

WILLIE BANGS OUT A HIT (l.), THEN SCORES WITH A SWAN DIVE

WILLIE AIN'T EVEN TRYIN'


Is He Greatest Hitter Since Tris Speaker?

Say, hey," chortled Willie Mays after hitting 6 home runs in 5 days, "I ain't no home run hitter... I'm jes' swing'."

A 23-year-old Alabaman with a laugh as explosive as his bat, Willie has electrified N.Y. Giant fans as no man has done since Mel Ott. His batting, fielding and personality have taken the dreary 5th place Giants of 1953 into the favorite's position for the National League pennant.

All New York suddenly went crazy over Willie this summer when he caught fire and the Giants followed suit.

Everything in baseball comes easy to Willie. Experts compare him with Tris Speaker as the game's greatest centerfielder and newspapers have been printing daily comparisons of Willie and Brooklyn's Duke Snider.

Said Snider ruefully: "Willie got me all this publicity." The Yanks' boy wonder Mickey Mantle was al- 

They Named a 'Say Hey' Samba After Him

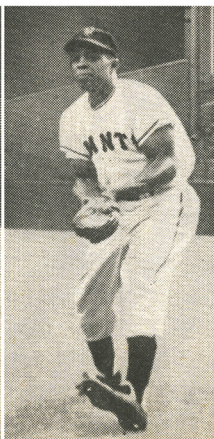
most a forgotten man.

Statistics don't begin to give a real picture of Willie's value. He adds drama to baseball in a way that defies fiction.

In the field, Willie is in a class by himself. Like Speaker, he plays shallow but can range into the deepest parts of the Polo Grounds to make his patented "basket catch." Says Braves' shortstop Johnny Logan: "I'd buy a ticket to see Willie play the outfield."

Born and raised in Fairfield, Ala., Willie was encouraged to play ball at an early age by his father, a tin mill worker who was a good semi-pro outfielder himself. Willie's dad kept him out of the mill: "Do anything you want, son, but don't go down to the plant. Once you go down there you'll never get out." His first fan, Willie's father remembers: "I first realized he had extraordinary baseball talents when he was about 14."

WILLIE RUNS IN TO MAKE ONE OF HIS FAMED "BASKET CATCHES" . . .



When sports columnist Jimmy Cannon asked Mays how he felt while playing ball, Willie laughed and said: "It's just like driving through a park. A great big park with all the people having a good time. That's what it's like."



Mays signed with the Giants in 1949. They sent him to Trenton, then to Minneapolis. Leo Durocher sent for him early in 1951.

Willie won the N.L. Rookie of the Year award and the Giants won the '51 pennant.

Early in 1952, Willie was

drafted and the Giants stumbled to second place and then 5th in 1953 as Dodger manager Chuck Dressen sneered, "The Giants is dead."

But Durocher answered: "Willie will make us well again." Willie has the makings of a good medicine man.

... PIVOTS AND LETS LOOSE WITH A ONE-HOP PEG TO HOME PLATE

