



The Per Niente

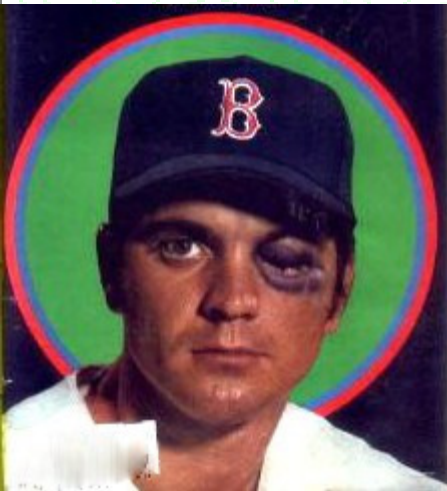


Per Niente Club

Editor Joe Di Leo

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Tony Conigliaro, right-hand hitting outfielder, was a product of Boston's North Shore born in Revere January 5, 1945, grew up in East Boston and Swampscott, played high school ball for St. Mary's in Lynn. He came from a close-knit family: parents Sal and Theresa, brothers Richie and Billy all seemed part of a group effort to take baseball by storm.

The Red Sox signed Tony in 1963 for a reported \$20,000 bonus. Thirteen other teams had been chasing him (this was in the days before the draft). Tony played 83

games that year for Boston's short-season Class A team, and amazingly made the big league club the following spring at the insistence of manager Johnny Pesky. His major league debut came in April 1964 at Yankee Stadium

In his rookie season Tony hit 24 home runs and 21 doubles in only 111 games. He missed six weeks when a Pedro Ramos pitch broke his right forearm, but bounced back to hit .379 in September. After the season the Red Sox were impressed enough that they traded away their big power hitter Dick Stuart and gave Tony the job. Despite missing a month when a Wes Stock pitch caused a hairline fracture to his left wrist, Tony hit 32 home runs in 1965. At age 20, he was the youngest man to lead the league in home runs, his future seemed limitless.

Tony Conigliaro was one of the few bright spots for the Red Sox. Many called him the most popular Red Sox player since Ted Williams. Tony C, young, good-looking, and ambitious, was everywhere. He was even signed to a four-year recording contract by RCA-Victor and made several appearances on the Merv Griffin Show. His big hit was called *Playing the Field*.

Tony was the kind of kid who might have wound up in a lot of trouble if it wasn't for baseball. He was always skipping school, where he was a slow learner and felt restless and confined. His parents took him out of public school after a teacher locked him in a closet and forgot about him; Tony didn't like parochial school much better. But he would stay at the playground and hit baseballs until his hands bled. He was a three-sport star in high school, was offered college scholarships, but never considered them very seriously.

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