

IS LADY LUCK BACK ON HERB SCORE'S SIDE?

Potentially the best pitcher in baseball today, the Cleveland left-hander needs only a little good fortune instead of the bad he's been plagued with most of his life

HERBERT JUDE SCORE, the flame-throwing Cleveland pitcher known as "the left-handed Bob Feller," has been waist-deep in luck most of his life. The only trouble is, most of it has been bad. If it ever changes, if he ever becomes as lucky as he's been unlucky so far, the American League batters are going to have a lot of trouble.

The best-known example of Herb's strange affinity for disaster was the accident he suffered on the ball field the night of May 7, 1957, during a game between the Indians and the New York Yankees. With two men out in the Yankees' half of the first inning, Gil McDougald, the New York shortstop, smashed a smoking line drive that struck Score full in the right eye. The tall, slim pitcher sank to the ground as though he had been hit by a .45-caliber bullet.

Rocky Colavito, Herb's roommate and closest buddy, raced in from right field like a sprinter. As he bent over Score's limp body, Rocky heard him say, "Hey, St. Jude, stay with me." St. Jude is Herb's patron saint; it's his name that Herb has taken as his own middle name. When Herb regained his wits, he said, "It just goes to prove that St. Jude really is the saint of hopeless cases like me."

He was badly hurt, that was certain. The ball had crashed squarely against the surface of bone around his right eye. "It was fortunate that the ball hit him flush," eye specialist Dr. Charles Thomas said. "It caught the top of the eyebrow bone, the cheekbone, and the nose, fracturing the nose. The bone structure of Herb's face absorbed most of the impact that otherwise would have destroyed his eye. There was no brain injury."

In the clubhouse, as he lay on a stretcher waiting to be taken to the hospital, Herb joked feebly with Cleveland pitcher Mike Garcia. "You can't say I didn't keep my eye on that ball," he said. But he had little to laugh about. It took a long time to heal the injury that nearly ended his career.

A 20-game winner in 1956, Herb pitched no more in 1957; his victories for the season: two games. In 1958, trying for a comeback, he was plagued by a badly inflamed elbow that finally put him on the voluntary retired list for most of the season. Again, he won only two games. Understandably, people be-

gan to wonder if he was all through; if he'd left his promise on the Cleveland Stadium mound when that line drive smacked his face.

The tragedy of it was that so much had been expected of him. Pitchers who can throw with the blazing speed of Herb Score come along very seldom. Each generation produces only a few. The Indians had been watching Herb ever since his high-school days in Lake Worth, Fla. Cy Slapnicka, the famous Cleveland scout who had signed Bob Feller off his father's farm in Van Meter, Ia., had been tipped off about Score by a Lake Worth policeman, Tom Nagle. Cy camped on his doorstep and, when he was ready to sign a professional contract, got him with \$60,000 of the Cleveland club's money.

"He's pretty wild," Slapnicka told Cleveland newspapermen, "but he's fast. Man, what an arm. He'll be the greatest."

MAYBE CY should have studied the luck of Herb Score more closely. When he was three years old, he had been run over by a truck. Both his legs were crushed just below the pelvis, and several doctors said they would have to be amputated to save his life. They were wrong. But a few months later he was stricken by rheumatic fever.

In his freshman year in high school, he tripped and fractured an ankle. Before the cast came off, he was in the hospital for an emergency appendectomy. He had pneumonia twice, as well as an agonizing colon condition. He was rejected by the Army because of high blood pressure. He suffered a separation of his left shoulder in a fall.

But Slapnicka didn't have much to worry about during Score's minor-league apprenticeship except his wildness. The youngster had a terrible time learning how to harness his blinding speed and get the ball over the plate. He'd always been able to throw hard, even as a kid pitching for the Holy Name of Mary School in Rosedale, Long Island, where he lived until his home was broken up and his mother moved to Florida. According to his mother, he used to throw anything he could get his hands on.

He liked to hit what he was throwing at, but control hadn't been so important as it was now. In organized baseball, the fastest



Going strong again, Herb deserves the lion's share of good luck for refusing to be discouraged each time the breaks went against him.