

By Frank Hyde
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One wonders Jamestown-born Irv Noren is exactly happy with the Yankees despite his sizeable take in World Series dough and his oft-reiterated, "It's a privilege to be a Yankee." Irv, recently elected to Jamestown's first Hall of Fame, is a ball player's ball player and those fellows chafe when inactive. The big Pacific Coast Swede, who left our city with his parents when he was 12 years old, appeared in 109 games for the Yanks in '53, but most of his 300 times at bat were built up as a pinch hitter and during that span when Mickey Mantle's trick knee collapsed. Noren saw action twice in the series, both as a pinch.

Casey Stengel says Noren fits prominently into his plans for 1954, but in the next breath admits his current outer patrol of Gene Woodling, Hank Bauer and Mantle "is young enough so we won't have any worries about that department." Such a statement would appear to relegate Noren to a pinch-hitting role for some time to come, barring injuries. Johnny Mize is gone, so Irv, if it is any honor, moves to the No. 1 slot on Stengel's reserve list.

When Joe DiMaggio hung up his spikes, Stengel started to play chess with his outfield which consisted of Woodling, Bauer, Mantle, then a raw rookie; Jackie Jensen and Bob Cerv. When it became obvious Mantle wasn't ready, the Yankees started to make goo-goo eyes toward Washington where Noren was contented in the outfield of Bucky Harris' second-division Nats. The first offer was Jensen and Archie Wilson for Noren. Clark Griffith just smiled so the deal was upped to include Frank Shea and Jerry Snyder. It clicked and Noren was a Yankee.

But he failed to catch on. "He gets the fly ball all right," Old Case admitted, "but, holy moses, look at him at the plate." Noren closed the '52 campaign batting a lowly .238 and Mantle came into his own. When Mantle's game kick started to go bad this summer, Noren was moved into center where he displayed to the satisfaction of everyone that he had shed whatever was wrong with him a year before.

Stengel admits Noren is the type of player who must be active to be effective but logically points out that he cannot bench Woodling, Bauer or Mantle. Talk of trading Noren back to the Nats was heard, but it died out as the

Bombers thundered along in quest of their fifth pennant with Noren doing a capable replacement job.

The Yankees, of course, will be satisfied to have Noren on the bench in view of Mize's retirement. But will Noren be satisfied to remain there? Irv, a left-handed batter, knows his portside swing cannot figure into any future possibilities because Mantle is a switch hitter, Bauer right and Woodling left, so the Stengel's garden is balanced offensively.

Noren also knows time is becoming a factor in his career. He will be 29 years old Nov. 29. His baseball fortunes have carried him from Santa Barbara in '46 through Ft. Worth, Hollywood and eventually to the big tent with Washington. If Noren, as Stengel admits, is the type of ball player who must be active to be effective, don't be surprised if Noren seeks that action by request that he be dealt off. George Weiss, a major domo in the Yankee head office, is proud that he has never retained a dis-satisfied player. Admitting dis-satisfied players with the Yankees are few and far between, one could hardly blame Noren if he feels his future with baseball's winningest team is somewhat on the dark side.