam's playing days, has become his confidant—a man to talk over his problems with, a need of every manager.

Maltzberger is responsible for the pitching staff, but Mele reserves the right to make all final decisions.

"Knowing how to handle your pitching staff is the toughest job a manager has on the field," said Mele. "How do you ever know for sure when a pitcher has had it?"

"But you learn a great deal through experience.

"It's important to set up your rotation of starters and I've found it's wise to platoon in the bullpen, too. You can't pitch a good thing to death every day."

And he has shown he can handle men, too, with fines if necessary.

Sam set a scale of prices "to fine themselves."

That Mele has the respect of his

'Sam's Honest, Firm, Has Respect of All Players,' Declares **Twins'** Prexy

men was expressed best by Outfielder Bob Allison: "Sam did a wonderful job this spring," Allison declared. "I never spent a more pleasant spring and we accomplished a great deal. There is a good feeling on the club. The coaching staff is one of the best I've ever worked with. Sam has given them some authority and when they speak, their word is honored."

Benchwarmers Beef

Naturally, there is some grumbling among the dugout dwellers. It's to be expected on any club in baseball and most managers don't hold with the player who "doesn't want to play."

At season's end in 1961, Griffith said, "Mele will adjust and improve. He must do a better relations job with the press and radio."

Mele admitted that "handling sports writers is one of the toughest duties." He's learned to field their questions more adroitly and found personalities involved are much the same as handling ball players—they're all different individuals.

Whether the 39-year-old manager holds and improves on his gains only the won-lost column will govern through the personnel at hand. But, starting from scratch, the likable New Englander has become a .300 hitter in one short season. He'd like to improve on that personal average, the **Twins** included.

Griffith Takes Bow for Rush by Rollins

Prexy Tabbed Rich as Third-Base Regular in Training—Rookie Rises Early, Feels 'Sharper, More Alert All Day'

By TOM BRIERE

TWIN CITIES, Minn.

Stubby, bow-legged, Rich Rollins of the **Twins** said, "I wouldn't have believed it if they had told me before the season started that I'd be leading the American League in hitting."

Yet there it was on April 24. Rollins was leading the A. L. with a gaudy .465 figure. He was second in home runs and RBIs with four and 15, respectively. He was slugging at an .884 clip over the first 12 games with two doubles, two triples and four homers.

After hitting safely in the first 12 games, Rollins said, "I'm just crossing my fingers and hoping my luck holds out."

There are those who think it is more than luck, however. And Owner Calvin Griffith of the **Twins** can take a bow for establishing Rollins at third base in the last two weeks of spring training.

"I can't point to one reason for selecting Rollins," said Griffith. "I guess it was his background."



Calvin Griffith

Built Up Confidence in Florida Winter Loop

Not blessed with great natural ability, the 5-10, 185-pounder is "dedicated" to baseball.

"I gained a lot of confidence in the Florida Winter League," said Rich. "I worked with weights to strengthen my wrists and I can feel I'm quicker with the bat. I've worked on sprints more to increase my quickness than my speed. I think it has all helped."

Then, too, Rollins has fought baseball laziness by becoming an early riser.

"I used to go to bed about 11:30 p. m., lay around the hotel room until 11 a. m.," he said. "Now I go to bed about the same time, but get up early for an 8 a. m. breakfast. I feel sharper, more awake all day."

"I know I'm not a home-run hitter," he laughed while leading the league for a short time. "I'm just swinging for base-hits." He had 19 of those in 11 games for the fastest start in the A. L.

Killebrew Likes New L. A. Stadium—Hits 2 Homers

LOS ANGELES, Calif.—As far as Harmon Killebrew is concerned, he can't return to Chavez Ravine Stadium too soon.

The **Twins'** slugger, a 46-homer man in 1961, didn't have a boundary blow this season until his club played a series against the Angels here. Then he found the range with his first two homers of the campaign.

"I really like the background at the stadium here," he said. "I'd say it's the best in the American League."

After looking at The Killer's pokes, the Angels might be inclined to agree.

pen," said the 26-year-old lefty. "The only thing I want is steady work."

Manager Sam Mele of the **Twins** promised Stigman would get it.

Twins Topics: Rookie Rich Rollins hit safely in each of the **Twins'** first 11 games. . . . The longest streak in the majors last year was posted by Len Green of **Minnesota** for 24. . . . The Angels are interested in Center Fielder Bill Tuttle of the **Twins**, not Jim Lemon. . . . There is no doubt of the **Twins'** problem—they can't win at home. In their first 11 games, they were 0-5 at the Met and 5-1 on the road. . . . They've lost nine straight at the Met, including four straight at the tag-end of 1961 to Detroit. . . . "If I could explain the reason for it, I'd change it," said Manager Mele. "Last year, I thought the boys were pressing to please in their new home, but not so in 1962. We'll win."

The **Twins** ranked 36-44 at home in 1961, 34-46 on the road. The season before in Washington, the old Senators were far superior on the road at 41-36, 32-45 at home. . . . In their first five games at home, the **Twins** drew 62,657 fans compared to 90,703 in their maiden flight of 1961 in the first five home games at the Met. . . . The weather was fortynish and coolish for 1962 series starts against Los Angeles and Chicago at the Met. . . . Joe Haynes, Twin veep, scouted Minnesota's Vancouver farm in its Pacific Coast League opener and then joined Griffith's "charter" party at Los Angeles. Griff entertained 20 **Minnesota** friends on the **Twins'** first trip to Chavez Ravine. The **Twins** made it interesting by sweeping three games from the Angels.

Rich Rollins

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my dad wrote from Cleveland and told me that Billy had talked to him last year and said he was needing me because he knew I could make the grade if I bore down. I owe Martin a lot."

And it is to Rollins' credit that on the day in spring training when Martin was handed his release, the red-head was first in line to shake Billy's hand and thank him for his help.

Makes Backers Look Good

That Rollins has justified the faith shown in him by his long line of boosters—Resick, Paskert, Baker, McKeon, Clary, Wilber, Martin and Mele—is illustrated vividly by his contribution to the **Twins'** first five victories this season. His record:

April 11—Drove in two runs with a homer and triple in an 8 to 0 verdict over Kansas City.

April 12—Doubled home two runs in 9 to 5 win over A's.

April 20—In 9 to 7 triumph at L. A., drove in two runs with a second-inning single and led off the winning tenth frame with a single, scoring the tie-breaking run on Bob Allison's two-bagger.

April 21—Went 3-for-5 in 5 to 2 victory over the Angels, driving in one run with a ninth-inning triple, then scoring the last marker on Bill Tuttle's sacrifice fly.

April 22—Batted in his fourteenth run with a first-inning sacrifice fly, singled with two out in the third to be aboard when Killebrew unloaded a three-run homer in the 5 to 0 triumph.

It was no fault of Rollins' that the **Twins** dropped their first five home games. He drove in six of their 13 runs during their first home stand, hitting .444 with eight hits—including three homers and a double—in 18 at-bats.

From Class A to the majors in less than one year—it's a true rags to riches story.

Rollins, Allen Were Signed by Same Scout, Floyd Baker

TWIN CITIES, Minn.—Rich Rollins and Bernie Allen, the **Twins'** rookie infield dazzlers, have two things in common. They observe the same birth date, April 16—Rollins was 24 and Allen 23—and both were signed by the same scout, Floyd Baker.

Power, Stigman Stick Feather in Cal's Swap Cap

Vic's Miracle Stabs Steady Kid Infield—Dick Twirls Trio of Slick Relief Jobs

By TOM BRIERE
TWIN CITIES, Minn.



Vic Power

After three weeks of the '62 season, the **Twins** claimed they got the best of the Pedro Ramos to Cleveland trade.

Vic Power, the showy first baseman, and Dick Stigman, the southpaw pitcher—both of whom

came over to the **Twins** from Cleveland in exchange for Ramos—give Owner Calvin Griffith of **Minnesota** every reason to be proud of his trading mastery.

In 11 games, Power saved 11 errors for the **Twins** "infant infield" of Third Baseman Rich Rollins (24), Shortstop Zoilo Versalles (21) and Second Baseman Bernie Allen (23). He scooped three throws out of the dirt for both Rollins and Versalles and two for Allen.

Vic Tough at Dish

Additionally, the veteran Power supplied the **Twins** with an adroit No. 2 hitter. He goes to right field a lot and has proved adept at putting on the hit-run with leadoff batter Len Green aboard.

Power hit .300 in 11 games, including three doubles. He also stole third base against good-throwing Bob Rodgers of Los Angeles.

If Power's contributions weren't

'Best Game I've Ever Pitched,' Claims Kaat After Ten-Whiff, No-Walk Gem

TWIN CITIES, Minn.—Jumbo Jim Kaat, the **Twins'** 23-year-old southpaw, achieved several personal peaks in blanking Los Angeles, 5 to 0, on four hits at Chavez Ravine, April 22.

"The best game I ever pitched," Jim enthused.

He struck out ten and didn't walk a man—A. L. firsts in both categories for the 6-4, 205-pounder from Holland, Mich.

Kaat blanked the White Sox, 3 to 0, on five hits, August 24, 1961, for his first major league shutout, "but this was much better," relished the Hope College alumnus. "The White Sox hit some balls hard off me last year. The Angels never hit the ball hard."

Twin outfielders didn't have a chance. It was either a strikeout, infield grounder or infield pop.

Kaat was particularly pleased

at winning his first game after being hit hard in two earlier starts.

He had a rough spring in Florida, too.

"I was experimenting with the slider all spring," explained Jim, "but I never felt comfortable with it. Now I've dropped the slider completely because I think it was hurting my curve ball.

"Now my curve is better. I'm using fast ball, curve and change. I had great control against the Angels and kept the ball low."

Kaat finished 1961 with a 9-17 record and 3.90 ERA. But Twin officials came to expect great things from Jim since he won six games in the final eight weeks a year ago.

President Calvin Griffith of the **Twins** predicts "a great future" for Kaat. BRIERE.

enough, Stigman made three appearances in the first week of the season, winning one game. Over five innings of relief pitching, Dick did not give up a hit. He walked one and struck out five.

The Nimrod, Minn., native picked up his first victory with a perfect two-inning relief trick at Los Angeles, April 20, as the **Twins** won, 7 to 5, in the tenth inning.

All of this, and Ramos had yet to make his first pitch for Cleveland through April 22.

"We got the best of the deal Power-for-Ramos straight up," declared slugging Outfielder Bob Allison of the **Twins**.

"Stigman is a bonus and he'll help us, too."

"I haven't got an error yet," announced Rollins. "I can thank Power for that. It's an assuring feeling to know you don't have to throw strikes. Naturally, you're not trying to throw

wildly, but on a hurried play Power helps you out by saving on errant throws."

Power, often labeled "Showboat" because of his fancy-dan, one-handed style of playing first base, takes it all in stride: "I learned to catch the ball with one hand in Puerto Rico. Why change now? Besides, I always catch the ball.

"I don't care what they say. Clubhouse lawyer. What's it mean? I'm a professional ball player. I like the game.

"I do my best wherever I play. I'll show those people in the Twin Cities I'm a pretty good hitter, too. I didn't hit much there with Cleveland against the **Twins** last year, but you will see a change this year."

Stigman, who was troubled with a sore elbow last year in a mediocre 2-5 rating at Cleveland, maintained his arm was sound and his work supported that statement.

"I suppose every pitcher likes to start, but I'm satisfied in the bull