Clouters hailing '73 season as the 'summer of the homer'

By SAM LACY

Maybe it's contagious, whatever it is that Hank Aaron has.

Maybe I have it too, because that sentence went awry in an ungrammatical way. It doesn't belong in a well-edited newspaper any more than the rash of home runs that have been hit up to now belong in the major leagues of baseball.

Aaron's charge on the all-time home-run record of Babe Ruth has captured the fancy of the sports public, and perhaps that is the reason so many hitters have turned into sluggers.

On the other hand, it could be that more young men are beginning to subscribe to the theory that clouters drive big cars and powder-puffers own foreign jobs, and that is the reason more batters are swinging from the heels and looking at the fences.

Whatever the reason, the fact remains that the long-distance league is relishing this as the summer of homers.

Continuing at their present pace, 28 or 30 players might well finish with 30 or more homers by the time October spells the end of the baseball schedule.

After 10 weeks, which is less than half the season, 29 players in the two leagues have home-run totals in double figures. An estimated 10 others are within easy reach and could make that plateau by week's end.

Dave Johnson
ex-Bird has hit 15

Frank Robinson
an Orioles' discard

Leading the lot, with 22 roundtrippers, is Willie Stargell of the Pirates, the perennial National League champion. Second, with 19 apiece, are Aaron and Bobby Bonds of the San Francisco Giants, not normally regarded a home-run hitter.

— —

Broken down by leagues, here is the way the smashers rated at the end of the 10th week:

The American League was led by John Mayberry of the Kansas City Royals, with 18.

Then came Dick Allen of the White Sox, and Carlton Fisk of the Red Sox with 16; George Hendrick and Charlie Spikes of the Indians with 15; Reggie Jackson and Sal Bando of the Athletics with 14.

Following them were Gene Tenace of the A's, with 13; Graig Nettles and Bobby Murcer of the Yankees, at 12, along with Dave Duncan of the Indians, Bill Melton of the White Sox, and Orlando Cepeda of the Red Sox, who is thriving as a designated hitter under the AL's new rule.

Eleven homers each had been rapped by Dave May and Amos Otis of the Royals, Oscar Gamble of the Indians, and the old traveller Frank Robinson, who found his way back into the AL with the Angels after being discarded to the NL by the Orioles.

Just off the double-figure list but within reach with a couple swings of their bats were Thurmond Munson of the Yankees, and Carl Yastrzemski and Rico Petrocelli of the Red Sox, the latter a righthanded swinger who drools every time he approaches the plate and looks at that friendly leftfield wall in his Fenway home park.

Following Stargell, Aaron and Bonds in the NL, were a dozen bashers with 10 or more circuits who also had a half-season in which to add to their numbers.

Darrell Evans of the Braves, had swatted 16, as had Rick Monday of the Cubs. At 15, was Dave Johnson, another former Oriole who approached that number only once in seven full seasons in Baltimore.

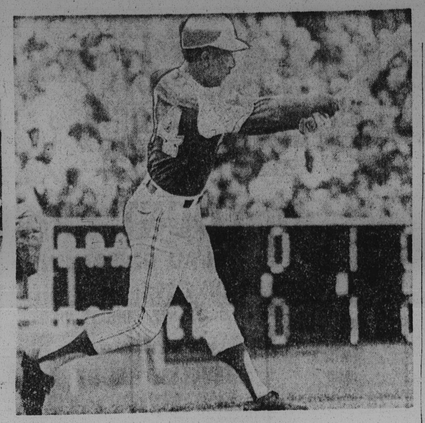
Willie McCovey of the Giants, and Johnny Bench of the Reds, had 14 apiece. And Jim Wynn of the Astros, though hitting only .233 averagewise, joined teammate Cesar Cedeno at 13 homers.

The Dodgers' Bob Ferguson had 12, and his teammate, Willie Davis, who is not normally a homer hitter, had 11. Also with 12, was Tony Perez of the Reds.

The 1973 NL batting champion, Billy Williams, rounded out the list with 10 roundtrippers.

Six other youngsters with power were chafing at the bit and ready to get into the race at any moment.

They were Joe Morgan of the Reds, Richie Hebner of the Pirates, along with teammate, Al Oliver, Lee May of the Astros, rookie Ron Cey of the Dodgers, and John Milner of the Mets.



Hank Aaron
his bat triggers big league bombing

Project Survival cagers open play

The 1973 season begins this (Friday) afternoon for the Project Survival Basketball League.

Opening ceremonies are set to commence at 2:30 p.m. at Lake Clifton High School.

Thirty teams will compete in the summer-long program designed to provide meaningful recreational activity for young people not involved in other supervised projects.

Weekend games will be played from now through early September at various sites throughout the city.

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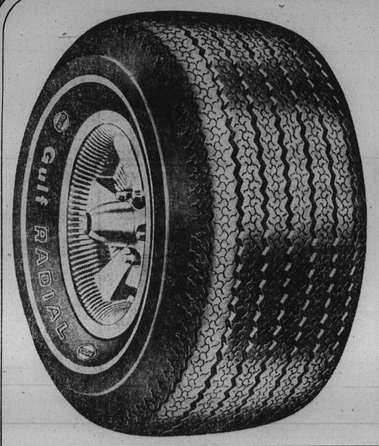

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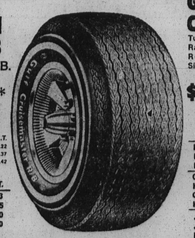

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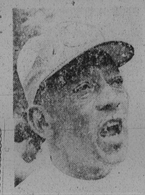
Jesse Owens' 1936 Olympics voted top feat of 100 years

Apparently 37 years have not dimmed the memory of people involved in sports.

The four gold medals won by Jesse Owens at the 1936 Olympics and the ill treatment accorded the American track star in Berlin by the Nazis has been chosen the most important sports story of the century in a survey conducted by the Pepsi-Cola Company, and reported Tuesday by United Press International.



Jesse Owens
4-minute mile 2nd

The firm, polling sports writers and broadcasters to determine the top 10 sports events of the past, said Owens' performance drew 112 votes to 105 for the breaking of the four-minute mile barrier by Roger Bannister.

Bobby Thompson's homer that helped the New York Giants beat the Brooklyn Dodgers in a 1951 National League playoff was third with 93 votes and Mark Spitz's seven swimming gold medals in the 1972 Olympics at Munich w considered fourth best wit 65 votes.

The UCLA college basketball dynasty was rated fif and Don Larson's perfe game for the 1956 Wo Series champion New Yo Yankees was acknowledge as the sixth top story in t poll.

The Muhammad Ali-J Frazier fight and the N ark Jets upset of the Bal ore Colts in the If per Bowl drew enou votes for a seventh pla tie. Babe Ruth's 60 homer in a season was eighth, th Jack Dempsey-Gene Tur ney long count fight wa considered ninth and Roge Maris 61 homers in the se son rounded out the top son rounded out the top stories.

Baseball was the spo most often mentioned in t balloting with 444 refe ences.

The writers and sport casters thought 319 in stances involving football was worth mentioning while track and field was noted 273 times, followed by boxing (224), basketball (206), swimming (88), golf (73), horse racing (25), hockey (10), auto racing (8), tennis (5), wrestling (4), skiing, boating and chess (2 each) and softball (1).

HOUSTON: The Houston Rockets NBA club signed Ratleff (l), their first draft choice, to a 6-year $1.3 million contract 6/22. Ratleff led Long Beach State to a three-year record of 75-12. His mother, Barbara Crump, tries out a Rocket's jersey.

Blair's bat brings back blazing Bird barrage

Much has been said of the terrific bat of Paul Blair, which has catapulted the Oriole centerfielder into the top echelon of American League hitters.

Also well publicized is his feat of raising his puny average of .218 in a little over a month ago, to a lusty .321 after Wednesday night's 4-0 victory over the division leading New York Yankees.

* * *

But apparently overlooked, or at least underestimated, is the effect Paul's sizzling stickwork has had on the rest of the club.

Following his two hits — a homer and double — Wednesday night, Blair's production through his last 92 at bats amounted to 40 hits. That means he belted the ball at a .435 clip during the preceding five weeks.

And in those five weeks, the Birds shook the lethargy that had gripped them to the point that they won nine of their last 13 games.

* * *

The evidence, then, is that Blair has built a fire under his teammates at the same time that he has been scorching the opposition.

It is an accepted fact that athletes respond to the heroics of their partners. And doing just that. SAM the Orioles appear to be LACY.

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Twins expected to fill gap at Norfolk State

NORFOLK, Va. — Track foes of Norfolk State college's NCAA College Division champions will be on the receiving end of a double dose of the Spartans' famed sprinters' speed in 1974.

Needing a replacement for departing sprint star Bill Cliffee, NCAA Coach of the Year William "Dick" Price lost no time in filling the gap when he recently signed Glenwood and Lenwood Adams, identical twin speedsters out of Calvert Senior High School, Frederick, Md., to grant-in-aid athletic scholarships.

At Calvert High, the twins — who were known as the Calvert Express — established school records of 9.5 seconds in the 100-yard dash (Glenwood) and 21.3 seconds in the 220-yard dash (Lenwood).

* * *

In addition, the twins were twice selected to All-Southern Maryland Athletic Conference teams in track and football.

Coach Price expects the Maryland swiftles to join Steve Riddick, Bob Colbert and freshman sensation Vic Jackson in continuing the Spartans fine performances in the 100 and 220-yard dashes and the 440, 880 and mile relays.

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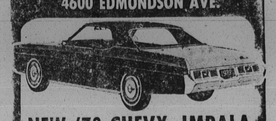

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