

Sand Along Base Paths: a Defensive Maneuver

By Frank Eck
Of the Associated Press

Is cheating returning to big league diamonds?

The Los Angeles Dodgers had a valid excuse when first baseman Ron Fairly discovered an abnormal amount of sand spread halfway between first and second base the

night after the Dodgers had whipped the San Francisco Giants, 11-3.

The Dodgers had stolen four bases, two of them perpetrated by speedy Maury Wills, the new base stealing champion.

Fairly complained to Manager Walt Alton who got Um-

pire Jocko Conlan's good ear. Obliging Jocko called "time," inspected the area and ordered the sand removed.

At the Washington All-Star game Dodger General Manager Emile "Buzzie" Bavasi and Giant vice president Charles "Chubby" Feeney, two like-

able officials who were to dine together, were spotted.

"There he is!" said Bavasi, who never lets anyone pull the wool (or sand) over the eyes of Walter F. O'Malley, his Dodger boss. "Just call him 'Sandman.'"

A "Half-Ton" of Sand

"Sure they did it on purpose. They had to find a way to stop Maury Wills. (Wills has stolen three bases in his first three games at Candlestick Park, home of the Giants). "I'm not accusing anybody but after we stole four bases in one game there was a half-ton of sand near first base."

This could impede any Dodger (any Giant, too) on steals and pickoff plays.

"You really don't think we did it on purpose, do you?" Feeney asked this writer.

(It's hard to say what the Giants will do. When they played in the Polo Grounds the ground crew dragged mats around the infield after four and a half innings. Clouds of dust reached the box seat fans. This, of course, was not on purpose.

"I know Buzzie was only kidding," says Feeney. "Actually what happened is that the hose (water hose not a sand blasting hose) broke. They took off only two wheelbarrows of sand."

The broken hose caused flooding, and groundkeeper Matty Schwab, a man who has around, used sand to help dry the spot.

It will be interesting to see what the Giants will think of when the Dodgers next visit San Francisco on Aug. 10-12.

It seems strange that baseball men today make excuses when they have been accused of tampering with the playing surface.

Stengel Folds Foes

When Casey Stengel managed the Boston Braves between 1938 and 1943 he knew more about manipulating a playing area than he did about platooning. He couldn't platooning with his material, but he found ways to foil visiting teams.

Casey had his ground crew build up the third base line at old Braves field. This, wizen Stengel felt, would serve a dual purpose — and it did. Visiting players, when they bunted down third base, could be fooled into thinking a close-to-the-line bunt would roll foul.

There was no sense to hustle down to first on a seemingly foul bunt. But much to their amazement the bunters would be caught napping when the



MAURY WILLS
Had Giants Jumping

ball returned to fair ground and Deb Garms, the Boston third baseman, had an easy chance for the putout.

It also worked well offensively for the Braves. They had to struggle for hits. Buddy Hassett and Deb Garms, beat out a number of bunts. Opposing third baseman were duped on bunts close to the line. The balls would be roll-

ing toward foul territory but when they reached a certain spot halfway down the third base line, the balls would veer into fair ground as though loaded with seeing-eye equipment (radar was new then).

Dr. Richard Rohde, Cincinnati Red trainer who acted as Fred Hutchinson's trainer for the National League All-Stars this year, recalls his days as club trainer when Bill "Deacon" McKechnie managed Cincinnati (1938-46).

"We had a groundkeeper who used to let the infield grass grow real high near third base," says Dr. Rohde. "Hed just water it and water it, and Bill Werber, our third baseman, would come out to supervise the operation."

Werber could play third base better than anyone in Crosley Field.

Pitching mounds have been raised and lowered at the whim of a star pitcher, distances of outfield fences have been changed to suit one team's power, or lack of same, and in the days of the Baltimore Orioles, baseballs were stored on ice to make them harder and thus livelier.

Manager Birdie Tebbetts of the Milwaukee Braves, who aren't doing too well, says he has mailed "undisputable

proof" to Commissioner Ford C. Frick that signals are being stolen by opposing teams. Birdie suggests a guilty manager ought to be suspended for one year.

Birdie is chirping up the wrong tree, says Frick. "If he had any evidence I'd act in a hurry," says the commissioner.

For shame, Birdie! You know there's no cheating in baseball. Your Joe Adcock always holds his foot on first base until the putout is made and pitcher Lew Burdette spits only to clean the soil spots for the baseball.

Big League Bus Takes Bumps Out of Minor League Travel

By CARLOS SALAZAR
of the NEA

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — (NEA)—If you travel with the Tulsa Oilers you get to see Texas League territory in high style—if you stay awake that long.

The Oilers' sleeper bus has several advantages. It gives the players adequate rest and provides the front office with a sizeable slash in travel expense. Manager Whitey Kurowski and his players like the comforts of their traveling hotel.

The schooner is converted into a sleeper. It sleeps 21. It has seats for six more. Besides boasting air conditioning—and foam rubber mattresses—it has a high fidelity radio-record player music installation.

The sleeper wagon was the brain child of Grayle Howlett, owner of the Oilers until he sold his interest this year to industrialist A. Ray Smith. The Kansas-Oklahoma-Missouri line leases the bus to the Oilers who operate it at a cost of 55 cents a mile. That includes the season lease cost, plus a \$30-a-day charge for the driver.

It cost \$1,500 to manufacture tailor-made supports for the special bunks. It takes less than \$125 to rip out the seats of a standard bus and install the bunks. It costs another \$125 to put the bus in service after the season ends.

A red-and-green color motif inside the bus provides a pleasant atmosphere as the Oilers take their long tours.

Tulsa travels 655 miles from Tulsa to Albuquerque, for example, and 779 miles on a junket to El Paso. Players don't feel the strain of long jumps like that when they sleep comfortably all the way stretched out in their bunks.

The huge sleeper fills a big need in public relations, too.



Easy Travel

Tulsa's Jeff Long, standing, and Jim O'Rourke display the interior of the Oilers' air-conditioned sleeper bus which the team uses for all its road trips in the spread-out Texas League. It saves wear and tear on the players and is economical, too.

The management uses the bus for an overnight Tulsa-to-St. Louis junket for a little league team during the season.

The little leagues compete with each other in selling season tickets for the Oilers. The winning team gets a free trip to see the Cardinals

play—and an added bonus of a big dinner at Stan Musial's restaurant. Tulsa, being a farm of the Cardinals, has little trouble selling the Cards to the kids.

The sleeper bus is the answer to the thousands of baseball players who hit the road nightly for cross-country hops.

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