

## AARON, MATHEWS VISIT STADIUM

## Braves Peer Into the Future

By HAL HAYES

The legendary "baseball hitter's paradise" is no longer a mere piece of fictional real estate. There is such a place. Eddie Mathews and Hank Aaron, Braves of Milwaukee until 1966 and Atlanta becomes their home, made the discovery and Saturday confirmed its reality.

"This looks like a hitter's dream," powerful Mr. Mathews said early Saturday as the sun bobbed and weaved from behind a heavy sheet of iron-gray clouds. "It sure does, this is beautiful," chimed Aaron, the batsman with lightning in his wrists.

"This is tremendously impressive," said Mathews. "Play ball," he yelled to Aaron, "get somebody out there on the mound."

The Braves' stars, who Friday night received special citations at the 100 Per Cent Wrong Club banquet at the Americana Hotel, were paying their first visit to Atlanta's marvelous \$18 million stadium. The occasion was one of warmth and merriment for them, despite the chilling 45-degree weather.

"THIS STADIUM should certainly be a favorite with all the ball players," said Mathews, himself long acquainted with popularity. "Due to its circular structure, wind currents won't be a hazard to the hitters. I'll especially like that," he laughed.

"Won't we all," Aaron offered. "Since we won't have any wind currents here, the other club's pitchers won't be nearly as effective. Their 'stuff' won't have as much of a chance to dance and dip as it normally would in a ball park that is open."

"You put a ball up in the wind in most major league stadiums and it'll hang," Mathews said. "Only occasionally will the wind help a hitter and carry the ball."

"You take Shea Stadium in New York," he said in a normal tone of voice. "And, sometimes I wish you would." This time he slightly lowered his head and half-way mumbled.

"No, seriously," he said, "Shea Stadium

really gave me a lot of misery last year. I didn't get a home run there all season, and it was due, at least partially, to that wind that blows like crazy in from right field."

AARON, WHO considers 1964 an "off year" despite his .328 batting average, 24 home runs and 95 runs batted in, wandered toward right field. It is here he will devote his waking hours when the Braves of Atlanta play defensive baseball.

"I like to hit in a ball park where there are no wind currents, and that's why I think I'm going to love this place," he told several writers who shadowed him and Mathews throughout the morning.

"An awful lot more hits are going to fall as they should in here," he said. Both stars, long regarded as undisputable—and unstoppable—candidates for the Hall of Fame at the end of their careers, also studied the foul lines.

"It's only 320 feet to right field," Mathews said. "Well, that's great. Somebody said it was 380 and I was already thinking about trying to switch hit." Aaron said it would "take quite a poke to hit one out, but you can bet I'll be trying."

A Braves official brought two bats out of the dugout and invited the sluggers to pose with them for photographers. One was an Eddie Mathews model, which Aaron hurried to pick up. Mathews got the one with Yankee great Mickey Mantle's name on it.

"HEY, HANK, who is this guy," Mathews jibbed. "I don't think I've ever heard of him." Aaron assured his teammate American League pitchers wished they never had.

"Atlanta Stadium will take a backseat to none," Mathews said. "Honestly, this is great."

"It is great," Aaron said, nodding in full agreement. "This is the first time I've ever been in a stadium that is completely round, and I am greatly impressed."

Both said they welcomed the chance to hit here in 1965 when the Braves play some exhibition games. So will Atlanta and all Dixieland.



Hal Hayes



Staff Photo—Bill Wilson

EDDIE MATHEWS, HANK AARON READY TO GO  
Braves Stand at Plate and Await Cry of 'Play Ball'