

June 20, 1950

Enough Said...

The New York Giants announce the signing of 19-year-old phenom Willie Mays ... a three-year veteran of the Negro American League, Mays is batting .318 with four home runs and 22 RBIs for the Birmingham Black Barons.

Signed by New York scout Eddie Montague, the Giants are reported to have offered \$15,000 for Mays' signature - believed to be a record amount for a Negro player.

A football and basketball prep star at Fairfield High School in nearby Fairfield, Alabama, Mays is not allowed to play baseball in high school since he was already playing home games with the Black Barons since 1948.

The New York Yankees will later claim that they decide not to sign Mays because "he couldn't hit a curveball."

Assigned to the Trenton Giants of the Interstate (B) League, Mays will hit .353 (108-306) in his minor league debut with 20 doubles, eight triples and four home runs in 81 games.

On May 23, 1952, Mays, on a 16-game hitting streak, is batting .477 (71-149) with 30 RBIs in 35 games for the Minneapolis Millers when the Giants call him up to major leagues ... he makes his debut two days later (May 25) going 0-5 with a strikeout against the Philadelphia Phillies at Shibe Park.

Mays Labelled as Speedy, Good Hitter and Fielder; New Giant Also Can Pitch

Pitcher or outfielder?—that is the question Trenton baseball fans will witness, answered in the case of Willie Mays.

Mays is the sensational, 19-year-old centerfielder purchased by the New York Giants' farm club of Minneapolis and assigned to Trenton. As an outfielder Mays was considered one of the better in the Negro American League for the last three years. As a pitcher Mays has had no experience but most major league scouts think there is his true calling.

The Giants are reported to have paid \$15,000 for his contract. The price is believed to have been a record for a Negro player. Scouts Eddie Montague and Bill Harris gave the final okeh on Mays last Sunday after watching him perform in a doubleheader against the New York Cubans.

Sunday was the worst day Mays has had this year at his home field at Rickwood. He got only two hits in eight appearances and didn't have a chance to unleash his powerful right arm on a throw. But apparently Harris and Montague were convinced. The Giants thus began outbidding several other major league clubs for Mays.

This is Mays' third year with

the Black Barons. He would have been sold to a major league club long since had he not been enrolled in Fairfield High (near Birmingham). He was graduated late last month and the scouts began flocking to Rickwood to watch him.

Hitting at .318

In nine games at home this season Mays hit for an average of .394. In his 13 hits for 34 at bats were six doubles, one triple and one home run. He batted in 12 runs. His overall average this season in 22 games is .318. He has clouted four home runs and has 22 RBIs. Last years he played in 64 games and hit .311. No records are available on road games.

Star though he is at bat, Mays attracts more attention afield. Fast and quick for a 185-pounder, Mays has had no peer in the outfield for his baseball career. His right arm is labelled the most powerful in baseball and opposing baserunners have long since quit taking extra-base chances against him. He throws with a three-quarters overhand motion and seldom bounces a ball to a base.

With such an arm, scouts figured there was a double chance that Mays would be worth the price paid to get him. If his batting slumps, use him as a pitcher, they figure.

He's a natural athlete. In prep school he was a football and basketball all-star. He was not allowed to compete in baseball—anyhow he played with the Black Barons everytime they came back home.

Mays will be the fifth Black Baron graduate to enter organized baseball. Others have been Satchel Paige (formerly with Cleveland); Dan Bankhead (Brooklyn); Piper Davis (formerly with Scranton) and Art Wilson (Oakland).