

Rangers could end KC hold on AL west

By The Associated Press

The Texas Rangers, a little slow getting the guns out of their holsters last year, are expected to come out blazing in 1978, perhaps ending the Kansas City Royals' 2-year reign as the best in the American League West.

The Rangers are the most improved team in the division, with enough new power and pitching to make up the eight games that separated Texas and Kansas City at the end of the 1977 season.

With their off-season wheeling and dealing, the Rangers have the best Texas lineup outside the world champion Dallas Cowboys, causing the folks in Arlington to clamor for double titles.

The Rangers were the best team in the division the second half of 1977, building a 60-33 record from the day Billy Hunter became Texas' fourth manager of the season.

Frank Luchessi, whose troubles included a spring training knock-out by disgruntled player Lenny

Randle, was fired with the Rangers floundering around the .500 mark. Coach Connie Ryan took over for several days until the Rangers signed Eddie Stanky, who stayed around for one day. He said homesickness sent him back to Alabama. Hunter was then hired and he righted the Rangers, who have made every right move since.

They spent nearly \$3 million for free-agent Richie Zisk, who belted 30 homers and knocked in 101 runs last season. Then they signed free-agent right-handed pitcher Doc Medich. And in the blockbuster deal of the off-season, which involved four teams and included 11 players, Texas wound up with left-handed pitcher Jon Matlack, who had been a future star with the New York Mets for several years and hard-hitting Pittsburgh outfielder Al Oliver.

For insurance, the Rangers reacquired pitcher Ferguson Jenkins, who rounds out a starting

staff that includes 17 game winner Doyle Alexander, Dock Ellis, Matlack and Medich.

The bullpen may be an Achilles heel. Adrian Devine and Tommy Boggs were part of Texas' shipment in the 11-player trade.

No matter who does the throwing, Jim Sundberg will do the catching and some think no one in baseball does it better. The four-year veteran batted .291 last year.

The infield is set with Mike Hargrove, a .305 hitter, at first; second-year man Bump Wills, .287, at second; steady Bert Campaneris at short and Toby Harrah 27 homers, 87 RBI at third.

The outfield of Claudell Washington in left, Juan Beniquez in center and Oliver in right is strong. Zisk can play the outfield but does less defensive damage sitting on the bench and getting his whacks as a designated hitter.

"To win we have to win one more game than Kansas City," says Hunter. "Last year, Kansas City won 102. So if they win 110, we'll have to win 111. But I think we can do it."

Kansas City Manager Whitey Herzog is betting they can't. "Last year, our only guy to make the All-Star team was third baseman George Brett. No other player was in the top six," said Herzog. "But we won 102 games, so we must have some pretty good players."

Their best players, however, seem to be non-pitchers. Except for fireballing Dennis Leonard, the Royals' starting staff is suspect. Jim Colburn won 18 games and Paul Splittorff 16, but neither is overpowering.

Kansas City is an extremely deep team otherwise. Two of the Royals' longtime stars, first baseman John Mayberry and center fielder Amos Otis, are being pushed by rookies Clint Hurdle and Willie Wilson, respec-

tively.

Brett has third base nailed down while shortstop Freddie Patek and second baseman Frank White are two of the slickest fielders in the business. Al Cowens had some of the best overall statistics in the AL last year, batting .312 with 23 homers and 112 RBI.

California continued to spend money on free agents but if the Angels have to also continue to pay enormous doctor bills, the 1978 season will be a bust, too. They acquired free-agent Lyman Bostock, who batted .336 last year, to play center field between Joe Rudi and possibly Ken Landreaux, the minor league players of the year in 1977. Landreaux's potential allowed the Angels to trade Bobby Bonds.

Injuries limited Rudi to only 64 games last season, 12 more than Bobby Grich. These two free agents — plus Don Baylor — were supposed to lead California to the promised land.

In deals with Chicago and Boston, the Angels picked up pitchers Chris Knapp and Don Aase, respectively. California is counting on these two hurlers to supplement stars Nolan Ryan and Frank

Tanana, whose arm injury is causing some concern in Anaheim.

The Chicago White Sox have the big bats, including Bonds, Lamar Johnson, Chet Lemon and free-agent Ron Blomberg. But only when Manager Bob Lemon, a former ace right-hander, goes to the mound for consultation does Chicago have a legitimate pitcher in the neighborhood. Francisco Barrios was 14-7, but had a 4.12 ERA.

As for the Minnesota Twins, who have Rod Carew — the best hitter in baseball — Gene Mauch tried to get out of his contract to manage California. Standouts Larry Hise and Bostock signed with other clubs. "I have two outstanding outfielders," Mauch said. "One of them is in California; the other one is in Milwaukee."

Oakland, or will it be Denver, has its best players all over the league, including pitcher Vida Blue, who is now with San Francisco. That, and the lack of enthusiasm in the Bay Area, will keep the A's behind Seattle's Mariners.

The predictions: Texas, Kansas City, California, Chicago, Minnesota, Seattle and Oakland.

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Track team season bests

Oregon's men's Track team had nine season bests in its recent thrashing of Long Beach State.

Dave Voorhees leads the way with a phenomenal 193-11 in the discus, the event he won against the Forty-Niners by a comfortable 31-foot margin.

Rudy Chapa smoked to a 3:42.3 time in the 1500 meters, which matches the winning time of the Pac-8 conference meet last year.

Alberto Salazar has bettered his time in the 10,000 meters from a year ago, with a current mark of 28:55.4 to his credit.

In the sprints, the Ducks seem to be faring well despite the loss of star Phil Bransom. Andrew Banks' time of 10.33 in the 100 meters would have finished second in the Pac-8 meet last year. In addition, Don Coleman has a 21.1 clocking in the 200 meters.

Tom Hintnaus reached the 17-foot plateau in the pole vault,

winning against two other 17-footers from Long Beach State.

MEN

100 — Andrew Banks	10.33
200 — Don Coleman	21.1
400 — Greg Walton	47.6
800 — Bruce Nelson	1:49.9
1,500 — Rudy Chapa	3:42.3
5,000 — Alberto Salazar	14:35.7
10,000 — Salazar	28:55.4
110-Hurdles — Mike Chris	14.93
400 IM Hurdles — Jim Bell	52.7
Steeplechase — Don Clary	8:52.9
High Jump — Jan From	6-10
Pole Vault — Tom Hintnaus	17-0
Long Jump — Jon Ogard	23-6 1/2
Triple Jump — Gary Lacey	49-5 1/2
Shot Put — Jeff Stover	61-2
Discus — Dave Voorhees	193-11
Hammer — Jon McArdle	191-3
Javelin — Ron Perkins	223-3 1/2

WOMEN

100 — Debbie Adams	11.8
200 — Georgene Rose	26.3
400 — Melanie Batiste	57.4
800 — Ellen Schmidt	2:12.7
1,500 — Katy Mountain	4:35.8
3,000 — Katy Mountain	10:28.8
5,000 — Heather Telford	10:39.6 (yds.)
10,000 — Heather Telford	17:04.3 (new school record)
100 Hurdles — Heather Telford	35:10
400 Hurdles — Kori Hesselblad	16.2
800 Hurdles — Georgene Rose	1:05.7
Long Jump — Joan Walton	17-1 1/2 (Indoor)
Discus — Mary Stephenson	149-8
Shot Put — Maggie Bonn	40-4 1/2
Javelin — Patti Kearney	141-3

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