

BASEBALL'S 10th MAN— PIONEER OR PIGEON?

By JOSEPH DURSO

Whatever he may do, homer or pop-up, he's putting some zap in the fine old game.



"Evidently you aren't aware
what I am in here for!"

Phil Wit

Tuesday, March 6, was a nice sunny day in Orlando, Florida, the only city in the hemisphere that harbored both Mickey Mouse and Harmon Killebrew. The twenty-six million tourists who visit the state each year all seemed to be converging on the town. Disney World was alive with cartoon heroes and kids. The racing cars were spinning at Sebring to the east.

The fishing fleets were plying the Gulf of Mexico to the west. The lady jockeys were booting home winners in Miami to the south. And, on all sides, the baseball camps were rustling after a delayed start induced by rigidity of the "whereas" clause at the bargaining table.

Over at the spring-training headquarters the Minnesota Twins were getting ready

for the first exhibition game of the season and everybody was talking idly about Willie Mays's knees, Sparky Lyle's ankle, Leo Durocher's temper and Richie Allen's salary. But before the afternoon was over, they would all be talking about a twenty-six-year-old retreaded outfielder named Larry Eugene Hise—because he was about to become the pioneer in the most contro-



versial experiment on the leisure-time scene. He was the first "designated hitter" of the baseball season.

As the tenth man on a traditionally nine-man team, Hisle wasn't sure that afternoon whether he was a pioneer or a guinea pig. He did know that he had had four shots at steady employment in the big leagues with the Philadelphia Phillies, for whom he once built a miniature batting average of .205, and that he had been passed from Albuquerque to St. Louis to Minnesota without playing any games during the previous winter. He also knew that Manager Frank Quilici had "designated"

him to bat for the Minnesota pitcher all afternoon, and so Hisle—a good "glove man"—would spend his time marching from the bench to home plate without ever touching a glove.

History had to wait a few minutes before Hisle made his debut as the "dh" in the box score because the other team was the Pittsburgh Pirates, who play in the National League. The rub was that the Twins play in the American League, which had voted in January to try the new rule for three years, except in interleague games: the World Series, the All-Star Game and exhibitions. So the Pirates put up a big

argument when Quilici offered the umpires a batting order with ten names. They finally subsided after the Minnesota management said it had advertised the experiment when selling tickets, grumbled that it wouldn't happen again and then watched Larry Hisle whack a home run with two men on base and another with the bases loaded.

"It felt kind of weird sitting in the dug-out while my teammates were on defense," Hisle reflected later. "I don't think I'd like the job full time since I enjoy defense almost as much as hitting. I killed the time by studying the Pittsburgh pitchers and by drinking a lot of water at the cooler."

Maybe it was caused by the seven-hour day, the five-day week or the four-week vacation, to say nothing of the fact that earthmen these days stare at a quarter of a billion television screens in 100 countries from Albania to Zambia. But whatever the reason, the 1970's came hustling into sight wrapped in dollar signs surrounded by people with the time and money to lavish on something called "the entertainment buck." It took 200,000 of them to buy one minute of commercial time on the Super Bowl telecast; 5,000,000 of them to syndicate a race horse, and 100,000,000 of them to build a stadium.

It was a time when most ski-country families had two or more snowmobiles in the barn, when America added 300 golf courses a year and when the National Hockey League expanded overnight from six teams to twelve and then to fourteen. You could watch Hungarian soccer players kick field goals from the 50-yard line or North Carolina basketball players heave three-point baskets from 30 feet out.

There were sixteen teams in two divisions in one hockey league and ten teams in two divisions in the competing league; seventeen teams in four divisions in one basketball league plus ten teams in two divisions in another; twenty-six teams in six divisions in two conferences in one football conglomerate, and twenty-four teams in four divisions in two baseball leagues. And as for the public: bewildered and bewitched maybe, but free-spending definitely. "They're really pouring it on," *The New York Times* observed as things heated up. "When the little guy suddenly gets a little money, he spends it."

To make a long story short, when he started spending it on something else, the baseball people started looking around for ways to recapture his interest and his wallet. Then, when nine of the twelve clubs in the American League drew fewer than a million customers in 1972, the stampede was on. The villain: the 6-foot-4-inch pitcher with overpowering stuff. The victim: the man waving a baseball bat 60½ feet away. The reason, suggested Gabe

Paul: "The pitchers and the stadiums grew too big."

Larry Hise didn't realize it at the time, but that was his cue. Actually, the cue had been sneaking up on him. In 1895, the infield fly rule was adopted to keep smart infielders from tricking unsmart base-runners. In 1901, it was revised to protect the innocent. In 1920, the spitball was outlawed. In 1950, the strike zone was defined (armpit to top of knee). In 1963, it was defined again (top of shoulder to bottom of knee). In 1969, would you believe armpit to top of knee again?

Then men walked on the moon, the Mets won the pennant and the red-ink wretches of the American League began clamoring for somebody, anybody, to put more clout into the old ball game. Enter the tenth man: the "designated hitter."

He arrived in 1969, during the same summer Neil Armstrong arrived on the shore of the Sea of Tranquility, but nobody paid much attention. Still, in places like Rochester and Syracuse and Toledo, he was often the talk of the town: the man who did nothing but bat for the pitcher, and Alexander Cartwright be damned. He was experimental that summer, his stage was the International League (highest minor) and his impact on the seas of baseball tranquility was immediate.

Batting averages in the league promptly rose by as much as 17 points for the first-place club. More runs were scored. The designated hitters collectively batted 120 points higher than the pitchers they replaced. The pitchers—who were allowed to stay in the game strictly as pitchers—began to stick around a lot longer. Few of them got to bat very often. And some of them—the eighth, ninth and tenth men on the staffs—didn't get to pitch very often, either.

Also, since nothing takes so much time in a baseball game as changing the pitcher, the games zipped along: ten minutes shorter on the average. The fans, reported George Sisler, the league president, "overwhelmingly liked it" when polled.

One player named Jim Campbell spent the summer batting in the No. 9 spot in

the lineup for Rochester, hit .295, drew admiring glances from the St. Louis Cardinals (who were looking for a pinch-hitter) and made the big leagues as a specialist.

Choo-Choo Coleman, the little sign painter who had kept Casey Stengel in chuckles on the chuckling Mets a decade earlier, came out of retirement for the occasion. Laying aside his paintbrushes in Florida, he revived his baseball career as the leadoff batter for the Tidewater Mets—since his contributions as a catcher had always been suspect, anyway—and had such a heady time that he charged the

Now it's 1973, and the mail is pouring in to the American League. Suppose, people wanted to know, the Minnesota club has a weak-hitting shortstop. Can Harmon Killebrew be designated to bat for him? No, the experimenters answered patiently, he can swing only for the pitcher.

Does that mean the "dh" must always bat ninth in the lineup, where the pitcher usually bats? Not necessarily. Pitchers bat ninth most of the time because they're usually the weakest hitters on the team. But theoretically, they may swing anywhere in the lineup—and so may their "designated hitters."

Q.—Suppose the manager wants somebody else to bat for the designated hitter later in the game; is that possible? A.—Yes, but then that man becomes the official "dh" in the batting order and the original hitter is out of the game.

Q.—Suppose Al Kaline is the designated hitter and, later in the game, Manager Billy Martin wants to use him in right field on defense. Legal or not? A.—It's legal, but then Kaline becomes the right fielder and Detroit plays the rest of the game without a designated hitter.

Q.—Does this mean that in every American League game for the next three years, there will be ten men in the lineup instead of nine? A.—No, the manager may elect to use the designated hitter on any given day or he may not. He has three choices: Start the game without a designated hitter and go the distance without one. Start with one and stick with him (or his successors). Or, start with one, and then switch him to defense later in the game and revert to

the old-fashioned rules.

A fine mixed bag of mail it was, too. The Governor of Pennsylvania, Milton Shapp, advised the commissioner that the game needed some punch. An American college student in Nairobi, Kenya, penned a thirty-two-page handwritten letter reviewing the situation in the big leagues and suggesting changes. From a mission church at Fort Defiance, Arizona, a priest put it in scenario form: "Suppose one team starts a left-handed pitcher and the

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team only for his bus fare from Orlando to Norfolk.

Hal King, a catcher for Louisville, couldn't run or throw particularly—which was like having a quarterback who couldn't pass particularly. But as the designated hitter, he batted .330 while Bob Montgomery handled the catching chores. And *both* then made the big leagues.

Everything worked so well, in fact, that Tidewater sent only three pitchers to bat all season. As luck would have it, two got hits.

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fifty-six, was found guilty of three counts of first degree murder, and was subsequently sentenced to die in the gas chamber at San Quentin.

Ironically, Archerd never profited from the six known murders he committed. His motive was to collect big insurance and inheritance money, but in almost every instance, he had failed.

Where is Archerd now? He is part of the general prison population at San Quentin. He escaped the death sentence when it was abolished.

Where are Andre and White? Applying their same methodical detectives' expertise to other murder cases assigned to the L.A. County Sheriff's

Homicide bureau. "Our only claim to fame is Archerd," Andre says.

And Doctor Arquilla? He's chairman of the Department of Pathology at the California College of Medicine, University of California at Irvine. More importantly, he's still involved in research on diabetes.

"I get upset at all the notoriety the Archerd case caused," he says. "I've done a lot of good work in the field of diabetes and insulin, and I could give you a spiel on how little support diabetes research gets. I think it's the most important disease in the country. I think it's a far more important killer than Archerd." ❧

1970 Today's Health, published by the American Health Association.

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designated hitter. Later in the game, the lefty is replaced by a right-handed pitcher. Can the right-handed designated hitter be replaced by a lefty? He enclosed two answer boxes to be checked off: one marked "yes," the other "no." And a stamped self-addressed envelope.

Joe Garagiola, who did not hit in the big leagues, said it was an innovation and he was looking forward to it. Tony Kubek, who did hit in the big leagues, believed you'd get more runs for your money but felt the rule

would "take something out of the game, too." Billy Martin said he hadn't been in favor of it especially, but noted that his pitching staff had the worst collection of hitters in the league—they batted under .100 and struck out 50 percent of the time. Joe DiMaggio liked it, but doubted that the experiment would have prolonged his own career twenty years earlier. Mickey Mantle scoffed at himself as a "dh" and said: "If I could still hit, I'd still be playing."

The Boston Red Sox tried to



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sneak a tenth man (Orlando Cepeda) into the lineup in an exhibition game one day against the Philadelphia Phillies (wrong league) and, when the umpires blew the whistle, Manager Eddie Kasko raged: "We've got a stupid rule that nobody wants to

make a ruling on." Cepeda, forced to pinch-hit once under the old rules, grounded out and the Phillies won. Two weeks later, in an unscheduled game against the Detroit Tigers, he hit an unscheduled home run and the Red Sox won.

Anyway, everybody was talking about it—even yelling about it—and that was probably the idea in the first place. The point was that the tenth man was here in the nine-man sport. Not even the lonely end or the pulling guard rated such commotion,

and strong men began to wonder what might have happened in the old days if... well, if the tenth man had been around then.

"It's a shame the designated hitter wasn't in when I was playing," lamented Ralph Houk, manager of the Yankees, who got forty-three hits during eight seasons on the back benches of baseball. "Then somebody else would've done more designated hitting and I would've done more catching."

The beau ideal, people guessed, would have been Smokey Burgess, who set records for pinch-hitting with the Chicago White Sox. In his last couple of years, he didn't even own a catcher's mitt, though that had been his trade, and as soon as he pinch-hit some days, he would skip the park and leave things to the nonspecialist troops.

Or it might have been Johnny Mize, who did nothing but pinch-hit for the Yankees at the end of his career. Or Zeke Bonura, who did strange things at first base but not at home plate. Or Ernie Lombardi, the hulking catcher who never got an infield hit but who got plenty of outfield hits. Or Hack Wilson, who knocked in 190 runs one year. Or it might have been Jerry Lynch, who had all the qualifications: no glove but a home-run bat. He was a menace to his own team in the field and a menace to the other team in the hitter's box.

In the dim days before the designated hitter crept into the box scores of America, the Pittsburgh Pirates stationed Jerry Lynch in left field one day—just after his manager, Fred Haney, had received a pregame plaque from the National Safety Council. Then the game started, fly balls began to cascade into left field, Lynch misjudged three in a row, people sitting in the bleachers scurried for cover and Haney finally pulled him out of the game, explaining: "I was afraid they'd take the plaque away from me if I left him in there."

But not anymore. Wherever you may be, Jerry Lynch, come back—all is forgiven in this enlightened day of electronic computers, microphotography, lunar modules, sophisticated missiles, laser beams, floating dollars and the tenth man in the nine-man batting order. **T**

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