

Unpredictable Bucs hit Three Rivers

By RICK STARR
Collegian Sports Writer

In both leagues, last year's Pittsburgh Pirates had no equal for melodramatic bat brutality.

But things really got interesting when they were out in the field chasing batted balls.

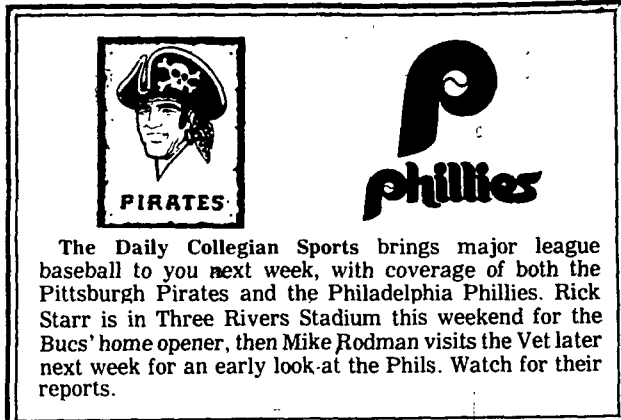
The 1974 Pirates hoodwinked the Eastern Division by sleeping in last place as late as June 15, then snorting their way into first with almost contemptuous ease, closing the season 14 games over .500.

The team batted .274 all last year, tops in the majors. And no letup is in sight, particularly after the Pirates clubbed the Cubs yesterday with four home runs.

To make things worse, Danny Murtaugh, Pittsburgh's indomitable manager, has been feeding his team hero sandwiches all spring.

In the outfield, the "permanent" shift of Willie Stargell to first base has opened up left field for Richie Zisk, and right for hefty, 6-5 Dave Parker.

Many feel Al Oliver plays first base better than anyone on the club, but he will continue playing center field and the left half of the batter's box with equal tenacity. By virtue of the fact he'll be playing between Zisk and Parker, Oliver will also run around in the outfield very much.



The Daily Collegian Sports brings major league baseball to you next week, with coverage of both the Pittsburgh Pirates and the Philadelphia Phillies. Rick Starr is in Three Rivers Stadium this weekend for the Bucs' home opener, then Mike Rodman visits the Vet later next week for an early look at the Phils. Watch for their reports.

Around what used to be the dirt portion of the field, Richie Hebner, Rennie Stennett and Willie Stargell are fixed.

More than anyone else, Hebner typifies Buc woes of the past few seasons. Hebner made 28 errors last year, and 23 in 1973. He had an average year at the plate—18 homers and 21 doubles.

Hebner's irony is he shares the Pirate fielding record with the late Don Hoak. In 1972, Hebner made only nine errors the entire season.

Stennett is playing second base on one good knee at the moment since his right knee was injured in a snowmobile accident during the Winter. So Stennett will hobble into the first part of the season.

Stargell's speciality is hitting the ball so hard it goes over the wall behind the outfield, and yesterday he did that twice in Wrigley Field.

Shortstop continues to be a problem, as it has since Gene Alley retired. Frank Taveras and Mario Mendoza, both second-year men, will get a second chance.

Being a pitcher is an underrated job in Pittsburgh since the staff has won more often than not in head-to-head competition the past few seasons. Doc Ellis, Jerry Reuss, Ken Brett, especially Jim Rooker, and Bruce Kison will start. But Dave Giusti or Ramon Hernandez often finish.

Dependable Manny Sanguillen will catch everything, as he did in 93 of the club's last 94 games in 1974.

The ever-perturbable Murtaugh, with his block jaw and chunky body, again leads the Pirates who open their home season at 1:35 p.m. today. Even Jim Cory wouldn't try to sell him a socialist newspaper.

Three Lady Lion openers tomorrow

The season opens for the womens lacrosse team tomorrow when Coach Gil Rattray takes her Lady Lions southward to meet Wilson College.

Perhaps the hardest thing for a coach to predict is how her squad will perform on the first game of the season. And it is even harder when the coach knows nothing about the team she is meeting.

This is true for Rattray. All she knows is that Wilson is weakened by the loss of six starters from graduation. But she doesn't know how good or how many new team members Wilson has this year.

"We're optimistic, of course," Rattray said. "We played them last year at the end of the season and we beat them. They graduated the strength of their team, but I don't know about their new freshman."

One important member Wilson lost was defense wing Sandy Walker. Walker, who was also a member of the U.S. team, was the team leader last year.

The Lady Lions have eight returning from last year's squad, and the majority of the team is used to working together. This is a definite advantage for the Lady Lions, since Wilson will be playing with over half last year's team gone.

Two Penn State women's teams hope for good weather conditions tomorrow as they make their second attempt to open their seasons.

The Lady Lions softball team has already rescheduled its meeting place with Cortland, N.Y., a contest supposed to be played on the Red Dragons' field this weekend. However, once again a weather problem, eight inches of snow, has forced a change of plans. The women now plan to meet the Cortland nine at SUNY Binghamton.

Last year marked the first time Penn State defeated the Cortland team. Second in the New York state tournament last year, the Red Dragons must rebuild their pitching

staff for this year's competition.

Penn State coach Pat McTarsney hopes to finally get the season underway.

"The West Chester game is coming up Tuesday, and we'd sure like to have a game before that," she said. West Chester was the only blemish on the Penn State record last season.

The Penn State women's tennis team is another hard-luck weather team. Traveling to Madison, Va., last week,

heavy rains forced the women to come home without competing against the Madison team.

West Chester will be in town for the opening game on the Nittany Courts tomorrow at 1, weather permitting of course. Finishing 16-2 last season, West Chester lost its first three starters to graduation.

—BP

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