

# SCHNEIDER AROUND



By RUSSELL SCHNEIDER

Frank Robinson's date with destiny began routinely enough, though it ended spectacularly.

"I had my usual four eggs, fried in butter, no potatoes and no meat, and coffee with cream and sugar," said major league baseball's first black manager on what turned out to be the most satisfying day — to date — of his 20-year playing career.

"I wasn't very nervous, really I wasn't. Oh, I got some butterflies in my stomach as they played the National Anthem, but once I stepped to the plate for my first-at-bat, I was able to lock everything out of my mind.

"I didn't get very nervous because I'm still too busy to think about myself and what's happening," said Robinson of his debut.

How about his family? Frank's wife Barbara and their two children, Frank Jr. and Nichelle, flew in from their home in Los Angeles for the opening.

"I don't think they were too up-tight," said the manager. "When I left 'em at the hotel, they were still sleeping. When I kissed my wife goodbye, she opened one eye and said, 'Good Luck.' Then she went back to sleep."

Robinson's pre-game meeting with the Indians was all low key stuff, too. "It really was only to go over the other team, that's all," he reported. "I made a few comments about spring training, but nothing really big."

No motivational or inspirational oratory? "No. The motivation is there. This team doesn't need any more," Robinson shrugged off the question.

And in the game that followed, did Robinson do anything wrong? "Nope," he replied with a smile. "I'm still perfect." Indeed he is.

Rachel Robinson, widow of the late Jackie Robinson, the first black man to play professional baseball in 1947, tossed out the ceremonial first pitch. In her pre-game remarks, Mrs. Robinson said, "I want to say I'm proud, proud, proud to be here, and I want to congratulate you for honoring yourselves by being the first to take this historic step."

Commissioner Bowie Kuhn, greeted by inverted cheers, told the crowd, "Thank you for a hearty Cleveland welcome. This is an historic day in baseball and I am happy on behalf of baseball to bring its greetings to Frank Robinson and the Cleveland Indians, and to bring our congratulations to the management of the Cleveland Indians Baseball Club. We hope you have a great season in Cleveland."

Mayor Ralph J. Perk, who caught (cleanly) Mrs. Robinson's first pitch, was booted, too. Then Hizzoner said, "I see all the pennants waving . . . I know this is pennant fever . . . and I know we're going to win the pennant this year." . . . game-time temperature was 33, and the dugouts were even colder because the heaters weren't working. The pipes froze Monday night . . . Charlie Spikes shivered and declared, "This is worse than the middle of winter back home (Bogalusa, La.)." . . . Jackie York and the Indians promotion department provided the Tribesmen with knitted stocking caps for pre-game practice.

Chris Chambliss, one of eight ex-Indians on the Yankee roster, and his wife, Audrey, are expecting their first child in June. "We're hoping for a son and if we get him, we're going to name him Russell," which is very nice . . . Yankee manager Bill Virdon says Dick Tidrow, when he comes off the disabled list (broken finger) on April 13 will be a reliever . . . the field was in remarkably good condition thanks to the world's greatest groundskeepers, Harold and Marshall Bossard.

There was a World Series atmosphere with out-of-town writers clustered around Robinson before the game, and the press box was jammed with scribes from Washington, Pittsburgh, Newark, Dayton and, of course, New York, as well as representatives from Sports Illustrated, Sport, and CBS. . . . Trainer Jim Warfield's big dilemma was whether to wear white, yellow or blue slacks. He finally decided on white. . . . Gaylord Perry's first pitch of the game, a ball to Sandy Alomar, was tossed into the dugout and probably will wind up in the Hall of Fame. . . . Gaylord, incidentally, jumped out of the dugout and was among the first to greet Robinson after his first inning homer.

Catfish (Goldfish) Hunter, who'll pitch the Yankees' home opener Friday, turned 29 Tuesday. . . . Mudcat Grant did a good job singing the National Anthem. . . . Old Friend Walt Williams earned a place on the Yankee roster by proving he can be a back-up second baseman. Walt also volunteered to do some catching if necessary. . . . Buddy Bell's family, including father Gus, who was a teammate of Robinson, drove up from Cincinnati for the inaugural.

Today and Thursday are open dates in the Indians' schedule, and they meet Milwaukee in the Brewers' home opener (before a sellout crowd) Friday afternoon. Jim Perry gets that pitching assignment, and Gaylord Perry works Saturday afternoon. Fritz Peterson makes his 1975 mound debut Sunday afternoon — then comes four more open dates before the Indians play the Brewers in the Stadium the weekend of April 18, 19 and 20.

## 8 pacers vie in Northfield opener

By D'Arcy Egan

Northfield Park unlocked its entry box for the first of 150 nights of racing Tuesday, and pulled out a 10-race program that included eight pacers for Friday's \$20,000 Curly Smart.

"It's a super field," said Director of Racing Joe DeFrank, "but we're honoring a super guy in Curly Smart."

"If the weatherman will cooperate, the winner could produce a sub-2:00 mile. There's no doubt in my mind that this is one of the fastest fields of horses in the country," said DeFrank.

The dash is named after the Harness Racing Hall of Famer T. Wayne (Curly) Smart, and the Delaware, O. horseman will be making the trip up Friday night for his affair.

To Ri Boy, who was slated as the morning line

favorite in the Smart Pace, didn't do so well in Tuesday morning's draw, being saddled with the outside slot in the field of eight.

Taking home the rail post position was Lou Gergis' Akron sidewheeler, Natural Ability, who was nosed out of the winner's circle in his first start of the season last Saturday at The Meadows in Pennsylvania.

In the No. 2 position will be Sly Attorney from the Jerry Latessa stable of Wickliffe, and outside of him will be Easy Irv, with lady star Bea Farber driving: Smashing Don, a Chicago toughie who has only one loss this year; Baron Gerard, an invitational favorite here; Royal Prince, who handed Smashing Don his only loss; and Playboy Hanover, who is undefeated in five outings this year.

# Robby's homer eases pressure on Perry

★ From First Sports Page

Series with Baltimore. We were a young club and pretty nervous going into the first game.

"Frank came to bat in the first inning and hit a home run. Brooksie (Brooks Robinson) followed with another.

"Those settled us down and we swept Series. The game today had that same World Series atmosphere.

"I know I was as nervous as I've ever been. The fans were terrific. It was almost sort of hysteria in that last inning. I would have hated to be the guy up to bat. It has to have an effect.

"I don't want to knock the fans in Baltimore but this was something I haven't experienced before. It really was tremendous. Something like that really gives a team a lift.

"I loved it. I hope they stay that way all season."

Powell admitted that his slugging surprised him. He recalled that he usually is a very slow starter at the plate.

"Usually I hit my first home run some time in May," he recalled. "This probably is the best opening game I've ever had.

"Part of it may be from being with a new team. It just could be that I'm concentrating more, bearing down more."

Boog admitted that being reunited with Robinson might have provided some of the incentive for the all-out effort.

"Anybody who can't play for him

can't play for anybody," the veteran declared.

Over in the other corner of the noisy quarters, Perry was asked about the ninth inning mound conference.

"I was glad he came out. We both knew that we were thinking the same way and the encouragement from him helped.

"I was a little wild in the early part of the game but the Yankees hit some good pitches. They were swinging those bats pretty good up there."

Gaylord set newcomer Bobby Bonds down without a hit, but he wasn't bragging about the feat.

"He's a player who never gives up," the pitcher declared. "He's a great competitor. Bonds will come back the next time and really hit you hard.

"He's an exciting player and has all the equipment. The fans are going to enjoy watching him."

Perry said he felt strong all the way. Even the cold didn't bother him although Powell said that he had no feeling in his feet from the fifth inning on.

"I guess all that hollering kept the

fans warm and maybe it helped me, too," said Gaylord. "With the fans giving the kind of support they did today there's no way we could let them down.

"We're going to have a lot of fun this year."

As the happy Cleveland followers filed

out of the Stadium, not even the thought of the rush hour traffic jam ahead wiped the smiles from their faces. They all seemed to be in complete agreement with Perry.

There, indeed, did seem to be a new feeling of fun and excitement about this ball club. And much of it is due to the man waving the baton — Frank Robinson.

## Johnny Miller athlete of year

NEW YORK (AP) — Golfer Johnny Miller has been voted the Outstanding Athlete of the Year in balloting by sports fans around the nation.

Each award carried a grant of \$5,000 to a youth sports or physical fitness program designated by the winner. Miller also received an additional \$10,000 grant for a program of his choice.

More sports on Page 8-E

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