Rival pilots like their chances

At Oakland

By Billy Martin

The 1981 season was both a good one, and a bad one, and a bad one for the A's. Good in the sense that we won the Western Division Championship, bad due to the unfortunate player strike.

We came so close, but our playoff loss to the Yankees showed me that we still must work harder. I want our players to realize that our organization shouldn't be second best anymore.

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I'm pleased with the make-up of the 1982 A's. I feel we really strengthened our depth with the additions of Joe Rudi and Dan Meyer. Both of these players give me more maneuverability than I've ever had here.

Meyers gives us the additional left handed strength we've been looking for, and he can play first, third or the outfield. Rudi, can also play first, and the outfield for me, and both players give me extra pop coming off the bench.

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There's not much I can say about our outfield that hasn't been said, they're simply the best in baseball.

There is very little that Henderson, Murphy and Armas can't do on the field. The speed of Rickey and Dwayne give me an excellent one - two punch in the lineup, and Tony Armas has put together two straight injury free years, and is now one of the top power hitters in baseball. His 22 HR's and 76 RBI's in a strike interrupted season are totals that many hitters would like for a full season.

In Chicago

By Manager Rony LaRussa

All winer, I have been predicting White Sox fans can make their plans to attend the American League Chapmionship Series at Comiskey Park this fall - and I mean that.

We made only three trades over the winter, but two of those brought us players who led their respective teams in game - winning RBI last year. Tom Paciorek, who also was the second best hitter in the American League in '81 (.326) led Seattle with 13 game winners.

Steve Kemp, who will be in left, actually led Detroit in that department the last 3 years in a row. Steve is a left - handed power hitter and a run - producer, something we needed; those two, combined with Greg Luzinski, the American League's "Most Valuable DH" in 1981, give the Sox the most potential power since the 1977 White Sox, with a much more balanced attack.

In fact, our line - up is so much stronger than last year, Carlton Fisk may move from the 3rd spot to the 7th spot in the line - up, although we now have the luxury of juggling the 5th, 6th, and 7th spots, according to who is hot and who is pitching for the other team.

In Boston

By Ralph Houk

It should be a lot easier for me this year. The knowledge I gained last season after returning to baseball and taking over the Boston club should be invaluable. I feel there is no question that I'll know our strong and weak points and be able to go right to work on some of the things we didn't do well.

So, I'm all excited about this year. Last year proved that our young ballplayers could do the job. I think we were playing our best ball when the strike hit. This club has a brihgt look with a lot of young talent. Fans saw that at the start of last season and they should see even more next season. I can't wait to get started.

Billy Martin
his Oakland A's team to beat

In New York

By Bob Lemon, Manager

Over the years, the Yankees have always generated excitement in New York and throughout the American League. I've been on both sides of the fence — as an opposing player and manager, and now as manager of the Yankees. I prefer it this eay, believe me.

In 1982, the Yankees have added another ingredient to the club. We've always had players who can run — players like Willie Randolph, Dave Winfield, and Jerry Mumphrey. Now, we have added two men who can also fly in Ken Griffey and Dave Collins. Our outfield of Winfield, Mumphrey and Griffey should be outstanding defensively.

Baseball, however, still comes down to pitching — and we feel that we have a talented and deep pitching staff. In Ron Guidry and Tommy John, we have two of the finest lefthanders in the game.

Now, you add Dave Righetti, another southpaw, who was the American League's Rookie of the Year last season, and you have a lefthanded threesome unmatched anywhere. Rick Reuschel is a professional pitcher who is an excellent athlete, to boot. He showed his talent last year after coming over from the Chicago Cubs.

I also expect George Frazier and Rudy May to be valuable members of our staff as long men and perhaps, spot starters. And don't forget a young man we acquired from the Cardinals — lefthanded Bob Sykes, who we know has the talent to be a fine major league pitcher.

GO
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'Billy Ball' 2nd

By Sam Lacy

Without taking a second look, it seems only logical to forecast a division championship for the Oakland A's in the American League West.

Billy Martin has the horses and he knows how to ride.

—

California may pose a threat, what with the acquisition of Reggie Jackson to offer lefthanded power and Doug DeCinces to man third base.

The addition of DeCinces is a definite plus because it produces an infield of Rod Carew at first, Bobby Grich at second, Rick Burleson at shortstop and DeCinces.

—

But the pitching is by no means awe - inspiring and in 17 years of managing, Gene Mauch has yet to prove he's a winner.

Kansas City to finish third, Chicago fourth, then Texas, Minnesota and Seattle.

At Milwaukee

By Manager Bob (Buck) Rodgers

After finishing with the best overall record in the Eastern Division last year and participating in the playoffs for the first time in the club's 12 - year history, it is no surprise that we're looking forward to the 1982 season with great anticipation.

Last year we did a good job of executing, especially down the stretch. Yet we feel many of our players didn't have the type of year we expected them to have. Thus, if most of our people have a "normal" year at the plate for us, we think we are capable to winning the rugged Eastern Division in 1982.

—

Back in the infield is All - Star Cecil Cooper, Jim Gantner and Robin Yount, three players directly responsible for the club topping the majors in double plays last season. Joining them in the infield at third base is the multi - talented Paul Molitor this season, which should give us one of baseball's best infields. Don Money, Roy Howell and Ed Romero give us plenty of depth.

As a unit, we have as fine a group of catchers as anyone in our league. All - Star Ted Simmons should be even better after a year of seeing American League pitching, and Charlie Moore and Ned Yost give us plenty of versatility back there and with out every day lineup. Steve Lake, an outstanding defensive receiver, is also on our roster.

At Detroit

By Sparky Anderson

There's no experience like the experience gained from being in a pennant race.

Our guyes learned that first hand last year. Now for 1982, they'll be better players for it.

There's no question that we happen to play in baseball's toughest division. There's also no question that we're going to take the East Division race right down to the wire again.

We've improved in a couple of areas which fans will see right away. Chet Lemon and Larry Herndon give us the reighthanded hitting we missed last year. And the defense we've added to the outfield will make us one of the best all - around fielding teams in the league.

Chet Lemon is no stranger to Tiger fans. Everyone knows him from his days with the White Sox. He's one of the better outfielders in our league. He can run and he's going to hit for some power.

Everyone in the league is going to be surprised by Larry Herndon. He's ready to blossom as a real star. He's a complete player and gives us a dependable leadoff hitter.

Nor do they count selves out

In Kansas City

By Dick Howser, MANAGER, Royals

We have some definite priorities on our list of things to accomplish this spring. Although we feel our overall pitching depth is one of our strengths, we need to nail down a couple of starters behind Dennis Leonard and Larry Gura. We also need to concentrate on producing more runs than last year.

Basically we feel good about the club. We have a solid nucleus of experienced players and a strong group of talented young players.

When you are starting with players like George Brett, Willie Wilson, Amos Otis, Frank White, Hal McRae, Willie Aikens, U.L. Washington, Dennis Leonard, Larry Gura and Dan Quisenberry, you have to feel good.

The key will be for these veterans to have productive years — not have exceptional years or do things they have not done before — just reach levels they are capable of reaching. Then, we're going to also be counting on some of our youngsters to step in and produce in some key roles.

In Cleveland

By Manager Dave Garcia

I'm really excited about this club. It's the best one the Cleveland Indians have put together since I've been with the organization.

With the addition of Lary Sorensen, Rick Sutcliffe, Ray Searage, Eddie Witson and Silvio Martinez, we have one of the finest pitching staffs in the American League. The young boys (Bud Anderson, John Bohnet, Gordy Glaser and Jack Nuismer) will have to beat out guys like Bert Blyleven — a fierce competitor — Len Barker, one of the top right - handed and Dan Spillner, who's just outstanding.

Ron Hassey, one of the top backstops in the league, is our No. 1 catcher. Chris Bando is ready. He certainly is major league caliber. And if Dave Rosello makes the club, he will be used in the infield as a utility player, as will speedy Mike Fischlin, and possibly as our third catcher.

In Texas

(Continued from Page 4)

base, in leftfield or as the designated hitter again. If he doesn't play first base we'll alternate Pat Putnam and Johnson there.

At second base we'll have a battle between Bump Wills, Flynn from the Mets and Mike Richardt, who led the American Association with a .354 average at Wichita despite losing a lot of weight due to a broken jaw and infected teeth. At shortstop it will be Mario Mendoza or Mark Wagner. Buddy Bell is a fixture at third base and, as far as I'm concerned, the best in baseball.

Mickey Rivers will be in centerfield, with the possibility of Billy Sample starting in left and Leon Roberts and John Grubb alternating in right. Jim Sundberg, a six - time Gold Glove winner, will handle the bulk of the catching.

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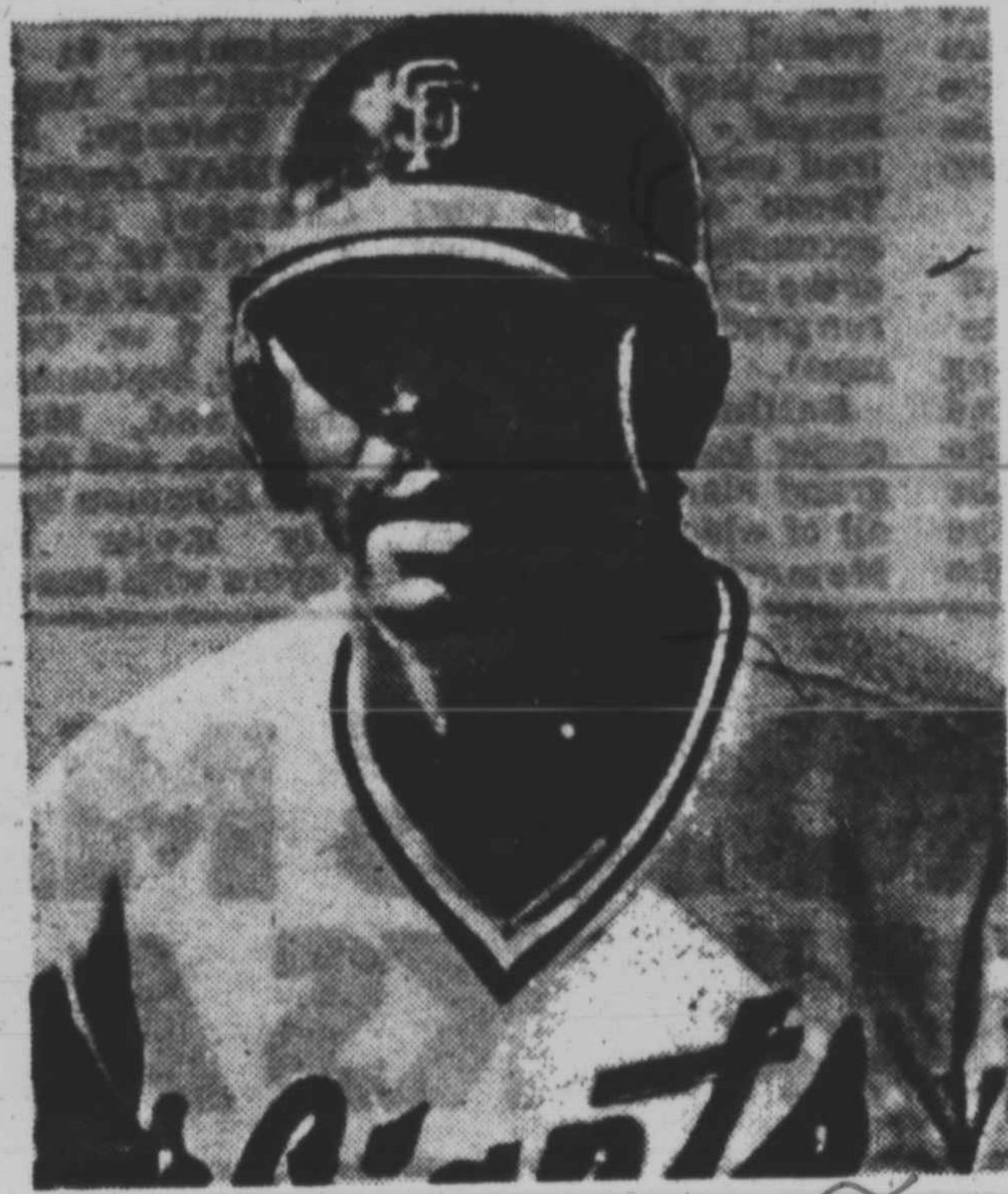

BEFORE THE FACT — When Kansas City manager Dick Howser was assessing his team's chances, he did not have Vida Blue. The flame - throwing lefthander was acquired in inter - league trade March 30, with San Francisco.

In Minnesota

By Billy Gardner

A year of changes . . . that's what looms ahead for the Minnesota Twins in 1982. Changes, I firmly believe, for the better.

A new stadium, the Metrodome in downtown Minneapolis, means a transition to a speed - and - defense style for the team, with the expected upsurge in attendance and fan enthusiasm a big factor in developing the dome as a definite home advantage for our guys.

We have one of the major leagues' youngest teams. Watching this talent change, or mature, into solid big league material is exciting. Especially when it translates into victories, which I'm confident will happen.

Kent Hrbek, Gary Gaetti, Tim Laudner, Len Faedo, Brad Havens, Ron Washington . . . they will all contributed down the stretch last year after being called up. Granted, a month does not a career make, but the poise they displayed bodes well for the Twins' future.

Injuries stalked our mainstays constantly in 1981. Any kind of comebacks from Wyngar, Smalley, Hatcher and Castino, which are expected, will make our offense productive against anybody. And don't forget Dave Engle and Gary Ward, who tore the cover off the ball those final weeks of the '81 race.

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