

# A's Confuse Critics, Set Fast Road Clip, Skid in Own Arena

Tabbed Weak in Offensive Department, Kaycee Springs Surprise With Potent Scoring Machine in Rival Parks

By ERNEST MEHL

KANSAS CITY, Mo.



Jerry Walker

One obvious reason why Confucius succeeded as a sage and his comments have existed through the centuries is that he never was called upon to offer any observations about baseball. Probably because there wasn't any baseball in his era. Had there been, and had he been tempted to make some comments about it, his infallibility would have been tarnished, just as today's experts often find themselves in a state of extreme frustration.

Take the Kansas City Athletics, for example. It was generally noted once spring training had concluded that they would experience great difficulty in scoring runs.

Yet, after they had finished their first five series, they were leading the American League in runs scored. Again, a new fence had been erected inside the stadium here to offer some assistance to what had been expected to be a soft punch, but the A's so far have been considerably more potent on the road than at home.

Hank Bauer doesn't pretend to have the answers. Hank, in fact, lays no claim to being a sage; he merely takes what happens in stride and has been content so far with the realization that his athletes have extended themselves.

"We keep on trying," observed the robust skipper, who sees in this present squad the nucleus for a better state of affairs in the future. And, he argues, it wouldn't take a great deal to transform what he has into something which could very well enter into the contention among the better clubs.

But the problem facing Houk and the A's officials is that a situation exists which almost definitely precludes any deals which might help. In order to get talent which could strengthen the club, talent would have to be given up which would at the same time weaken it.

## Hank Grooming Youngsters

And then there is the youth movement to consider. "We're going with youngsters," comments Hank, "and I'm all for that. But it means we have to keep certain players and these, of course, are the players the other clubs are interested in."

"I can't see us making any swaps of any importance between now and the trade deadline. It's a cinch we can't give up players such as Jerry Lumpe, Norm Siebern, Dick Howser or any of our young pitchers. It wouldn't make any sense for us to help one department and weaken another. We would be no better off and might even be worse."

"So the chances are we will go with what we have now and, as long as the players extend themselves as they have, I have no complaints. We have fought back several times now and that's an encouraging sign. One of my jobs, perhaps the most important one, is to maintain this spirit."

## Bass Works on Curve

The pitching staff has at the same time been both inconsistent and promising. There are some signs to be observed that in time it can attain some degree of real effectiveness.

Norm Bass, as an example, has not so far been as convincing as he was in some games last year and that may be due largely to the fact that he has been trying to include a curve and change in his repertoire. He had neither last year, relying almost entirely on his fast ball and in some instances, when his control was sharp, he was highly impressive.

This spring, the younger brother of football's Dick Bass has been working on the other pitches, his control as a result has not been as sharp. But in a recent out against the Orioles he submitted some tangible evidence that he is getting the hang of the curve. In this game, he went seven innings on four hits and two runs before going out after jamming a thumb on his pitching hand. This probably was Norm's best showing of the season.

Jerry Walker, who missed some

## A's Red Hot, Nine of 15

### Hits Go for Extra Bases

KANSAS CITY, Mo.—The Athletics staged one of their most potent batting attacks in recent years, May 2, when they pounded out 15 hits in decking the Tigers, 12 to 8.

Nine of the safeties were good for extra bases, Norm Siebern and Wayne Causey contributed home runs; Gino Cimoli two doubles, Bobby Del Greco, Manny Jimenez and Jerry Lumpe one double each and Cimoli and Jose Tartabull triples.

Cimoli's triple and one of his doubles came in the second inning, when the A's punched across seven runs.

spring training after suffering a muscle spasm in his back, also has offered some testimony to his hope of becoming a winning member of the staff. Jerry has made an excellent start and there seems a good chance he will fulfill the expectations held for him when he was acquired from the Orioles in a trade early last year.

Jim Archer, who lost most of spring training with an ailing arm, finally got into action in a relief role and, while he was not effective in this turn, he is expected to take a regular start and pitch as he did last year.

Along with these is Dan Pfister, who hurled an impressive three-hitter against the Tigers and who is considered by both Bauer and the pitching coach, Ed Lopat, as having more stuff than anyone on the staff. Pfister has only the problem of control, and with this solved he could develop into one of the most formidable of the league's hurlers.

## Pitching Shows Promise

In light of this, the pitching, while still in no sense solid, has enough potential to whet the interest of the manager. It could improve to the point where it would be one of the team's strongest boasts.

A's Atoms: Young Bill Bryan, the husky backstop who was brought up to fill in after Jose Azcue went out with an intestinal ailment, has been sent down again now that Azcue is capable of filling his role. Hayward Sullivan, however, remains the first-string receiver. . . . Dick Howser is off to a good start in the stolen base department and, if he continues, he could top his mark of last year. . . . When the Orioles were in Kansas City, Hank Bauer made a bid for Dick Williams, but without any success. "We can use Dick the same way you would if you had him," Bill Hitchcock told Bauer. . . . Lew Krausse, Jr., the bonus youngster whose debut in major league ball with the A's last June was a three-hit shutout against the Angels, has had some early success in the minors and is being followed closely by the A's officials.

# Mincher Hot-Hitting Twin Spare

Sub for Ailing Power Socked Five Homers in 6-Game Spree

By TOM BRIERE

TWIN CITIES, Minn.

Don Mincher heard reports all winter that he was the **Twins'** first baseman for 1962.

But the 23-year-old Alabamian hit .240 in spring training, continued to show fielding deficiencies and the **Twins** traded Pedro Ramos to Cleveland for an established first baseman in Vic Power just before the American League season opened.

And Mincher was relegated to pinch-hit duties.

"They can tell you the job is yours, but you still have to produce to hold it," said Mincher.

Having missed his first opportunity, Mincher, a powerful southpaw swinger, made the most of his next chance at Cleveland, April 28, when Power went out for a week with a pulled leg muscle.

Pinch-hitting for Power in the third inning against Ron Taylor of the Indians, Mincher hit a bases-empty homer over the left field fence. In the seventh, he hit a bases-full homer over the right field fence off Reliever Frank Funk to bring the **Twins** a 7 to 7 tie. That they lost, 8 to 7, was no



Don Mincher

fault of Mincher. The two-homer game and grand-slam marked personal "firsts" for Don.

Don doubled and homered in the **Twins'** April 29 sweep at Cleveland, 8 to 4 and 7 to 3, to boost his batting average to .304. "Don was swinging the bat, but I was most impressed by his improvement afield," said Owner Calvin Griffith of the **Twins**.

## Pep Talk Hikes Don's Spirits

Don unloaded a 405-footer against Baltimore, May 2, for his fourth homer in five games. His B.A. then was .310. He was hitting .350 as a regular.

"Don was let down a little when we got Power," explained Manager Sam Mele. "But I had a little talk with him and he snapped back good. He said he'd do anything he could to help the club."

A year ago, Mincher even offered to go behind the bat. Instead, he was shuffled off to Buffalo (International) in June, where he responded with 24 homers. He hit six more homers and batted around .400 to help Buffalo to International League playoff and Junior World's Series laurels.

"I'm free and easy now," said Mincher. "I'm not pressing any more. I'm ready to make the best of every chance I get. I hope I can help the club."

# Killebrew Quick to Learn Ropes on Picket Patrol

Wallop Rated Competent Glove Man in Left Field—Harm Hikes Homer Total

By TOM BRIERE

TWIN CITIES, Minn.



Harmon Killebrew

The American League season is young, but the **Twins'** homeric Harmon Killebrew appears to have found a home in left field.

In the first month, the transformed infielder made all the plays in the outfield. He had "butchered" only two balls, neither of which cost a game.

And why all the fuss about Killebrew's .180 batting average? Before going out for a few days in Cleveland, April 28, with a pulled groin muscle, the slugging Killebrew hit home runs back-to-back in games of April 27-28 to boost his HR count to four.

That put him ahead of Roger Maris' 61 pace of 1961, ahead of his own 46 rate of last season. A year ago, the Killer didn't hit his first homer until April 30 and went until May 7 before bashing Nos. 4 and 5. Maris smashed his fourth as late as May 17, 1961.

There had been an inclination to attach Killebrew's low batting average to his shift to left field—the mental pressures. Such is hardly the fact.

## Other Standouts in Slumps

The 25-year-old Killebrew had illustrious company in his slow start—Maris at .152, Jim Piersall at .167, Rocky Colavito at .175, Roy Sievers at .143 and Frank Robinson at .167—none involved in position switches.

The **Twins** are not worried about Killebrew's hitting, only his fielding has been under scrutiny. Manager Sam Mele of **Minnesota** knows Killebrew will approach a .300 average on the season, 50 homers and 120 runs batted in.

Mele said, "Harmon has been confused at the plate." Harmon said, "It's just a matter of getting my timing at the plate. It has nothing to do with playing left field. I'm coming at the plate now."

"My toughest adjustment to the outfield was in learning the strategy of the position—hitting the cutoff man, when to throw to which base, etc. You have to learn conditions in each park, too."

Killebrew has proved to be a sound judge of fly balls. He has even cap-

# 'Horse Blinder' Helps Protect Battey's Injured Cheek Bone



Earl Battey

TWIN CITIES, Minn.—Catcher Earl Battey of the **Twins** says he's hitting "from behind a horse's blinder."

It's the protective batting helmet he's been wearing since suffering a fractured cheek bone when hit by a pitched ball from Cleveland's Bobby Locke last July.

But Earl figures "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" and he has a .320 batting average to prove it.

"I don't like to hit from behind the blinder, but I guess it's for the best," Battey said. "Sometimes I lose sight of a side-arm pitch."

Battey went to the plate once without the protective "ear flap" against side-arming Ed Rakow of Kansas City recently. "I couldn't follow the ball when he came from third base," Earl explained.

Since then, however, Trainer George Lentz of the **Twins** has made improvements on Battey's "blinder," giving him greater protection and better visibility. Earl has been instructed to continue wearing the extended helmet and, as long as he's hitting, he doesn't mind.

## Twins Set 500-Gee Value on Big Backstop

Battey, who suffered four concussions in prep and college basketball, has been "beated" three times in baseball. The **Twins** place a \$500,000 value on the strong-armed catcher—too much to risk losing for lack of preventive measures against another wild pitcher.

The soft-spoken Battey has an odd habit of often falling into tight pitches, instead of falling away. Earle's lean-over plate stance also exposes him to inside pitches in much the same manner as the oft-struck Minnie Minoso.

Battey batted .302 in 1961 to lead the **Twins**. He's hopeful an injury-free season will enable him to build on that figure in 1962.

The workhorse Battey caught 133 games and won his second straight Silver Glove award with a .978 fielding average, setting an American League record with 812 putouts. This eclipsed the old mark of 785 posted by Ossie Schreckengost's 785 in 1905 with Philadelphia.

The bulky Battey gained weight on that routine—from 225 up to 231. He approached 260 pounds this winter. But a diet, hard work and thyroid treatment have brought Earl back to 220-pound playing weight.

to drop a pitcher—probably 18-year-old Rookie Jim Manning—and two infielders at the May 10 cutdown date. . . . Manning made his first major league start at Cleveland, April 28. He left after two and one-third innings, giving up seven hits and six runs. A mixup on an infield pop which dropped for a base-hit cost Manning three runs in the second inning. . . . Manager Sam Mele of the **Twins** had to go to his bench depth in Baltimore, April 26, using Jim Snyder at second base when Bernie Allen came up with a virus. In Cleveland, April 28, both Killebrew and Vic Power went out with pulled muscles. . . . Lemon replaced Harmon in left and Don Mincher moved in at first base. . . . It was Mele's intent to tighten the **Twins** defensively to improve on a 1961 seventh-place finish. . . . The **Twins** played an errorless three-game set at Baltimore, April 24-26, to take second place in American League fielding behind Cleveland. They won two out of three from the Orioles, but came apart at the seams with five errors in losing the first two games at Cleveland. . . . Ace Camilo Pascual of the **Twins** won his third in four decisions with a 3 to 2 victory at Baltimore, April 26, "but I'm still not sharp with my control," Camilo confessed.

tures several sinking liners. He charges ground balls like an infielder and comes up throwing. He has never been accused of being a sprinter but he covers the ground adequately. Actually, he's a better defensive outfielder than Jim Lemon, whom he replaced in left field. This is one of the sore points with Killebrew who moved reluctantly to the outfield.

Honest Harmon hasn't said so, but moving his "best friend" Lemon out of the outfield hurt him more than the physical shift. Genial Jim said, "Harmon didn't take my left field job, Rich Rollins took his third base position."

## Fixture in Garden

There is nothing to preclude Killebrew filling in at third base or first base in an emergency, but present plans call for the Idaho strong man becoming a full-fledged outfielder.

"I think Killebrew has done a fine job in left field," said Owner Calvin Griffith, who sponsored the move. Mele was somewhat partial to stationing Killebrew at third base since Don Mincher and then Vic Power became available at first base.

But Griffith had pictured Killebrew as a left fielder since last season, and it proved a logical switch—in practice as well as in theory.

Twin Topics: The **Twins** figure