

GEORGE BEAHON

"In This Corner"



Following a few fretful days while the owners and the troops and all their legal eagles played the second annual strike-or-walkout bit, Dehiber-nation Time arrived last weekend for more than 900 baseball players, assorted space cadets, and swarms of baseball writers and sports columnists. The game is called spring training, and the task confronting the writers, in particular, would appear both gigantic and frantic. The assignment: visit and report on each of 17 major league ball-clubs camped in Florida, but scattered hundreds of miles apart.

The following format is offered free of charge to any citizens fanatic enough to want to see all 17 clubs and become instant experts. It can be done without dashing madly up and down both the east and west coasts of Florida, and with a minimum of automobiling and airplane flying.

Once you've convinced the family that it's just another nasty part of the duty, book yourself on the early morning United Sunbird to Miami and into a nice pad like, say, the Miami Springs Villas. Early, so you can get a noontime start in the pool for benefit of building a suntan. The Villas because it has it all, and is only ten minutes or so removed from Miami Stadium. Pick up the rental convertible at the airport, and reserve it for at least three weeks. Three weeks, it says here, because you need at least 17 days to pick up all 17 clubs, plus some extra driving and flying time to cover the state.

Miami as a base is the key to the whole itinerary.

In Miami Stadium, playground of the Baltimore

Orioles, and the busiest of all exhibition game sites, you can pick up more than half the Florida-based teams as they visit the O's for lucrative exercises. As early as March 9, you can pick up the Dodgers, as a patient Walter Alston sprawls in the visitors' dugout and answers all the questions over and over again.

Across the field you can check with the Orioles' Earl Weaver for outspoken opinions on the other clubs and his own, and just for laughs, all the newest spring training gags. You also can catch Earl in any number of after-work watering holes, where he is even more relaxed. When the Tigers and Yankees are guests, you can do likewise with Billy Martin and Ralph Houk, and if you go the route you are eligible to witness a fist fight.

During workouts or day games, you can free-load in the Orioles clubhouse — fruit juice, restaurant made soups, rugged sandwiches. Or you can take the elevator to the air-conditioned press box and load up on more exotic fare.

Now for the first of two inconveniences. The drive to Fort Lauderdale, and Yankee headquarters. If you hang around for Houk's press conferences after the games, you are eligible to stay up late, after a late-hours session of wine and dining, on the Yankee press pad. Pompano Beach is just across the road, so you can pick up additional camp coverage, before winding up this first of two trips out of Miami. Now, between the schedules in Fort Lauderdale and Miami, you have covered the Orioles, Yankees, Dodgers, Red Sox, Tigers, Royals, Twins, Rangers, Braves, Astros, Expos, Pirates and White Sox.

Now for the other road hardship. The flight to Tampa (always use Delta), where within a few miles covered in another rental convertible, you can find the Reds (Tampa), Phillies (Clearwater), the Mets and Cardinals (St. Petersburg).

With a little hustle, morning workout for one club, pre-game and post-game coverage of two others, you can be finished with this drag in one full day, and make the late night flight from Tampa back to Miami via Delta. (You fly Delta because this is a service which starts dispensing booze in the first class cabin before the hatches are closed and the engines fired up. No limit, either, but it's a job that's got to be done in 45 minutes.)

With proper timing, you should be ten days ahead of schedule. Watch out for overdoing it at poolside. Try to work in a golf match in the morning, before the Florida Derby. And continue to mingle with the other newsies.

This is known as the trade-out game. You tell me all you know about the clubs you've seen in depth, with a few pithy quotes on latest developments, and I tell you my stories. It also can be helpful to visit with the scouts who assemble back of the Miami Stadium screen. Be equipped with extra copies of various club rosters and press books. This saves the scouts a lot of work, because most of them savor statistics. Thus they can report that Joe Diamond, up from Winston-Salem with only two years in the minors, has shown consistent improvement in hitting, and could be a valuable throw-in for that trade that's being talked. (The scout's job is safe for at least three years on anyone coming out of Winston-Salem, even the equipment man.) In turn, the scouts can give you some off-the-record brain-fill on the bad news about their own organizations, which of course you write as private knowledge.

All that's left is some fast typing, and checking the exhibition schedules. If you're doing the Twins today, be sure they are playing at home, and start it with a dateline Orlando, Fla. — or for the Expos: Daytona Beach, Fla. — et cetera. You were there. Alongside the column next day will be a two-graph AP report on how the team performed that day.

The record for covering Florida still is the property of a one time wire service columnist. He didn't stray from Miami for three weeks. In fact, he rarely left the McAlister Hotel. Every night he stationed himself at the bar, and invited visiting newsmen to join in the juice. Whereupon he picked the guys' brains dry, acquired intelligence other guys wouldn't print, and built an enormous bar tab, buried in the travel expense account.

Following this format, a guy could find himself stuck with as much as ten days with nothing to do. So think of something. Like somebody once said, a sportswriter doesn't want to become a millionaire.

Just live like one.

JOHN DOSER

Scholastic Notebook



Not all public schools outside of Monroe County oppose the entry by Catholic schools into public school athletic tournaments.

Romulus Central, headed by Superintendent Robert Hoagland, voted for the proposal last year and will still opt for it if the vote comes up again.

Two Monroe County superintendents, Dr. W. McGregor Deller of Fairport, and Dr. John Bennion, voted no a year ago and haven't changed their minds.

Hoagland, who heads up one of the smallest schools in the section, said "We take them as they come, no matter what their size."

Romulus, which was Class D for basketball for the past 12 years, is now competing in the Finger Lakes West League at the Class C level.

"We play B and A schools," Hoagland said, and pointed out that although Mynderse Academy of Seneca Falls (Class A) has beaten Romulus twice this season, the two schools split their two-game series last year.

Romulus, under coach Tony Alvaro, has been a frequent visitor to the Section 5 Class D tournament finals at the War Memorial. Romulus won eight of its first 10 games this year and was tied for second place in its division.

DeSales of Geneva is the only Catholic school in the Finger Lakes area which Romulus competes against and Hoagland said the schools get along fairly well.

He said it was unfair to permit any team to compete in a public school league all season long, then not be eligible for tournament playoffs.

Hoagland said Catholic schools have recruited talent in the past, but he wasn't sure whether the practice is taking place now.

"I think in some cases it might even be the parents who do the recruiting," Hoagland added.

"FOOTBALL was a real good game," Fairport's Dr. Deller said, referring to the contest two years ago between Fairport and Aquinas before 14,000 fans at Aquinas Stadium.

"But it's not an easy problem to solve," Deller said, referring to "The Catholic Question."

He said Fairport isn't going to make any new decisions until the vote comes up again. "We're trying to straighten out current problems in our district, and this is not our most important issue," he said.

Dr. Deller said the fact that

Catholic and public schools are playing each other in sports is a "good first step."

While Catholic schools await a change of attitude from Fairport, Deller announced the retirement of athletic director Joe Cummings after some 35 years of teaching and coaching in the Fairport district.

Cummings has gone on record as being in favor of Catholic participation in sectional tournaments.

BRIGHTON's Dr. Bennion said if the vote came up today, Brighton would vote against it.

"We feel parochial schools have the opportunity to recruit

from the general Rochester area and this puts us at a disadvantage," Dr. Bennion said.

He added the door was left open at Brighton for further discussion of the issue.

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