

Beating The Gun

BY BILL BROWER FOR ASSOCIATED NEGRO PRESS

The other day the news came through that Monte Irvin had retired from baseball. Although you know that he was doing the right thing, it was the kind of item you hated to read. Guys don't come any nicer than Monte.

Irvin was 38 years old. He didn't get his chance in organized baseball until he was 28 or 29. His fling at glory was all too brief.

Jackie Robinson, Larry Doby, Satchel Paige, Roy Campanella and Dan Bankhead, all preceded Irvin in the majors. But somehow the impression lingers that had Irvin been given the chance, even a couple of years earlier, he would have ranked with the best of them. Irvin was a teammate of Doby's on the old Newark Eagles. At the time, Bill Veeck was angling for Larry as the first ten player in the American League, he wrote off Irvin for a couple of reasons.

"We know about him," Veeck said at the time. "Abe Saperstein told us he would make somebody a fine ball player. But so would Satchel Paige. Trouble now is that we don't want to bring more than one colored player into the league at this time. Besides, Irvin's too old."

Irvin did reach the big leagues, of course. Along with Hank Thompson and Ford Smith, he was signed by the New York Giants for the Jersey City International League club in 1949. Ford, a pitcher, didn't have much success and soon drifted into obscurity. Thompson, a second baseman who had a brief trial with the old St. Louis Browns, came up to the Giants in 1949.

Monte got a late-season chance with the National League team that year. After spring training in 1950, he was again consigned to the minor league team. But not for long. In 18 games with Jersey City, he was batting a smoking .310, and was hurriedly recalled by the parent club.

In 110 games with the Giants - playing third base, the outfield and finally first base - Irvin batted .299, hit 15 home runs and drove in 66 runs.

It was in 1951 that he rose to his greatest heights. In 151 games, he batted .312, had 24 homers and drove in 121 runs. Without his season-long performance, the Giants never would have caught the Brooklyn Dodgers and then beat them in the playoff for the NL flag.

In the World Series against the New York Yankees that year, Irvin was one of the heroes for the Giants, who were beat in a six-game set. He had 11 hits in the six games and four of them came in the first game, two of them tying Series records. He heaped insult upon injury to the Yankees by stealing home, the first time that had been done in a Series game since 1921.

Paul Richards, manager of the Baltimore Orioles, said:

"I think Monte Irvin is the greatest ball player in America. There is only one man I'd compare with him - Stan Musial."

Nobody guessed then, but misfortune was to overtake the quiet Irvin. Playing in Denver during an exhibition game with Cleveland, Monte broke his right ankle sliding into third base. He didn't even make a pinch hitting appearance until July 27, finally appearing in



BASEBALL BALLET - Again running out from under his hat, Willie Mays of the New York Giants collides with Gil Hodges, as the Dodger first baseman tries to snag an errant throw during last week's opener at Ebbets Field. Mays was safe on the play, and continues to burn up the base paths, as he has done since his benching. (Newspress Photo).

Say Al Smith, Indians' "Jack-Of-All-Trades," Paid To Play Infield

NEW YORK (AP) - Al Smith, versatile Cleveland Indians star, who has played every position on the club except first base, pitcher and catcher, got a bonus of about \$3,000 to switch from the outfield to a permanent third base assignment, according to a story published here last week by Milton Gross, New York Post columnist.

According to Gross, the extra money came after Smith let it be known that playing the unfamiliar "hot spot" meant more money to him. Thus the arrangement, mutually beneficial to Smith and the Indians, was worked out. It filled the need of both parties concerned.

But, Gross indicated, the Indians brass came out on the long end of the deal. Smith, who this season reportedly signed for a round \$17,000, improved his financial standing by some \$3,000, but the Indians got themselves a workable third baseman at a bargain price.

Al Rosen, retired and lamented Indians third baseman, got \$22,000 to play third last season, and this year would have gotten a round \$27,000, had he not chosen to go into retirement.

According to Gross' story, Smith did not want to play third base and actually intended to stay away from it. However, he was the most versatile man the Indians had and during spring training Indians manager, Keny Farrell, put him on third and told him to give it a try. Al did. But after making three errors in one game, he got discouraged and asked out, saying that he preferred the outfield. However, he left one reservation.

He said privately: "If I have to go back there, (third) they're going to have to give me more money. It's worth \$4,000 more to me to make the shift." The Indians brass were quick to catch on, according to the story. They gave him his bonus and as a result the team is now on the move.

The whole story points up one thing, Smith is a conspicuously underpaid player. Last year, for instance, he got somewhere from \$10,000 to \$15,000, although the previous season he hit .306, batted in 77 runs, hit 22 home runs and was sensational in the field. His bat mark dipped last season but he remained somewhat of a one-man team. "A Jack-of-all-Trades," they call him.

MIAMI, FLA. - (AP) - Indicative of the progress being made in Christian race relations by the Diocese of South Florida which is totally integrated on the Diocesan level, the Venerable John E. Culmer, Rector of St. Agnes' Episcopal church and Archdeacon for Negro work in the Diocese of South Florida, was elected one of four deputies at the General Convention of the Episcopal Church. The General Convention, which meets tri-annually, will convene here at Miami Beach, in the Fall of 1958.

General Convention is the highest legislative body of the Episcopal Church and election as a deputy to that body is an honor coveted by every clergyman of the Episcopal Church.

Dr. Culmer was elected from a field of 27 nominees - 26 white and one colored - of the predominantly white annual Diocesan Convention which was held earlier this month at Daytona Beach, with headquarters at the Princess Esplanade Hotel.

Dr. Culmer holds the distinction of being the only Negro priest of the Episcopal Church who has been four-times elected a deputy of the General Convention. The Rt. Rev. Henry L. Louth is bishop of the Diocese.

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In last week's fight, Giardello had to stave off a rally by Calhoun to win. In the seventh, Rory almost doubled him up with a left hook. But Joey used his better boxing to evade most of Rory's bombs, the remainder of the bout.

Both fighters received slight cuts around the eyes.

The loss by Calhoun was only his second in more than 40 professional fights. He had won 14 of 27 previous fights via the knockout route.

Besides Giardello, the only other fighter to defeat Calhoun was Ellsworth (Spider) Webb, the No. 2 middleweight contender, who decided him in a Chicago bout several weeks ago.

Rules Massive African Ineligible For Boxing

LOUISVILLE, KY. - (AP) - A scheduled 10-round bout between Sid Peaks, veteran heavyweight, and Ewart Potgieter, massive South African fighter, was scheduled last week after the Kentucky State Board of Athletic Control ruled that Potgieter is suffering "shotgun vision." The bout had been scheduled for the Fair Grounds here this Saturday.

Potgieter, who at 285 pounds is the heaviest man in the history of boxing, was already under suspension by the Massachusetts commission for failing to report for an examination after an operation for a glaucoma condition late last year.

Potgieter's "shotgun vision" was described as inability to detect punches coming at him from the side. It probably means the end of the South African's ring career.

Unlike Primo Carnera, another giant who went on to win the heavyweight title, Potgieter never was able to make much of an impression on the fight game. Recently, Johnny Holman, no speedster himself, used him for a punching bag in winning an unanimous

10-round decision.

Only those wheat growers who have 15 or more acres of wheat for grain in 1958 will be eligible to vote in the marketing quota referendum on June 20.

Eggs, cheese, or meat cooked at too high a temperature are hard to digest.

My Neighbors

"Will you please stop talking about taxes! You're driving me crazy!"

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