

Tigers Smother Tribe In Opener, 12-4

By W. W. EDGAR
 Displaying the same kind of power that carried them to the pennant and a victory in the world series two years ago, the Tigers converted the non-believers Tuesday afternoon by crushing the Cleveland Indians in the home opener, 12 to 4.

They pounced on seven of the Tribe's pitchers for 15 hits and caused Alvin Dark, the Indian pilot to stand on the dugout steps and confide in intimates that he was glad for the off day on Wednesday to retrain his forces for the second battle of the series on Thursday.

He tried to choke off the

Tigers' power with a variety of pitching. He used tall pitchers, short ones, fast ball throwers, slow ball hurlers, right handers and southpaws. But they all looked the same to the Tiger team as it battling to regain the confidence of the fans.

BEFORE THE GAME many in the gathering of 46,891 cast their doubts about the team that Manager Mayo Smith brought up out of the south.

It had a poor spring training season, made even worse, with the suspension of Denny McLain, and it had fared poorly against the weakest

opposition in the Grapefruit League.

But during the final week the team pulled itself together to finish the training grind with five straight victories and an even break in the first six games on the road to open the regular season.

There was no doubt at the finish—the Tigers put on a show of power that would have pleased the most critical.

HERE ARE SOME of the things they accomplished:

They pounded out 15 hits off seven pitchers.

They bunched many of the hits to score four runs on three

saeties in the third and six more for five runs in the fifth.

Al Kaline doubled to left in the third to tie Harry Heilmann for the all-time Tiger record of extra bases.

The Bengals scored five runs before a man was out in the fifth inning.

To add to the embarrassment of the Tribe, Mickey Lolich stole third base while Calcher Ray Fosse held the ball.

This display of power combined with alertness in the field enabled the Tigers to give Lolich, the relieving left-hander his second victory in three starts in his new role as the No. 1 pitcher.

It wasn't one of Mickey's better days as he was touched for 12 hits and fanned only five batters, gave up three bases on balls.

One of the hits he allowed was a booming home run to Ted Ford, the Tribe right-fielder in the eighth inning. It was Ford's first major league hit after going to bat nine times.

The turning point came in the third inning. After being held to one hit, a single by Jim Northrup in the second, the Tigers turned the game into a rout in the third.

Don Wert, who is fighting to retain his position at third base, opened with a single to center. Then Lolich furnished his first surprise. He laid down a bunt and beat the throw to advance Wert to second. Dick McLaughlin then singled to right to score Wert and the drive was on.

Cesar Gutierrez, the new shortstop making his first appearance before the home fans, drew a pass.

Then came the crowning blow.

With Lolich on the front end the Tigers worked a double steal while the Tribe's catcher Fosse held the ball in utter amazement.

While the huge gathering still was chucking over the sight of Mickey plowing his way to third base, Kaline doubled to left, scoring both Lolich and Wert and scored a moment later when Willie Horton slashed a sharp drive to first base.

Northrup and Bill Freehan drew passes to fill the bases, but Wert, up for the second time, hit into a force out and the morning subsided... only briefly.

For a time in the Tribe fold it appeared as if Lolich was juring in the frigid weather and would be denied his cherished victory before the home crowd.

AFTER ONE WAS OUT Tony Horton found a pitch he liked and lined it to left for a double. Mickey walked two of the next three batters to fill the bases and bring Coach Mike Roarke out to the mound.

Mickey allowed that he was slighted and was allowed to stay. He proved his point by fanning Jack Heideman, the Tribe shortstop, to end the trouble.

This was the Tribe's last hope of victory.

Picking up where they left off in the fourth, the Tigers tallied five times in the fifth before a single batter was retired in a parade of pitchers.

Kaline opened the session with a pass. Cash and Horton

followed with singles. Northrup doubled, and Freehan, Wert and Lolich singled in succession and the contest was turned into a rout.

It was then that Dark walked back to the dugout after a change of pitchers, shaking his head and gesturing with his hands that he was at a loss to stop it.

The Tigers added another run in the sixth when Cash, Horton and Northrup singled in a row and Cash accounted for the last two runs with a home run into the right field stands after Kaline walked.

IN THIS OPENING day display of power Cash and Northrup shared honors with each

getting three hits. Stormin' Norman had three, including his circuit blow, and Jim had a double and a pair of singles. Freehan and Wert also had two apiece to help fatten their averages.

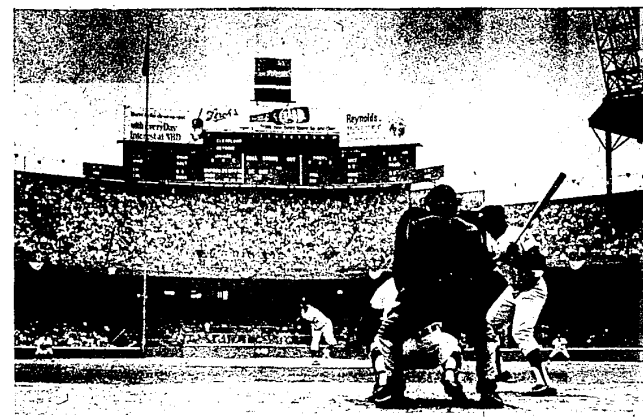
When it was all over and the shivering fans walked out of the frigid atmosphere they were smiling and admitting that the Tigers might be able to gain their old-time momentum—even without McLain.

The fellow wearing the broadest smile was General Manager Jim Campbell who told all within earshot:

"This team is a lot better than it has been given credit." He didn't get any arguments.



OUT AT SECOND and Don McLaughlin (3) rolls away from second base after taking a relay to force Vada Pinson. Note the umpire's arm at right designating "out." (Observer photo by Vince Wittek)



PLAY BALL!! Tiger Pitcher Mickey Lolich answers the call of the umpire by firing the opening pitch past Vada Pinson of the Cleveland Indians. Mickey went on to record an easy 12-4 victory. (Observer photo by Vince Wittek)

There's Nothing Like An Opener For Detroit Fans

By GEORGE MASKIN
 Observer Sports Editor

There's nothing like opening day—at least in Detroit when the Tigers are involved.

In most areas, the fans take opening day in stride. Not so around Detroit.

It's the biggest sports day of the year, and nobody is overlooking the fact the Lions may draw more for a game, the Wings may surge forth in a titanic struggle or Lew Alcindor may be coming to town to meet the Pistons.

Whatever the weather—a gloomy, chilly day, such as was the case most of Tuesday, a balmy day (which is rare) or a snowy-frigid day (which we have had)—make little difference on opening day.

The fans still pour out—46,000 strong. It's the "in" thing to do, it's the "in" place to be.

You're a nobody unless you're seen at the ball park on opening day.

THERE SURE must have been a flock of grandmothers sick Tuesday.

As early as 10 a.m., youngsters of school age were parading down Michigan avenue and heading for the stadium.

Most of them knew their parents and their teachers would understand.

Baseball still is the national pastime.

THE TIGER CLUBHOUSE wasn't the same, not when over on the right side of one entered, the cage of No. 17 Denny McLain stood empty.

And gone was the guy from Livonia, Joe Sparna, who always occupied the spot next to McLain. Sparna's now up in Montreal, where he's lost two heartbreakers for the Royals.

Some new fresh faces were spotted, decked out in the brand new Tiger uniforms. There was Elliott Maddox, who two years ago was playing in Detroit, but on that occasion was a member of the University of Michigan team which opposed the U. of D.

Maddox has made it to the majors faster than most young men. He also has already earned a starting job, at least on some occasions, at third base.

AND, THERE WAS Al Kaline in his 18th season as a Tiger. The "old" man of the team, but you would hardly

guess it, looking at the trim slugger who has written history as a member of the team.

Some say this could be his last season. But they're also saying that about Gordie Howe.

TURNOVERS HAVE marked the Tiger and Cleveland lineups. Each side had nine players who weren't with the team at the same time last year.

One such Tiger, of course, was McLain.

DURING THE Introductions:

Biggest Cheers: For Al Kaline and Willie Horton.

Biggest Jeers: For Manager Mayo Smith (had the fans forgotten Mayo had two second-place teams and a champion in three years?)

More jeers — for governor William Milliken pitching to Detroit Mayor Roman Gribbs in the traditional opening ceremonies.

THE FIRSTS:

No night games until May in the Stadium.

Ball—Leadoff batter Vada Pinson.

Strike—To Pinson.

Walk—Pinson.

Out—Pinson when picked off first.

Hit—Ray Foster of Tribe.

THOUGHT: Wouldn't it be nice to have such nice "green" grass? Nice paint they use.

It was easy to tell in the pressbox which writers had been to Florida for spring training—and which hadn't.

It's doubtful if anybody in the stadium could match the record of Observer raving editor Eddie Edgar. This was his 47th opener.

Hungry people: The concession department had 55,000 hot dogs on deck for the opener.

Don't Forget: Tigers are home again Thursday afternoon to Cleveland, then it's Boston the next three afternoons.



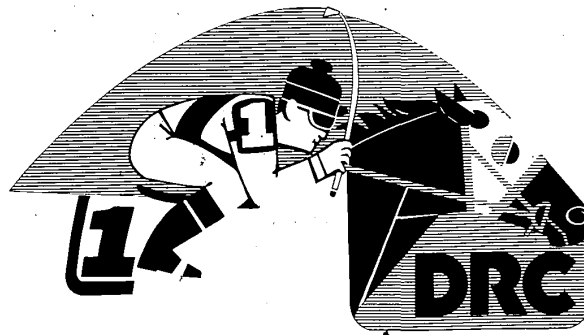
CHILLY OUTSIDE but Manager Mayo Smith had a warm feeling inside as he watched his Tigers maul Cleveland, 12-4, in the season opener. (Observer photo by Vince Wittek)

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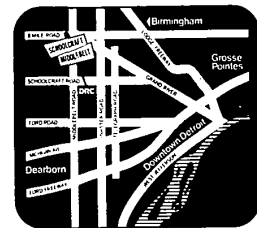
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Every Thursday is Ladies Day. Ladies are admitted for half price in the Grandstand.

... bring a friend.