Cincinnati Reds will try to revive 'Big Red Machine' in 1972

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — With Bobby Tolan returning, Joe Morgan being added and Manager Sparky Anderson cracking the whip, Cincinnati is aiming to regain the power of "The Big Machine" of 1970.

The Reds' pitching appears at this stage to be their strongest asset but the team will have to improve its offense to make a strong bid for the National League West division title.

Johnny Bench and Tony Perez combined for 85 homers and 273 runs batted in during 1970, while Tolan paced the major leagues with 57 stolen bases. The Reds ran away with the West division by 14½ games mainly on the strength of their offense which won them the nickname of "The Big Red Machine."

In 1971, it was a different story as Tolan missed the entire season with an Achilles tendon injury, Bench slumped to 27 homers and 61 runs batted in, and Perez, hampered by a sore hand, got off to a terrible start. The Reds wound up a fourth-place tie in the West in 1971.

Bench, who hit two home runs in a recent exhibition game, says, "I am cutting down on my swing. I believe it is beginning to pay off. I know I've hit the ball well down here in the games I've tried it."

Perez has lost about 13 pounds and says, "I feel stronger."

Anderson says of Perez "He'll be stronger this year. Weight doesn't make you stronger."

Tolan played in his first exhibition game March 14 but has vowed to be in center field opening day. Tolan's base stealing has been viewed as part of the reason both Bench and Perez had such outstanding years in 1970.

Morgan, who has stolen 40 or more bases in his last three years, was obtained in an eight-player winter deal with Houston. Anderson says that if Morgan bats .280, he expects him to steal around 60 bases.

Batting behind Pete Rose .304 last year, Morgan and Tolan, Bench and Perez are being counted on for much improved years over 1971.

The .304 mark was the lowest for Rose since 1967. He says he is determined to bat at least .325 this season.

Anderson started off spring training camp this year by letting the players know things were going to be different from last year.

"It was an attitude, a careless attitude," Anderson said of last year. 'They weren't thinking baseball. They just thought they could go out and play the game without giving it 100 per cent in concentration."

While hoping the Reds veterans can return to form, Anderson is hoping that Denis Menke, who played third for Houston last year, can help solidify the defe and that Darrel Chaney and Da Concepcion can handle the sho stop position. Veteran Wo Woodward retired recently.

Morgan will be at second ba and Perez will switch from th to first since Lee May was ou to the Astros along with sec baseman Tommy Helms and ut ity man Jimmy Stewart.

Rose, Tolan and George Fos will comprise the outfield.

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