

# 200-Game Chart Worries Pilots of Vet-Laden Coast

Skippers Wonder How Much Over-30 Men Can Take; Even Fred Haney, With Youngest Club, Voices Concern

By JOHN B. OLD



Red Barrett

LOS ANGELES, Calif. To the casual observer, all appears to be going extremely well with the eight Pacific Coast League teams, who will open the 1950 pennant race on March 28. The weather has been fine, inter-club exhibition games are drawing up to expectations, numerous rookies have received lush praise and even some veterans seem to have been revitalized. Nobody is claiming the pennant before the race is run, but neither is any club official relegating his favorite to the cellar—or the second division.

But to this bystander more than one PCL manager has confided solid cause for worry. In short, here's their problem. The Coast league schedule runs 200 games this season—longest in Organized Ball and 12 more than any PCL schedule has run in over 20 years. How much baseball can the veterans—fellows over 30—take? That is the question.

Manager Fred Haney of the Hollywood Stars, last year's pennant winners, is quite outspoken on the subject.

"I have some players who have reached the point where they no longer can play the required number of games on our schedule. Therefore, I must build our club accordingly. Take Gene Handley, our second baseman, for example. I doubt if I can count on him for more than 125 games, barring injuries, so I have to find another second baseman who can double for Handley without weakening our infield and still play one or two other positions satisfactorily if called upon," Haney explained.

Haney, who probably will have the youngest club in the league after he returns from Vero Beach, Fla., where he is gathering five or six players he was promised by the Brooklyn Dodgers, is the least worried of the Coast managers. Nevertheless, he has been doing a lot of thinking about how many games his veterans can play.

### "Old Man's Guessing Game"

With the rest of the PCL managers, the "Old Man's" guessing game is acute, although they prefer not to be quoted for obvious reasons.

"The Coast league owners keep trying to sell the fans on the point that our brand of baseball is just a shade under major league standards. The majors play only 154 games, yet everybody is plenty weary, mentally and physically, at the end of the season up there. Out here we must play 46 more games and both the majors and the PCL have a player limit of 25 players," declared a PCL manager.

"Adding to our worries as managers, many of us have several players down from the majors—'names' who no longer could stand the gaff up there—so naturally we are wondering how they're going to stand up under the strain of 200 games.

"Frankly, I seriously doubt if very many youngsters can take it without intermittent rest. It's my considered judgment that the pennant-winning manager this season will have to do a masterful job in resting both his veterans and youngsters."

### Angels Are Gray-Haired

Bill Kelly, whose Los Angeles Angels finished last in '49 after having won a pennant in '47, admittedly has eight veteran question marks in his pennant plans—Pitchers Charlie (Red) Barrett (35), Herman Besse (34), Emil Kush (33) and Bob Muncie (33). Infielder Elbie Fletcher (33) and Outfielders Cecil Garriott (33), Stan Spence (34) and Mill Byrnes (33).

Lefty O'Doul of the San Francisco Seals, the pre-season favorite, is another "old age warrior" with Pitchers Tommy Bridges (44), Ralph Buxton (34), Al Lien (34), Cliff Melton (37) and Xavier Rescigno (37); Infielders Les Fleming (35) and Don Lang (33), and Outfielders Brooks Holder (35), Walt Judnich (33) and Don White (31).

So runs the gamut. Every other PCL club has its share of oldsters—decrepit old men as baseball players go—but many of their names are magic at the box office. PCL fans, it seems, prefer

### Wet Weather Jinx Trails Seals 5th Spring in Row

EL CENTRO, Calif.—When rain washed out several early Seal workouts here, it marked the fifth consecutive spring training season of the San Francisco club that has been marred by wet weather. This brought from Manager Lefty O'Doul the declaration he was convinced the Seals were a climate jinx. "We could train in the middle of the Sahara Desert and still get rained on," O'Doul sighed.

## Wedemeyer, Grid Star, Trying Out at Seals' Camp

By EDGAR WILSON  
EL CENTRO, Calif.

Manager Lefty O'Doul has been spending considerable time giving batting instruction to Herman Wedemeyer, former All-America football player, in the San Francisco Seals' spring training camp at Stark Field.

Whether the Seals keep Wedemeyer will depend upon his success in developing his hitting.

"He's a good athlete any way you figure it," O'Doul commented. "He can run and throw and field, and if his hitting improves he should be able to make it."

Wedemeyer, who completed his second year of professional football with the Baltimore Colts last season, hopes to make the switch to the diamond game.

"I figure I have only about two or three good years left in professional football," the 25-year-old former St. Mary's grid great explained as he waited his turn at the plate inside the batting cage.

"But if I can make the grade here, in baseball, I figure I may be good for ten more years."

Wedemeyer indicated he would forsake football altogether if he caught on with the Seals. In his high school days, Wedemeyer was a topnotch baseball performer in Honolulu and played the gridiron sport only as a sideline, according to Red McQueen, Honolulu sports writer.

When he went to St. Mary's, however, Wedemeyer concentrated on football and that was the field in which he gained his national fame, although he was also a member of the diamond team.

the Beavers last year, came from the same school.

## Mesa a Friendly Host for Acorns

By RAY SCHWARTZ  
MESA, Ariz.

The enthusiasm of the Oakland Oaks for their new training base here apparently is shared by local fandom. The club was in camp only a few days when President Brick Laws signed for an encore at Rendezvous Park in 1951. And to prove that the cash customers here are as enthused as the Oaks, 2,350 turned out for the opening exhibition game, March 4. This was more than the club drew for all of its 1949 pre-season tilts at Glendale, Calif.

The inaugural here was done up in style. Dan Garvey, governor of Arizona, tossed out the first ball to Mesa Mayor Frank Mendick. Other notables on hand included Del Webb, Horace Stoneham, Leo Durocher, Roney Salmon, president of the Arizona-Texas League, and Harry Nace, Sr., owner of the Phoenix club.

"I have never seen such wonderful hospitality," commented Laws on the new setup. Members of the Mesa Junior Chamber of Commerce, which enticed the Oaks here and remodeled the park, now are conducting a series of social events for the visitors. Included are lunches and dinners, a press cocktail party and a barbecue at the base of Superstition Mountain.

Mrs. Terry Calleri, Laws' secretary in his motion picture business since 1935 and also executive secretary of the club, was responsible for selecting Mesa as this year's camp. She also handled room and board assignments for the 48 players here.

Several of the more rotund athletes, among them Billy Herman, Lou Tost, Earl Jones, Don Padgett and Augie Galan, have been spending their afternoons at the nearby Buckhorn Mineral Wells. Buckhorn first became famous as a weight-shedding spa for the New York Giants. Manager Dreesen gave hearty approval to the idea for his plump players bathing in 106-degree mineral waters.

## Fleming Flaming as Seal Slugger

By JIM MCGEE  
EL CENTRO, Calif.

Les Fleming, first baseman purchased from Indianapolis, has been the big noise in the San Francisco's training base here.

When he belted one drive far out of sight, Lefty O'Doul predicted that Fleming would join the select group who have hit balls out of Seals Stadium

## They're on the Ball for Seals



MANAGER LEFTY O'DOUL putting up a battle to keep a football away from three former gridiron stars in a gag shot at the San Francisco Seals' training base at El Centro, Calif. Left to right, Herman Wedemeyer, former St. Mary's star who played with the Baltimore Colts last fall; Wally Yonamine, ex-San Francisco 49er star; Rube Navarro, University of California fullback, and O'Doul.

## 'Country Club' Park Backs Palm Springs' Bid as Camp

\$100,000 Spent on Building and Equipping Dressing Rooms; Facilities Praised by Rainiers, First Occupants

By JOHN B. OLD  
PALM SPRINGS, Calif.

California and Florida have another argument brewing, but old-timers who have seen every spring camp used by the majors the last 20 years say it isn't even a contest—like the world champion New York Yankees playing the Epworth League tail-enders.

California in general and the southern part in particular proudly point to the new \$355,000 ball park built by the energetic citizens of this desert spa as America's newest and finest training quarters.

"Palm Springs' new 'Polo Grounds' is unquestionably the No. 1 spring training camp for ball teams in the United States. It's tops on both points—the finest of facilities and the warm desert climate

### 200-Game PCL Slate Easier Than Majors, Says Dreesen

MESA, Ariz.—While many of the Pacific Coast League managers reportedly have expressed concern over whether their veteran performers will be able to stand up under this season's 200-game grind, at least one pilot, Chuck Dreesen of Oakland, appears unworried over the circuit's move of last winter in increasing the schedule from 152 games. Dreesen says he considers the coming 200-game campaign not only reasonable, but a better deal than is given major league clubs, according to Sports Editor Alan Ward of the Oakland Tribune.

"Shucks, we've got it easier than major league teams," declared Dreesen. "No? Well, listen to this. We play 200 regular games this year and the Giants, say, play 154. But the Giants have 38 exhibitions during spring training and on their way to New York. Almost all those exhibitions are one-night stands. Travel all day, play at night, get on the train at midnight, get up at daybreak. The Oaks' exhibitions, and the same goes for other clubs in the league, involve practically no travel.

"And look here. All major league games are nine innings. We play 28 double-headers, which means 28 seven-inning games. Two innings cut from each contest, a total of 56 innings, or approximately six regulation games.

"Coast league players don't play on Mondays. That means a day off each week. Major league clubs either play on Monday or travel. No days off. Yeah, I'll take our schedule over the Giants' schedule."

um over the right field wall. The last man to do it was Jack Graham, when he was with San Diego.

Fleming also became a member of the "blimp" club at camp, joining Lou Grasmick, rookie righthander, a plump gent, and Cliff Melton, big southpaw, in the battle of the girth.

O'Doul has appointed Tommy Bridges, veteran righthander who was

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match," declared Earl Sheeley, general manager of the Seattle Rainiers of the Pacific Coast League, who admits to having seen 38 spring camps across the land.

The park was completed just this season and immediately occupied by the Rainiers. Already there are strong indications several major clubs would like to "take over," with the Cleveland Indians, the likely new tenant after their Tucson contract expires in 1951.

Seattle has a one-year contract with an option to come back next season. Owner Emil Suck of the Rainiers long a Palm Springs booster, says he would like to have the Rainiers sign a "forever" lease on the park.

Here are a few of the vital statistics regarding the new plant completed February 20. It covers 30 acres, purchased at a cost of \$160,000, including paved free parking space for 120 cars. The park, completely fenced, takes up eight acres. It's 360 feet down either foul line and 400 to center. The infield and outfield are completely sodded and equipped with a sprinkling system. The all-steel grandstand seating 3,200 with plans for an increase to 7,000, cost \$55,000.

### Luxurious Dressing Rooms

But here is the pay-off. The balance of the money—over \$190,000—was spent to equip two team dressing rooms, each with large training quarters, "yacht club" style; rest room; lounge, etc. Both clubhouses are completely tiled, equipped with dryers, washing machines, rubbing tables, gadgets and gadgets galore. Millionaires in their finest clubs simply don't have finer "locker room" quarters.

To Mayor Charlie Farrell, the former movie star who owns the swank Racquet Club; Horace Heidt, ace band leader; and radio star who has sunk a fortune in the plush-plush Lane Palm Hotel; and various promotional-minded Chamber of Commerce dignitaries including Harold Hicks, George Clarke and Bill Dunkerly, to name a few, the completion of the new park is a long-cherished dream come true.

It's questionable if Palm Springs, whose population drops to less than 5,000 during the summer off-season, could support membership in Organized Ball. But during the Palm Springs season—October to May—the population hovers around 25,000 through the influx of tourists.