

Pitchers giving baseball brass the slip over spitball

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The spitball. Batters can't hit it, umpires can't spot it, managers can't stop it. Yet somewhere, somehow, some pitchers apparently are throwing the pitch — with great effectiveness — regardless of its legality. Gaylord Perry of the Cleveland Indians is the most frequently mentioned suspect, although Jim Merritt of the Texas Rangers and Bill Lee of the Boston Red Sox have admitted throwing the game's most con-

troversial pitch. "It isn't difficult to detect," says Al Campanis, general manager of the Los Angeles Dodgers. Calvin Griffith, president of the Minnesota Twins adds, "A pitcher throwing a spitball is taking a hitter's life into his hands. They really don't know what the ball is going to do." New York Yankee Manager Ralph Houk knows what the pitch can do — and doesn't like it. "It dances and dives worse than a knuckleball or a curve. It changes the nature of the game

altogether." No matter what the pitch does, one fact remains: The spitball is illegal. Baseball's rule 8.02 states: "The pitcher shall not apply a foreign substance of any kind to the ball; expectorate on the ball, either hand, or glove; deliver what is called the 'shine' ball, the 'spit' ball, 'mud' or 'emery' ball." ITEM: A tube of surgical jelly was found in the warmup jacket pocket of California Angels pitcher Bill Singer at this year's All-Star Game. ITEM: On August 25, Merritt admitted

to throwing 25 to 30 "Gaylord Perry fastballs" — a pseudonym reserved for what many allege to be a Perry strength — the doctored pitch. The next day, Merritt was fined an undisclosed amount by American League President Joe Cronin.

ITEM: After the fine on Merritt was announced, Red Sox hurler Lee divulged that he, too, had made use of foreign substances — yet no fine was announced.

ITEM: On August 30, Detroit Tigers Manager Billy Martin ordered pitchers Joe Coleman and Fred Scherman to throw what he called "Obvious spitters...on purpose," in a game against Perry and the Indians, because "this thing's got to come to a head some time."

It came to a head, indeed. Martin received a three-day suspension from the league office for his "blatant actions and endorsement of such illegal tactics."

"I want everyone to know it — I am instructing my pitchers to throw spitballs," said Martin. "If the commissioner is going to fine me and not fine Gaylord Perry, then there is going to be someone in a higher office than the commissioner who will decide this," he said.

The ultimate decision on the Martin matter was handed down by Tiger General Manager Jim Campbell. Martin was fined. "We can't endorse what Billy did," said

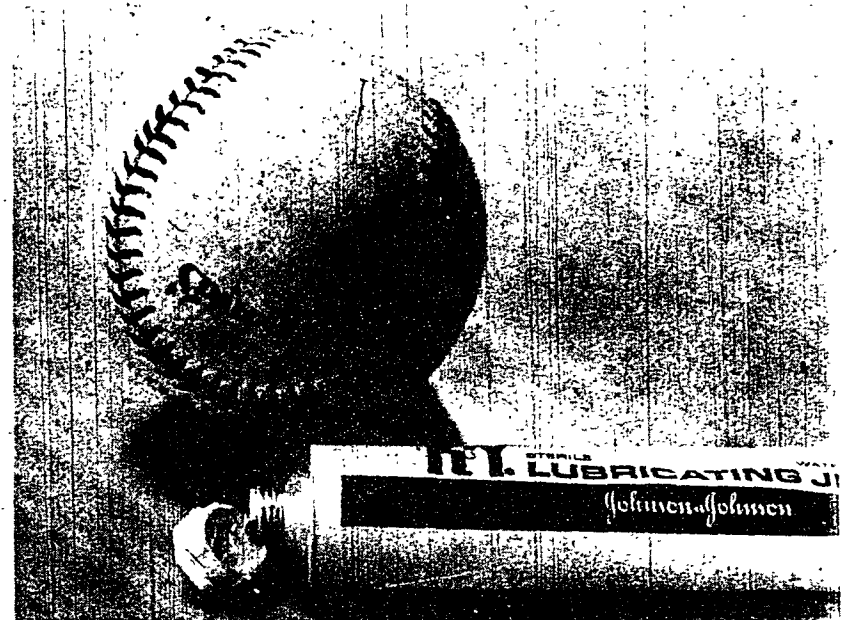


Photo by Ira Jaffe
Campbell. "We can't condone it. The spitball is a matter for the rules committee and directly to the -pitball controversy. There has been no announcement from Commissioner Bowie Kuhn's office regarding the recent developments and possible significance because it relates only in- tion on the pitch itself."

NL has to prove its 'superiority'

By FRED BREWER
Collegian Sports Writer

This year's meeting of major league executives concluded two weeks ago and once again the weak National League refused to pick up the gauntlet.

Interleague play is the only sure way to tell which league has superior talent. The American League owners are all for it, but the NL owners, as they have for over twenty years, turned it down. They would rather the geographically, but the NL executives aid all their good teams were in the West and it wouldn't be fair to Eastern fans to split geographically. So they gave the East two "good" teams, Cincinnati and Atlanta.

Since then not one team west of Cincinnati has won a pennant and only one, San Francisco in '71, has won a division crown. How can the NL judge the worth of the AL if it doesn't know which teams are the best in its own league?

Other methods used to ascertain the differences between the two leagues are interleague trades and the results of All-Star games and World Series. None are conclusive.

Whenever a computer is fed all the material on ballplayers that have played in both leagues the answer is: "Not enough data to show one league significantly better than the other."

And isolated examples to make a case for one league can always be refuted by similar findings in the other league. For instance: Much ado was made over the improvement in Gaylord Perry's record last year from the one he had in the NL the season before, but Tom Hall made an equally impressive turnaround. He had a 10-1 record last year for the Reds after a losing season for the Twins the year before.

If the All Star showdown was a best of seven series fought with all the zeal of a World Series the results, if lopsided, would be an indication of which league had the best superstars. As it is all the All Star game does is help prove the old adage that "good pitching will usually stop good hitting."

The pennant winners supposedly carry the responsibility of league honor into the World Series, but few losers accept this idea after the fact. Even a four game sweep is thin evidence to prove one team, much less league, is better than another. Often a team will lose four or more regular season games in a row and still take the advantage for the season series.

As interleague trades have indicated, there isn't a significant difference between the two leagues. Many NL fans won't agree. One suggestion for all of them: get together, write a letter to NL President Charles Feeney and exclaim: "We'd like to put up or shut up!"

Collegian sports
Fall Tab Monday

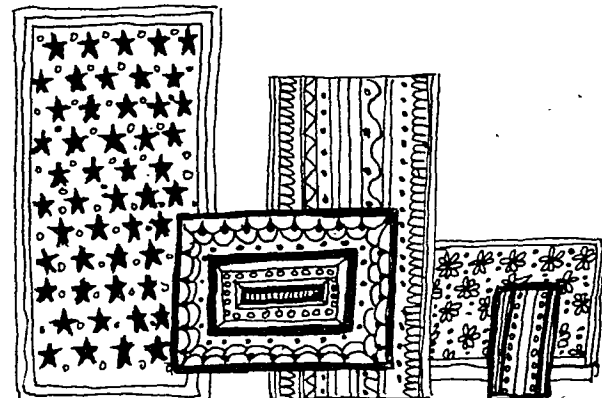
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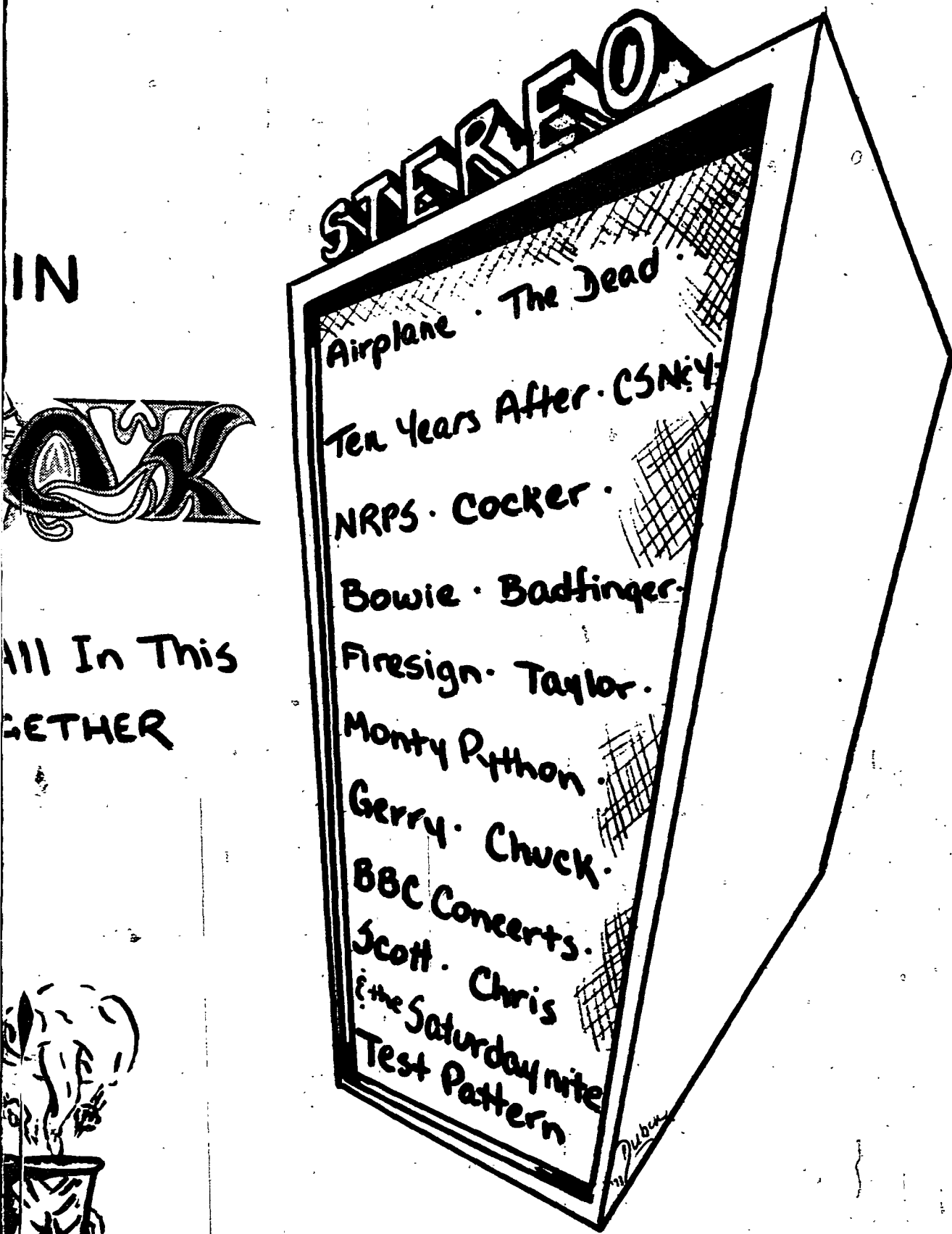
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