

Roger Maris: NEW IDOL IN YANKEEDOM

Fickle fans have cooled to New York's great Mickey Mantle; their new hero-slugger already has challenged Mickey at the plate and hopes to equal him soon in business acumen

By JACK RYAN

gested. Both are too coolly professional to fall into a trap like that. Mantle, like Maris, acknowledges that part of his upsurge this year is having another slugger in the lineup to take the pressure off the individual batter.

Maris leaves baseball talk almost with a sense of relief. It's part of his philosophy of being a relaxed athlete and as important to him as muscle condition and reaction time. "My wife Pat and I never talk baseball at home. There's enough tension on the field. Why lug it home?"

At 25, Maris is eminently successful in dodging the nagging worries that can tighten up an athlete's payoff muscles as much as a Charley horse. At the height of Roger's hitting splurge, columnists were turning out verbiage on how Maris might pass Babe Ruth's homer record of 60, which has stood for more than 30 years.

"I read that stuff," Maris admits, "but it doesn't affect me. I read it every year about somebody."

Being a hero in the Big Town hasn't disturbed the composed young man from the wheat fields of North Dakota, either. He and his wife have bought a one-story Tudor home in a Kansas City suburb. "We're through packing up with every move. We like Kansas City, and that's where I'm going to buy my business."

Pat Maris was Roger's high-school sweetheart in Fargo, N.D. Married four years, they have three children: Susan, 3, Roger, 19 months, and an infant born last month.

As the closing theme of the Laurel and Hardy movie piped from the TV set, Mantle and Maris clumped out to the field shoulder to shoulder, still without a word. A dour newspaperman, still in love with the era when baseball heroes died broke, commented: "Maybe they'll be more talkative when they have year-end statements to compare."

But whether the old-timers and bleacherites like it or not, the best baseball—and certainly the most exciting—is being played today by steady, thoughtful men like Mickey Mantle and now Roger Maris. As a businessman would put it, you get a good return on your dollar when you see them play—even if you come out only to boo them.

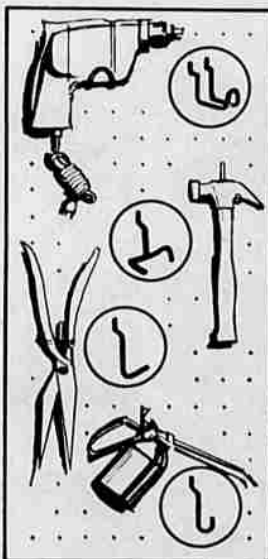
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