

# Pinch Hits, "Two-Headed Catcher & Night Pitching"

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Ev Johnson  
1950 Cincinnati Spring Training

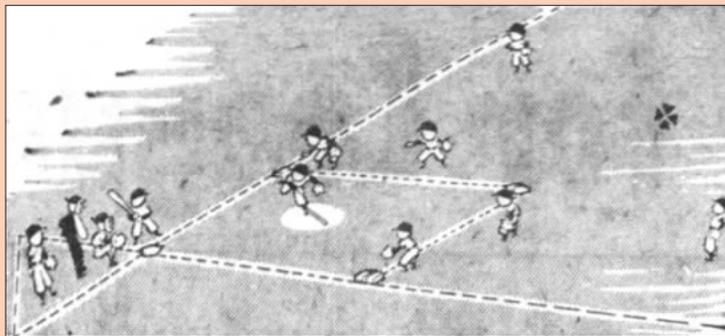
## May 10, 1953

After the Augusta Rams steal nine bases in each of the first two games of a South Atlantic (A) League series, Columbia Reds' manager Ernie White had seen enough and institutes a two-catcher system for the third game - one for catching and one for throwing.

Already missing Wilbert McConnell, their first-string catcher due to a hand injury and Ev Johnson, their only other catcher, still suffering the effects of a serious shoulder injury from the previous season, White decides in the sixth inning, when the Rams have a runner on first base, to bring strong-armed Hal Stamey in from right field and place him in the catcher's box next to Johnson. Reds pitcher Ed James then throws to either Stamey or Johnson, with the pitches to Stamey being considered pitchouts as each had to be thrown wide of the plate.

The shift, which leaves Columbia with only two outfielders - Jim Boger and Lew Davis - works as Augusta makes no attempt to steal a base in any of the three times the shift is employed.

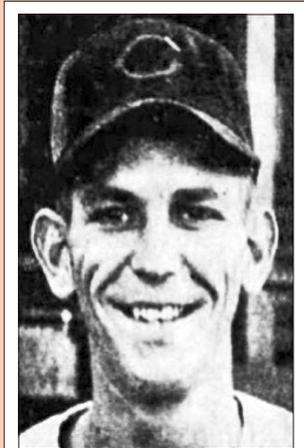
## They Stole Columbia Blind Until Manager Got An Idea



Augusta manager Lou Fitzgerald plays the game under protest after failing to convince umpire Al Zinzone that the shift is illegal. But, since Augusta wins the game 4-1, the protest is dropped.

One day after the illegal split-catcher scheme, the Reds sign 21-year-old rookie Jim Hodge to handle the catching duties until McConnell's return. The

Pacolet, South Carolina native is 1-for-4 in his pro debut against the Columbus Cardinals on May 11 and throws out the only runner to attempt a steal against him. Hodge will play in seven games for the Reds before being released.



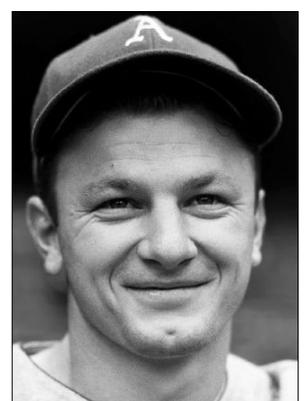
Hal Stamey  
1953 Columbia Reds

## May 3, 1935

Following an 0-for-5 performance against the Asheville Tourists, the Wilmington (N.C.) Pirates trade 19-year-old infielder Joe Gantenbein to the Bi-State (D) League's Mount Airy Reds due to "his inability to hit night pitching" at the Piedmont (B) League level. The 5-foot-9, San Francisco native responds by hitting nearly .400 in his first couple of weeks with the Reds, before finishing his first year of professional baseball with a .284 average and seven home runs in 103 games.

Gantenbein makes his way up through the minors before hitting .290 with four home runs and 36 runs batted in in his rookie season as the starting second baseman for the 1939 Philadelphia Athletics. The following year, Gantenbein has four home runs and 23 RBIs but his batting average drops 51 points to .239 and he plays his final major league game on September 28, 1940.

Demoted to the minor leagues the following season, Gantenbein hits a career-low .180 with nine doubles and five home runs for the Toronto Maple Leafs of the International (AA) League. Following a four-year stint (1942-1945) in the Army during World War II, the San Francisco native returns to play three more seasons in the minor leagues, ending his career in 1949 hitting .295 as a player/manager for the Salina Blue Jays of the Western (C) Association.



Joe Gantenbein  
1940 Philadelphia Athletics