

# Pirates Wet But Not Wild About Spring Progress

Associated Press Sports Writer  
BRADENTON, Fla. (AP)—A wet, windy spring and a series of annoying minor injuries have left the Pittsburgh Pirates with much work to do before the opening of the season.

Three straight rainouts in mid-March, a recurrence of Gene Alley's shoulder problem and mishaps to Roberto Clemente, Bob Robertson and Bill Mazeroski put Manager Larry Shepard a

bit behind schedule.

Alley, who never could throw the ball with his old snap last season, went to Norristown, Pa. for treatment by a specialist. He is back now, but the former All-Star shortstop has to remain a question mark.

Clemente fell on his left shoulder, (he hurt the right shoulder last year while diving for a ball) but not seriously hurt. Robertson, a rookie coming back after missing

an entire season due to surgery for a kidney obstruction, damaged a knee in an early game but is back on the job. Mazeroski troubled all last year by a pulled hamstring muscle, pulled one in the other leg but it was not serious.

For a team that is trying to bounce back into contention after finishing sixth 17 games back last year, the Pirates are optimistic.

The Pirates have a solid nucleus in Clemente, Willie Stargell and Matty Alou in the outfield and one of the best double play combos in baseball in Alley and Mazeroski.

The first baseman probably will be Robertson, who already has shown some of the power he displayed in the minors before he was forced out of action. Robertson and Al Oliver, another rookie, have been fighting for first but

Oliver also can fill in as a center fielder.

"We'll probably have at least two rookies in the infield," said Shepard, "One will be the first baseman and the other will be Richie Hebner, who did a fine job at Columbus last year."

If Alley does not come around, the Pirates will go with Fred Patek at shortstop. Patek is only 5-foot-4 and 165 pounds but he was impressive last year with the

Pirates until suffering a fractured wrist.

What is expected of Manny Sanguillen, the Panamanian expected to challenge Jerry May for the No. 1 catching job.

If Jim Bunning continues to do the job in his comeback try, the Pirates will have a five-starter rotation of Bob Veale, Steve Blass, Bob Moose, Deek Ellis and Bunning.

The rest of the staff still is un-

settled, Ron Kline, a 12-5 winner last year, is the bullpen stopper and Bruce Dal Canton may be a helper.

Shepard thinks Luke Walker changed style will make him more consistent with his curve ball. Tommie Sisk, who was the No. 1 starter a year ago, has had good success this spring. Denny Dleberger and Jim Shenley are other possibilities for left-handed relief.



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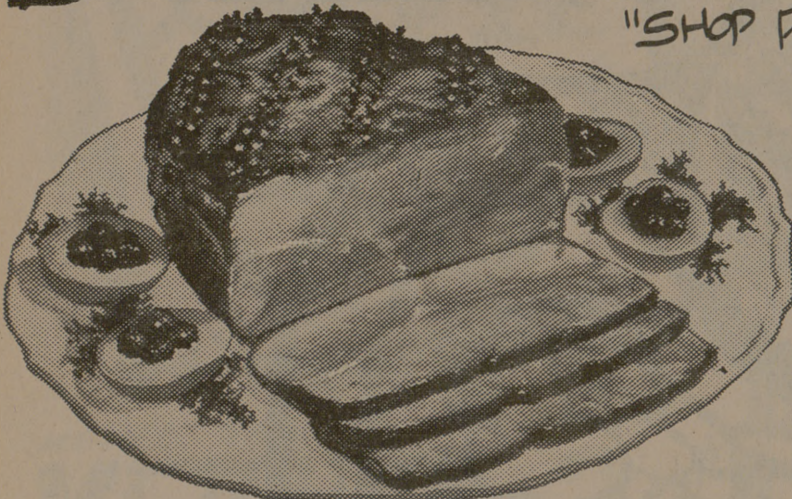


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