

Tigers, Red Sox Open Season Tuesday

Play Ball!
The old cry will ring out at Tiger Stadium Tuesday when the Detroit Tigers lift the lid on the 1968 American League season facing the Boston Red Sox.

No more appropriate opener could have been arranged by the American League.

It was Boston which beat out the Tigers for the junior circuit flag last season, with

the Sox margin of victory being one game and coming on the final day of the season.

The Red Sox had negotiated a stunning upset: They were listed at from 75-100 to 1 going into the 1967 season.

Notwithstanding their title finish of a year ago, the Sox can't find too many who think they'll repeat.

Instead, it's the Tigers who

appear to have excited most experts, although Minnesota and Chicago are rated as major threats to Detroit along with the California Angels.

The Sox are figured for around fifth place.

THE TIGERS appear ready to spring off to a flying start. After three weeks' of indifferent action in exhibition play, the Tigers last week finally started "putting everything together."

They received solid pitching, good defense and some mighty hitting.

The item that makes the Tigers happiest is a healthy Willie Horton.

An ailing heel kept Horton sidelined for almost a third of last season. When he did play, he never operated at 100 per cent.

But Horton underwent off-season surgery, which has made his heel sound again.

His big bat has been rocking the fences in Florida, prompting Tiger Manager Mayo Smith to say:

"With Willie available to us for fulltime work, well, it sure will make a BIG difference."

A SOUND Horton gives the Tigers the best outfield in either league. He'll be in left with Al Kaline in right and either Mickey Stanley or Jim Northrup in center.

All four have had fine springs and Stanley even showed in a game last week against the White Sox that he could do the job for the Tigers at first base, if needed.

But the starting first baseman against Boston will be Norm Cash. Dick McAuliffe will be at second, Ray Oyler at short and Don Wert at third.

Tommy Matchick, a rookie, will stick around to help out and there's also the veteran Eddie Mathews, who can play either first or third.

Catching is a bright spot for the Tigers, especially when Bill Freehan is healthy.

The same has to be said about the pitching where the Tigers boast the best group of starters in either league—Earl Wilson, Mickey Lolich, Dennis McLain and Joe Sparano.

IF THE TIGERS have a problem, it could be in relief pitching. But Manager Smith doesn't seem to be worried.

For the past week, fellows like Mike Marshall, Dennis Ribant and Fred Lasher all have done excellent jobs for us coming out of the bullpen. So has Pat Babson.

"We'll be okay, I'm sure,"

THE TIGERS will remain home for the weekend to meet Chicago on Saturday and Sunday. Cleveland then comes in on April 17-18.

Observer area fans may purchase tickets for Tiger games at J. L. Hudson's at Westland.

The major league season actually begins on Monday with three games.

Minnesota plays at Washington in the American League in the traditional contest at which the president usually tosses out the first pitch.

Other duties are expected to keep President Johnson from being present. It's likely that Vice-President Humphrey will handle the honors.

There'll be two games in the National League—Chicago at Cincinnati and Pittsburgh at

While the Tigers plunge happily into the new season, the defending champion Red Sox have their problems.

Missing from their roster Tuesday will be Jim Lonborg, their ace pitcher. He's still recovering from a torn knee, suffered while skiing the day before Christmas.

With Lonborg absent, the Sox will probably send Jose Santiago to the hill.

Sox also is worried about Tony Conigliaro, their great outfielder who was beamed last

Aug. 18.

CONIGLIARO STILL complains of split vision when batting and wasn't able to complete spring training. He was sent home to undergo new tests after doing very little with his bat in Florida.

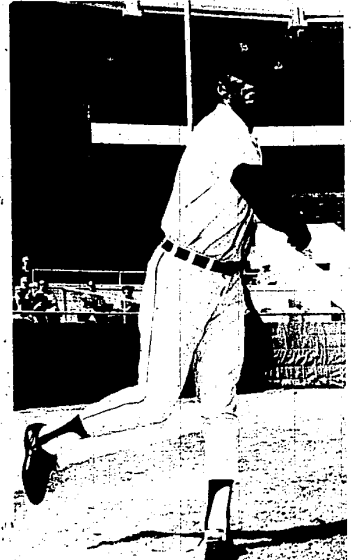
He struck out 22 times in 66 at bats in Florida and walked on eight of his last 10 appearances before the Sox sent him home.

Until he was felled by a pitch, delivered by Jack Ham-

ilton of the Yankees, Conigliaro was hitting .287 and had poked out 20 homers.

The Sox aren't the only contender ailing. Minnesota won't have star pitcher Jim

Kaat around for at least three weeks. He has an ailing left arm.



NOD TO PITCH the season opener for the Tigers goes to big Earl Wilson, who was one of the biggest reasons for Detroit's bid for the flag a year ago. His impressive work in the spring games won approval of Manager Mayo Smith.

How Experts See Flag Races

AMERICAN LEAGUE	NATIONAL LEAGUE
1 - Detroit	1 - St. Louis
2 - Minnesota	2 - Cincinnati
3 - Baltimore	3 - San Francisco
4 - Chicago	4 - Pittsburgh
5 - Boston	5 - Chicago
6 - California	6 - Los Angeles
7 - Cleveland	7 - Atlanta
8 - Oakland	8 - Philadelphia
9 - Washington	9 - Houston
10 - New York	10 - New York

Bengals Sight Opening Record

The Detroit Tigers may attract a record Tiger Stadium opening day crowd for their battle with the Boston Red Sox Tuesday.

Much will depend, of course, on the weatherman.

In 1959 the Tigers best Chicago, 6-5, before a turnout of 53,563. The thermometer hit 80 degrees that day.

The customary opening day ceremonies will mark Tuesday's gateway action.

The parade to the flag pole will start at 1:05 p.m. There will be presentations at home plate, after which Gov. George Romney and Mayor Jerome Cavanagh will participate in throwing out the first pitch.

They have formed the starting pair since 1953.

If Tuesday's game is knocked out by the weather, the two teams will try again on Wednesday. Boston also is scheduled for a game on Thursday afternoon at the stadium.

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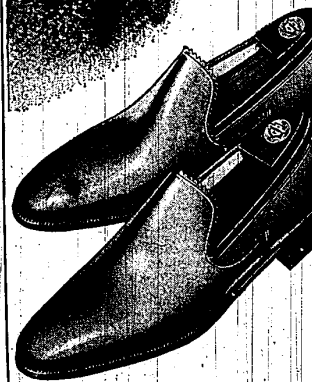
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