

Williams wanted to pitch

United Press International
NEW YORK — Ted Williams always had this one all-consuming desire, this near obsession of his which continually bugged him. He wanted to be a pitcher.

One day, Joe Cronin, then playing manager with the Red Sox, finally let Williams pitch in a game that was hopelessly lost and what brings that back to mind is the "Monday Night Massacre" in Toronto in which the Blue Jays all but cremated the Orioles, 24-10, and Earl Weaver, in total unequivocal surrender, brought in centerfielder Larry Harlow and catcher-coach Elrod Hendricks to pitch.

"Not too many people realize it, but Ted originally broke into baseball as a pitcher," Cronin said from his summer home in Cape Cod Tuesday.

"Williams started as a pitcher with San Diego, but was such a good-looking hitter that Frank Shellenback, the manager there, put him in the outfield. After Ted came to the Red Sox, he'd frequently pretend he was pitching to an imaginary hitter when he'd warm up before a game on the sidelines. He was a great pantomimist and he'd say to whoever was near him, 'I got two balls and one strike on this guy, now watch me throw him a curve ball low and on the outside.' And after he'd throw that curve of his, he'd jump up and down just like a little kid and say, 'Did you see him miss it!'"

"Anyway, we had a big crowd this day in Boston and we were playing Detroit," Cronin recalled. "We were way behind in the seventh or eighth inning, and I said to Ted on the bench, 'You've been popping off so much about your pitching, I'm gonna put you in to pitch.'"

"Good, good!" he said. He was really excited. He pitched one inning, I believe, and I remember him striking out Rudy York. Pinky Higgins singled off him, but to the best of my recollection, the Tigers didn't get any runs off Ted. The fans loved it. When they left the park, they were talking about his pitching rather than the beating we took."

In Monday night's contest, Weaver was criticized by Peter Bavasi, the Blue Jays' president, and by Roy Hartsfield, their manager, for turning the game into a travesty by bringing in Harlow and Hendricks to pitch, but there is no rule in the book against it. And Weaver had ample precedent on his side.

When Pepper Martin, ordinarily a third baseman, was with the Cardinals, Frankie Frisch let him pitch in relief one day against the Cubs and Martin was so out of his element he had to be shown how to stand on the mound.

Rocky Colavito, who had an arm like a cannon, came in from the outfield to pitch in a game for the Indians in 1958. He did the same thing when he was with the Yankees 10 years later, winding up winning that contest.

Hendricks had never pitched anywhere in his life before getting the call against the Blue Jays Monday night.

"I take that back," he told me

from Toronto. "I pitched a little softball in the Islands when I was about 14 years old," meaning the Virgin Islands where he's from.

Hendricks, 37, didn't do that badly in his professional debut as a pitcher, giving up one hit and walking only one in 2 1-3 innings. He was in the bullpen warming up Oriole right-hander Dan Stanhouse when he was notified of his instant conversion in the fifth inning. Toronto was in front 24-6 and catcher Dave Skaggs delivered the message to Hendricks when he came to the bullpen from the dugout.

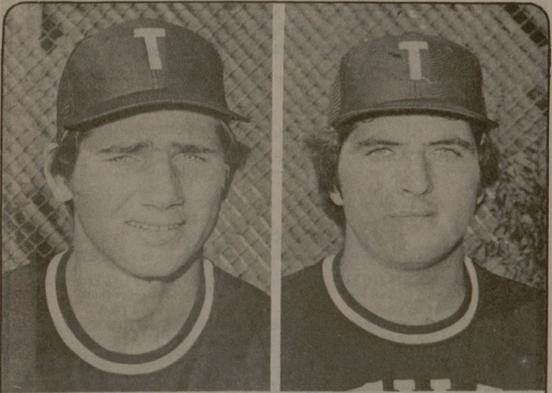
"He said to me, 'Can you throw strikes?' and I told him 'I'll try,'" said Hendricks.

"I didn't have a finger glove, so I used Stanhouse's," related the Orioles' veteran receiver. "All I did was go in and throw at the same speed I use pitching batting practice and hope no one would hit it back at me."

One of the most popular players in the big leagues, Hendricks took a lot of goodnatured ribbing from the other Orioles during his pitching turn.

One of the Baltimore players urged him to try the hesitation pitch Satchel Paige helped make famous.

"I told him no, I can't do that," said always conscientious Elrod Hendricks. "I know I'm not a pitcher, but I didn't really think it was a joke."



Mark Thurmond

Kyle Hawthorne

Aggies in Japan

Texas A&M baseball players Mark Thurmond and Kyle Hawthorne are playing in the Sixth Annual USA-Japan College All-Star Series.

The USA team is coached by Rod Dedeaux, coach at the University of California. Dedeaux brought his USC Trojans to the opening ceremonies at C.E. "Pat" Olsen Field last season. The All-Star series is tied at

one game each with five games remaining.

Thurmond, A&M's stellar southpaw, finished last season with a 13-1 record for the Southwest Conference champions.

Hawthorne, the Aggies' first baseman, broke two school records last season. He hit 14 home runs and had 53 RBIs.

Both Thurmond and Hawthorne will be seniors for the 1979 Aggie baseball team.

Puhl is Astros' shining star

United Press International
HOUSTON — The pressure is beginning to mount on National League batting leader Terry Puhl, the one bright light in a dim season for the Houston Astros.

"All this publicity is no big deal,"

says Puhl, 21. "I come to the ball park just like any other player and don't do anything differently. Actually, though, my teammates have been paying more attention to me and ribbing me more than they do anybody else."

Puhl, a native of Canada who signed with the Astros for \$1,000 in 1973, acknowledged that hitting .332 near the midpoint of the season is bringing more attention to him and making him think of being selected to the All-Star Game next week.

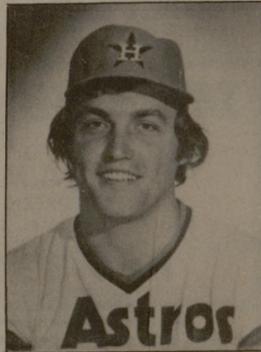
"My parents (in Melville, Saskatchewan) don't realize what it's all about or even what the All-Star Game is," said Puhl.

Of the All-Star Game, Puhl said, "It's an honor. I'd love to play. I will be disappointed if I don't go."

Puhl has been by far the Astros' most consistent player, and his hitting could carry him onto the team for the July 11 All-Star Game. To be selected, Puhl must be chosen by Los Angeles Manager Tom LaSorda as one of three or four alternate outfielders.

Despite the paltry number of votes turned in to the league office by the Astros, the young outfielder said he liked the All-Star voting system.

"Yeah, when we start winning, we'll start getting votes," he said. Puhl has steadily improved his batting average from .240 early in the season, despite the league's



Terry Puhl

third basemen moving in to take away his drag bunts.

"People are playing me smarter," he said. "But I feel comfortable at the plate and I am easily stroking the ball to left field. If I continue to do that, I'll hit."

Names in the sports world

United Press International
HOUSTON — Bob Watson blasted a three-run homer to snap a scoreless tie in the seventh inning Wednesday night and Tom Dixon posted his first major league shutout by stopping the Cincinnati Reds on four hits in pitching the Houston Astros to a 3-0 triumph.

DETROIT — The Detroit Tigers said Wednesday pitcher Mark Fidrych went to New York for treatment of his sore right shoulder, which has kept him on the disabled list since May 1. The team said the popular right-

hander would see Dr. Maurice Cowen, an orthopedic surgeon for the New York Yankees, at Lenox Hill Hospital.

SEATTLE — Track immortal Jesse Owens detects a growing interest in running among young people around the country and thinks "kids are a lot more dedicated and disciplined than they were a few years ago."

Owens, who won four gold medals in the 1936 Olympics and became the most enduring figure in the history of track and field, said, "Young people seemed to have lost

those qualities for a time, but they're coming back now."

NEW YORK — The estranged wife of Harlem Globetrotter Meadowlark Lemon was conditionally released Tuesday at her sentencing for assaulting him with a knife during a dispute last April. She pleaded guilty to simple assault last month after she was accused of stabbing Lemon in the back April 25.

Manhattan Criminal Court Judge Louis Necco ordered the discharge of Willye Lemon, 40, on condition that she seek psychiatric help and stay out of further trouble.

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