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"POPPING OFF" With Stan...



The Perennial Rookie Turns Up.

HENRY COPPOLA, the perennial rookie, is going to training camp with the Nationals again. So far Mr. Jack Doyle of Broadway has displayed remarkable equilibrium about the matter. He hasn't allowed the item to affect his odds on the 1938 American League pennant race and Washington still will be a 30-to-1 shot, give or take a few units, when the ball clubs go to the post in April.

But for talk-making purposes in this town the Coppola item is worthy of note. Henry is a little Italian boy from New England. He has never been a full-fledged major league pitcher, as judged by President Clark Griffith, but he has missed only one training camp since he first came to the Washington club in 1934. Along with veterans like Buddy Myer and Ossie Bluege and Monte Weaver, together with the beardless Cecil Travis, he is a survivor of the Biloxi training days. I mean, Henry really is a sort of an authority on Southern camps by now.

And why? Well, as near as anybody can explain it, Henry is one of those pitchers who haven't done anything and yet, by the same token, has shown enough to make a clubowner afraid to cut him loose. It was in 1935, early in the season, that Coppola made his big league debut as a starter. Bucky Harris' undying peeve against the Red Sox was in full flame at the time and when Coppola shut out the Bostonians with three hits, Mr. Harris announced that here was one of his starting pitchers and a sure-fire comer.

Indeed, Mr. Harris wasn't the only person impressed. The Sox bubble had not been broken early in 1935. And Coppola was only 29 years old.

But Henry did not follow up that victory. Instead, he pulled up with a sore arm. The following year he tried again but again the arm bothered him. Last season he did not throw a baseball. Now he writes that his arm is well again and Griffith has hastened to include him on the roster which will be taken to Orlando next month.

Burke Was Most Famous.

THERE must be a generous dash of bulldog tenacity in Mr. Griffith. Once he likes a ball player he sticks by him, no matter how dismal his performances. For a while Coppola looked as if he never would be able to break a pane of glass with his fast ball. And it was plenty of what the boys call "swift" that branded him as a prospect. You see, he has no curve ball to speak of.

The last really perennial rookie the Washington club had was probably Griffith's most famous. That would be Bobby Burke, who also was a pitcher.

Bobby was a skinny kid who threw left-handed and always looked as if he might start winning ball games. He was the kind of a fellow Griffith feared to let go. He never did anything over a sustained stretch, but he was on the border line.

Sometimes a ball player can hang on for a long time without doing anything. I wouldn't know what the record is for this sort of thing, but I know that Burke was around Griffith Stadium for eight years or so.

Some Day Griff Will Hit.

ONCE Bobby pitched a no-hit, no-run game against the Red Sox, who were unparadonably weak at the time. Burke wasn't a newcomer when he did it, but his feat set off the fireworks again in the press box and in Mr. Griffith's office. Everybody said that Bobby finally had "arrived." The fact is, Burke never "arrived."

Griff cut him loose in the end and Bobby drifted to Albany, to the Phillies and then back to the bushes.

Coppola has a long way to go before equalling Burke's mark. Henry hasn't been around for eight years but for a kid who is only 23 or 24 he will have eaten a lot of free meals and soaked up a lot of free Mississippi and Florida sunshine without giving the Washington ball club a boost with his pitching.

Some of these days, though, Griff's patience toward one of these fellows is going to be rewarded. It might even be that Coppola will vindicate the old gentleman's judgment.

Nats Go Overboard on La Pointe.

A NEW name probably will be added to the list of Nats to be taken South in February. It is that of George La Pointe, an infielder who recently was signed to a Charlotte contract.

La Pointe must have promise. He was brought to Griffith's attention in a highly flattering fashion. The Old Fox was won over, for when La Pointe indicated that he intended to go to college Mr. Griffith offered to finance him.

This is something the Yankees and other prosperous clubs often do, but not Griffith. It amounts to quite a tribute to La Pointe.

The youngster changed his mind about going to college, however, and asked to be taken South. Griff promptly acquiesced and had the boy signed by the "farm" team of the Piedmont League in order to conform with baseball rules. La Pointe is 19 and seems to play anywhere in the infield.

GALLAUDET MAT VICTOR

Winning five out of eight matches, Gallaudet's wrestling team defeated the grapplers of Baltimore City College, 23-13, yesterday in Baltimore.

Sullivan, Gallaudet's 128-pounder, won in the quickest time, throwing Sober in 2 minutes and 48 seconds. Other decisions for the Blues were scored by Berg, Jounge, Stotts and Culbertson. Rogers, Hess and Berke were the Kendall Greeners to lose.