Pennant Picks: Cards and Yanks

By PAUL BURKA

St. Louis and the Yankees in the Series! Owlook's well-worn crystal ball was given a thorough polishing job before it came up with the standard solution to the American League question, but tabbed a dark horse in the National.

The Cardinals don't look like the best team on paper, but if their pitching holds up, they could go all the way. Definitely the sentimental choice in the Senior Circuit, the Redbirds are after one last pennant for Stan Musial. And only the Cubs have gone longer without winning a championship.

WITH A LINEUP which has had as many as seven hitters over .300 at the same time, St. Louis won't go hurting for runs. The power is there, with all-star Kenny Boyer supplying the punch along with Bill White, Musial, and Minnie Minoso. There isn't a slow man in the starting lineup, nor is there a weak link defensively. If rookie Ray Washburn can become a dependable starter on the mound, a pennant should be in the Cards for St. Louis.

San Francisco Has Usual Troubles

Best on paper but only second-best in the standings is San Francisco's annual predicament. Question marks at short and second are too much of a handicap even for Cepeda, Mays, & Co. A bridesmaid's role again for the Giants.

The Dodgers, near-universal favorites again this year, don't seem to be appreciably different from the ball club we thought was overrated in 1961. Third place for O'Malley's crew.

Milwaukee, Pittsburgh, and Cincinnati should fight it out for the remaining first division spots. Defending champion Cincy seems still to be suffering from their traumatic World Series experience, and probably won't recover in time to make a serious bid to repeat.

THE COLT 45S look by far the best of the rest. We were fortunate enough to see three games at colorful Colt Stadium during the Easter holidays, and came away quite impressed with Houston's first year ball club. The jury is still out, of course, but it appears that in going for good pitching and a sound defense, the Colts made a big step toward building a ball club. But seventh place is tops for '62.

The Phillies, Cubs, and Mets should wrap up the NL in that or any other order. The Mets may be the first team in National League history to finish 11th.

American League Will Trail Yanks

The annual Yankee-chase gets more pointless and less interesting each year, but much as we think it would be good for baseball for the Yankees to vanish temporarily, common sense tells us to pick 'em and be quiet. New York's win handily, with feeble protests from Baltimore and Chicago. Detroit, Cleveland, and Boston will fight it out for the middle positions, while the remainder of the league will bask in obscurity for the summer.

Casting the spotlight: A contender for Believe-It-Or-Not is Rice's overall baseball record against Texas—15 wins and 113 losses. . . . our latest win, however, may cost the Steers this year's SWC championship. . . . Horns are seventh-ranked in nation. . . . Number one and two players on Rice's conference tennis champions are displaced Floridians Neal Marcus and Fritz Schunk . . . Rice recruiters came up with blue-chip signees in basketball and football recently . . . next week, Owlook reviews Rice athletics for the past year and gives a preview of what to expect in '62-'63.