

Earl Starts Well--Then Bosox Lower Boom

Opener Brings Out Color, Drama And Tradition

The 1968 Tiger opener had all of the color, tradition and the spirit that generally comes with the start of a season for America's favorite sport. The attendance was announced at 41,429 but judging from the number of empty seats in the stands, there must have been quite a few that bought tickets who didn't attend.

In the typical chilly, blustery weather that seems to be one of the earmarks of an opening game in the Motor City, Gov. George Romney and

Detroit Mayor Jerome Cavanagh came out for the opening pitch.

The crowd seemed about equally divided in its sentiments towards the pair — half was booing and the other half cheering. Who the booing was for and who the cheering couldn't quite be decided.

Gov. Romney went through the motions of a pitcher but the ball was some 15 feet short of the plate and Catcher Cavanagh quickly gobbled it up.

Both vanished into the stands after the ceremonies.

The fireworks, if one could call it that on such a chilly day, were provided first by Tiger Pitcher Earl Wilson with a home run and then by Carl Yastrzemski who powered one into the right field stands and then added an inside-the-park blast in the ninth inning.

FIRST BALL into the stands came on the first pitch by Tiger Earl Wilson. It was a foul off the bat of Boston's Mike Andrews into the second deck back of first base.

FIRST STRIKEOUT victim was Andrews who went down swinging. So did Dal Jones who followed him into the batter's box. Yastrzemski, everybody's choice as most valuable player of the year last fall after leading the Bosox to the American League flag with his tremendous bat, popped out to Ray Oyler.

OPENING DAY FANS were treated to another first — it was the first time in modern history American League umpires wore anything but the traditional blue.

The four-man crew appeared in sporty blue jackets and caps and grey slacks. That's the official attire this year.

MICKEY STANLEY, who started at first base in a somewhat surprise move by Tiger Manager Mayo Smith, gave the crowd something to cheer about when he blasted the first pitch of Lefty Dick Ellsworth down the third base line for a single. That's as far as he got — he was a victim of force-play grounder by Al Kaline.

Picture story of Tiger opener
by R. T. Thompson and Chief
Photographer Jim Hubbard.

BOSTON SHOWED some signs of a defending champion in the second inning when they broke the scoring with two runs on a long double by Rico Petrocelli.

Reggie Smith had opened the frame with a smash to shortstop and beat the throw. George Scott fled to Al Kaline but Joe LaHoud worked Wilson for a walk. Then Petrocelli lofted one into the left field corner that went for two bases when Willie Horton acted like anything but an antelope in chasing down the ball.

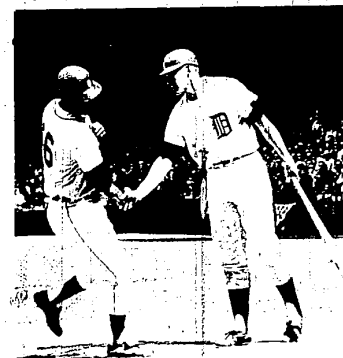
Jones received credit for the season's first stolen base when he loped from first to second while Andrews was on third in the third inning.

WILSON, WHO IS as well known for his hitting as his pitching, received a standing ovation from the crowd when he belted one into the second deck of the stands in left-center. It was the first homer of the season and the first Tiger run of the American League race.

JOE LAHOUD, the 19-year-old Connecticut youngster filling in for Tony Conigliari in right field, had some anxious moments in the third inning when he had to chase three high flies in the blustering wind catches. He just scratched up with and hang on to a towering blast by Dick McAuliffe. The fans received a big kick from the manner in which he chased, stopped and then chased the ball again before finally making the catches.



IN A FAMILIAR ROLE is Gov. George Romney who fired the opening pitch to officially open the season. He almost made it this time — the ball bounced once in front of the plate and then was nabbed by catcher Mayor Jerome Cavanagh of Detroit.



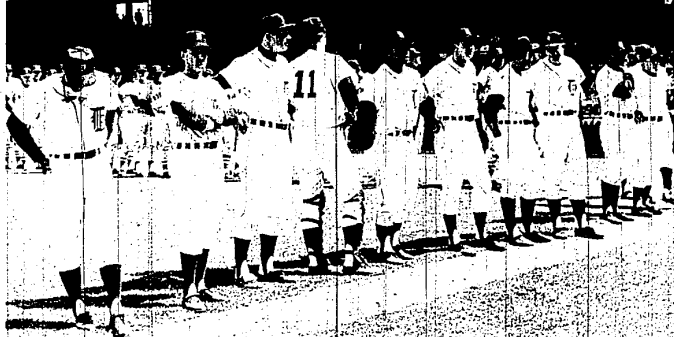
GREETING EARL WILSON at the plate following his long distance blast into the left field bleachers is first baseman Mickey Stanley. Earl did alright batting but ran into trouble in the pitching department and had to be replaced by Pat Dobson.



TRADITIONAL GOOD LUCK floral piece is turned over to Tiger Manager Mayo Smith by a representative of the Detroit Firefighters Association. As has been the case in many other openers, the horseshoe wasn't lucky this time.

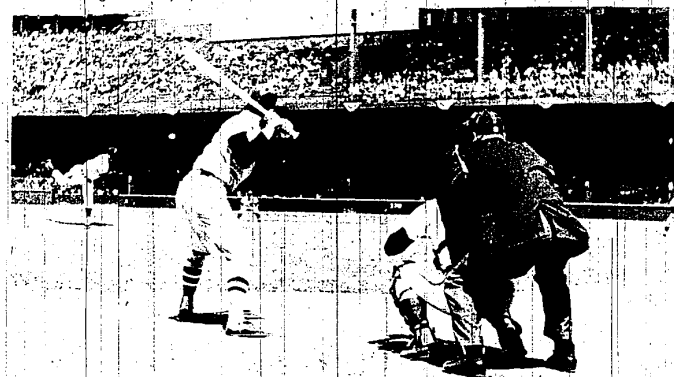


DISCUSSING PROSPECTS are Tiger President John Fetzer and Manager Smith. It was cold and blustery and the team lost but Fetzer was still there rooting when the final out was recorded.



MEET THE TIGERS. The huge opening day gathering had just that opportunity prior to the start of the game. All players were introduced

over the PA system and trotted from the bench to the third baseline as the names were called.



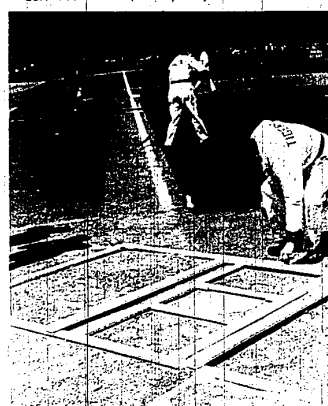
PLAY BALL. Here comes the first pitch from Tiger starter Earl Wilson and Boston's Mike Andrews promptly fouled it off into the second

deck behind the plate. That's catcher Bill Freehan behind the plate.



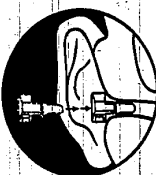
SCAMPERING HOME to score on his inside-the-park homer on a long belt to centerfield is Carl Yastrzemski, everybody's choice as most

valuable player a year ago. It was one of his two circuit clouts — the other landed high in the second deck of the rightfield stands.



GROUND CREW puts the finishing touches on the diamond, laying out the batter's box and the catcher's position. Then came the call of "play ball" and the season was underway.

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