

FANS

Motto: May the best team win; But ours is the best

By Hugh S. Fullerton

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"Wow! Wow!! Great eye, Eddie! Make him put it across! Bust a fence! You can do it! Wow! Wow!! Wow!!! ROBBER! All right. Tough luck, Eddie. Two and two. Make her be over. Home run, Eddie. Old scout. Break the gate. Wow! Wow!! We—"

The red-faced, apoplectic young man in the front row made a trumpet of his hands and yelled until the veins in his neck turned purple. In the middle of the final "Wow" he collapsed, looked disgusted and turning to me said:

"What do they keep that hunk of cheese for? He can't hit. Never could. Striking out in a pinch like that!"

The fan, howling encouragement or bawling abuse at the ball players is the spirit of the town. Just how great an influence this spirit exerts upon the playing strength of the team representing the town or city is impossible of calculation, but it is certain that it is part of the national game. He and his fellows exert almost as much influence upon the team as does luck, and this spirit is so intricately mixed with the element of luck that it is impossible to determine cause and effect. There are cities in which the loyalty of the fans has waned and turned to gibes, and in these cities no player does well. There are crowds that remain loyal in victory and in defeat. These inspire the players to give their best efforts to win. Ball players will tell you that teams invariably play better with friendly crowds applauding. The fan invariably will respond that he would be loyal provided the club would win games enough to justify loyalty. The players accuse the fans, the fans accuse the players, and both are in a measure right. The majority of patrons will "root" when the home team is winning. Any team will play better ball and win oftener if the patrons are loyal. The fan, voicing the spirit of the town, is a power for victory or defeat.

Conditions in different cities comprising the circuits of the major leagues assert a powerful influence over their teams. Players will tell you they would rather play for the Chicago White Sox or for the New York Giants than for any other teams. They will assert that twenty Cobbs could not win a pennant for Cincinnati under conditions which the management is now striving to change. The fanatical loyalty of the White Sox rooster and the Giant patron, the angry abuse of players by the annually disappointed Cincinnati public, the sarcasm and raillery of Washington crowds, trained for years to expect nothing but defeat, have an immense effect upon the players and teams. They make or mar players, and weak men win for one type while brilliant ones fall and lose for the other.

The baseball fan is a unique American species and the most rabid of all enthusiasts. Compared with him the golf fan, the bridge fan, even the bowling fan are mild. Baseball is the most serious pleasure ever invented.

Probably the most blindly loyal crowd in the world is that which follows the fortunes of the Chicago American league team, and to one who is disinterested the Chicago situation is acutely funny. The White Sox park is located on the south side

of the Sox rosters when they scent victory.

One of the most dramatic displays of loyalty I ever saw was in 1907, when the team, beaten and displaced from the championship, came home to close the season. They had gone away in high hopes, and failed. It was Sunday, and as the defeated team marched down the field 17,000 men and women stood silent and uncovered for a moment, then broke into applause that swept the stands. It is small wonder that a team backed always by such loyalty won even during years when it seemed much weaker than its opponents.

I have heard opposing players declare they would rather face anything in the game than the grinding "rooting" of the Chicago south side fans. The only duplicate I know is the rasping, nerve-racking, long Yale yell.

Not all players are frank enough to admit that the rooting has any effect. Indeed it is a common pose to pretend that they do not even hear. But they do. Even among themselves they pretend they do not care; but once in a while they tell their inner feelings. They know that half the men who quit the major leagues are driven out by the voice of the fan. I have seen men break and go all to pieces, rave and swear and abuse everyone after suffering a cruel grilling by a crowd.

Walter Willmot, one of Anson's famous old Chicago players, came to a game on the old grounds fifteen years after retiring. He looked across toward the left field and said:

"There's some of them out there now I'd like to choke."

Yet the roar of the crowd does not break them as quickly as does some sharp thrust of sarcasm or biting wit from an individual. Perhaps that shaft is only the last straw, but when a player is in a nervous collapse he usually rages at some individual who said something to him. Josh Reilly, one of the merriest, happiest players I ever knew, "blew up" one day and had to be restrained from assaulting three or four thousand men in the bleachers.

"Did you hear what he said?" demanded Reilly as the other players tried to restrain him.

"What did he say?" inquired someone.

"He said: 'Reilly, you're a disgrace to the Irish,'" and then he raged again.

One of the quickest things I ever heard was a remark from a Washington fan which upset Frank Ibbell, the veteran, completely. Ibbell's head is as bald as a concrete pavement, and usually he kept his cap plastered tightly on his head to shield himself from the gibes of crowds. This time he tried to steal second and made a desperate, diving slide around and under the base man only to be called out. He was so enraged that he ran at the umpire, grasped his arm, argued and raved and finally in sheer anger, jerked off his cap, hurled it onto the ground and jumped upon it. His bald head glistened in the sunlight and the crowd roared. Then, above the roar came a voice:

"Put on that cap. They pinched Mary Garden here for less than that."

Possibly more trying than any concerted rooting is the incessant nagging to which players on the Polo grounds, New York, are subjected. The one great bit of rejoicing among

In Cincinnati, Brooklyn and Washington, during most of the season, the crowds are bitterly sarcastic toward the home teams, although the Brooklyn crowds are decent except on Saturdays. St. Louis affords a queer study of the crowds. When the Browns are at home the crowds are ugly and vent their temper upon the players, yet half a dozen blocks away, on the rival park, there assembles a crowd wilder and more frantically in favor of the home team and more unreasoning in partisanship than almost any in the country. Just where this feeling arises is hard to discover. The crowd is violent in temper when the team is winning, worse when it is losing. Perhaps long years of bitter defeat have caused it.

In Boston and Philadelphia, on both major league parks, the home players and visitors are almost upon equal terms, and the spectators applaud good plays irrespective of the players. They see baseball under the best conditions, with both teams encouraged and giving their best efforts to the work. Pittsburgh is bad because of the gambling that has become almost part of the game in the Smoky City. The temper of the crowd is ugly and the losing element is in evidence no matter whether the home club wins or loses. Detroit is a loyal, rather violent crowd, tamed now because the fans have learned to endure victory as well as defeat. The crowds were mad with enthusiasm the first year Detroit won and have since tamed down

the cheer masters fell flat—in Chicago at least. The harder the leaders of the rosters worked the more apathetic the crowds became. It was an interesting phenomenon and I set out to discover the reason. The first bleacherite I met solved the problem. "Dem guys ain't on de square," he said. "Usuns out in de bleachers don't want to rob nobody."

There was the solution. No matter how partisan a baseball fan may become, or how wild in his desire to see the home team win, deep down he wants fair play, and, after a time, he will insist upon it. The rosters' clubs died.

There are few of the noted fans now, chiefly because the papers seldom mention them. Perhaps they exist. In the old days almost every club had one or two such followers. Probably the best known was "Hi Hi." This was General Dixwell, of Boston, who for many years followed the fortunes of the famous old Boston club. He is wealthy, intellectual and a cultured gentleman who became completely absorbed in baseball. He followed the team wherever it went and became a familiar figure all over the country. He occupied a front seat in the stands, kept a careful score and studied the game with a seriousness that was appalling. He maintained a deep silence during almost all the game, but when a really great play was made he emitted two sharp staccato barks: "Hi! Hi!" and then dropped to silence again. His



"They Pinched Mary Garden for Less Than That."

One of the queer things in that city is the bawling of George Mullin, the veteran pitcher. Mullin is a jolly, quick-witted joker and years ago he began talking back to the bleachers. He was warned that the bleacherites would put him out of the business, but persisted. Every afternoon he would walk down in front of the bleachers and engage in a verbal skirmish with the crowd, trying to hold his own at rough repartee with hundreds. He abused the crowd, laughed at them, accused them of "quitting," and enjoyed it. If he had taken it seriously the result might have been different, but after a time it became part of the game and now the spectators in the bleachers would not be satisfied if Mullin forgot to start a skirmish. Last summer, going out on a car in Detroit, three young fellows were talking.

"Oh, I've got a peach of a get-back at him today," said one, and, at the urgent request of the others he drew out a card and read what he was going to say to Mullin if he came near their seats.

It is not the great crowds that attend the crucial games that exert the strongest influence over players. True there is a natural nervousness among all the players when a tremendous throng gathers to see them, as in world's series games; but the ones that help the home team, or damage it, are the crowd of from six to ten thousand, stirred up by the "regulars" who, day after day and season after season, incite those around them. There are thousands of these regulars, self-appointed claqueurs or cheer masters, and some of them feel as if they are doing as much to help the team to victory as if they were out there on the mound pitching. The large crowds usually are the fairest and most sportsmanlike, for in these great gatherings the rabid and partisan fan is lost and his utterances are smothered. These crowds police themselves and the players feel safe and assured of fair play, and, after the first nervousness passes, they play their best.

A baseball crowd is much like a mob. Without a leader it is just noise and turmoil, but with one recognized leader it can do much. A few years ago a number of Chicago men attempted to carry out a theory that the crowd needed leaders and the result was one of the most dangerous experiments ever attempted. The White Sox rosters organized, a band of men far above average intelligence, who laid daily plans for inciting crowds and stirring up enthusiasm. The Board of Trade Routers operated at both Chicago parks, being organized primarily to attack McGraw and the Giants. They wrote and circulated songs, invented ingenious methods of harassing a worthy foe, and to force undeserved victory upon the home teams. The idea spread rapidly. "Routers' clubs" were organized in many cities and towns to help the home teams. For a few weeks it looked as if the new movement would seriously endanger the national game. The crowds grew more and more violent. Then, suddenly and without warning almost, the wildest efforts of

war cry gave him his name. He quit attending baseball games years ago, but still continues his deep interest in the sport, and in his apartments he keeps a wonderful set of books showing the averages and performances of players for many baseball generations.

"Well, Well, Well," was another character who was named because of his cry, which followed just after a big outburst of applause on the part of the crowd. The moment the applause subsided his "Well, well, well," would boom over the field and never failed to start the cheering again. The average crowd is cruel, because it is thoughtless. Few of the fans who hurl abuse and criticism at the players stop to think that the men they are addressing have the capacity to feel and to suffer. Many a thoughtless, barbed jest has wrecked the career of some ball player. It took the players a long time to discover the fact that their popularity and their safety from abuse lies in presenting a good-natured appearance, no matter what happens, and in answering questions when possible.

If you go through league after league, team by team, you will find that the most popular player, in nine cases out of ten, is some outfielder. He probably is not the best player, but he has the most devoted following, because he keeps on friendly terms with the men and boys who sit

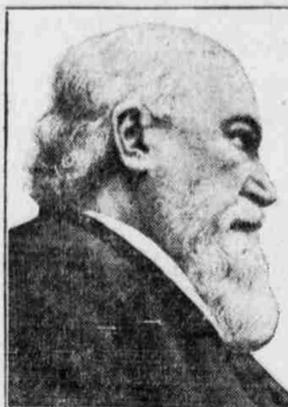


The Baseball Fan is a Unique American Species.

behind him. In fact, almost every outfielder has his own regular patrons, who attend games and seek seats as near to him as possible, and who defend him against all comers. To them he is the best in the world, a "Greater than Cobb," nor do they forget him; the player who finally displaces an idol has a hard time. I have known them to follow a player around the field when he was shifted from one to another position and to battle for him with the retainers of the other fielder who dared criticize him. Biased, prejudiced and distorted in their views as most of them are, they are very human and very lovable in their blind devotion to the game, and in their unreasoning hatred. And a word of warning: Never try to argue with a real, dyed-in-the-wool, thirty-second-degree fan. In the first place the chances are he is right, but even if he is wrong there isn't a chance to win the argument.

WHO'S WHO—and WHEREFORE

AT 70 MAYOR BECOMES STUDENT AGAIN



A picturesque white-haired "gentleman of the old school" stepped buoyantly from a train at Madison, Wis., a few days ago.

He was Mayor Rudolph Blankenburg of Philadelphia, scholar, patriot and philanthropist, and he, with a party of 100 easterners, went there to take a special course in civic government.

The venerable Quaker made an impressive figure in his flowing beard and frock coat. His eyes, undimmed by age, shone with the eagerness of youth.

"Never too old to learn," was his cheery announcement. "Think of it—going to school at my age." And he laughed heartily at the idea of becoming a schoolboy at the age of seventy.

The party, which made the pilgrimage under the auspices of the City club of Philadelphia, regards Madison as a sort of new world Athens. They took a three-day course in advanced civics, and returned with the very latest ideas on the problems of municipal government.

There were 26 women, including Mrs. Blankenburg, in the party. "Like a Greek philosopher," said Mayor Blankenburg, "I am traveling far in search of learning. Here are my disciples, who have come to sit at the feet of the great masters. Government in these days has come to be a science, and we propose to give Philadelphia the latest improvements."

Mr. Blankenburg was elected chief executive of the Quaker city on an independent ticket. For many years he has been prominent in the field of civic improvement. He retired from business in the '70s in order to devote his time and money to the betterment of Philadelphia.

SAYS INDIANS NOT A VANISHING RACE

That the American Indians are a vanishing race has frequently been asserted of late. In only one sense is this true, according to statistics. As a race proper, the Indians are assimilating the ideas, teachings and mode of life of the white man and so losing their identity, but as a matter of fact they are increasing in numbers, are more prosperous, healthier as a result of education in sanitation, more industrious than they have ever been before and are better cared for by the government, through the office of Indian affairs, than at any time in the history of the red man in the United States.



Acting Commissioner of Indian Affairs Abbott speaking of the Indian situation says:

"The Indian race is vanishing only in the sense that modern standards and habits of civilization are displacing those of a former day and applying those qualities in the Indian, always virtuous, noble, and worthy, to the new and modern industrial mode of life. The work of the Indian bureau in caring for the Indian's interests is increasing and must continue to increase for years to come."

CARES LITTLE FOR FORMALITIES



The American agricultural commission which visited Rome recently took away a lasting remembrance of at least two very prominent men met while there, namely, King Victor Emmanuel and Signor Luzzatti, the former minister of finance and agriculture and once president of the cabinet.

Of the commission's experience with King Victor a story is now being told which, besides throwing more light on the king's democratic ideas and disregard for etiquette, also explains why the delegates were so pleased with the reception at which the king and Queen Elena were present.

According to the story, on leaving America many members of the commission little thought they would come in contact with crowned heads of several European countries and failed to bring along evening dress suits, Prince Alberts, cutaways and striped trousers.

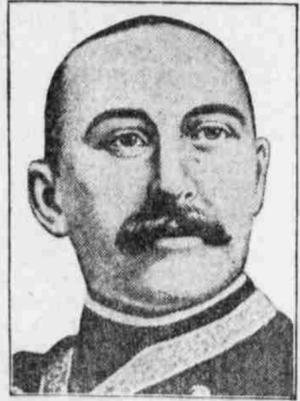
It thus happened that when the commission's presentation to the king and queen was set for five o'clock in the afternoon many delegates informed Ambassador O'Brien that they would be unable to be present on account of the fact that they had no evening clothes with them.

The ambassador, who knows the king intimately, decided to inform his majesty of the delegates' plight and the king's answer was:

"Now, Mr. O'Brien, tell them to come even in walking coats. I know they are here to work and not to enjoy themselves. Besides, I care little for formalities."

HUERTA TIRES OF HIS JOB?

General Huerta is chafing under restraint imposed by the duties and ceremonies of his office as president. Some of his old friends in the army will not be surprised if he throws off the tri-colored band and again dons the military uniform. It is said that the president, not satisfied with the progress being made against the revolutionists, is considering seriously the resignation of his office that he may direct the campaign personally. That the army has not made any great advancement in restoring peace is evident. "I am not a man of governmental affairs," said Huerta in an impromptu after-dinner speech. "I am a soldier, and every time that I see a body of men entraining I long to go with them into the field."



Who would take Huerta's place as provisional president is a matter of speculation. His inability to find a man who would satisfy the people and display the requisite executive ability is what may prevent Mexico's soldier-president from abandoning the palace.



"Fans."

of the city; the Cubs' on the west, and the city is divided into two great armed camps. In 1896 when these two teams, winners of the championships in their own leagues, met to contest for the world's championship, it was the loyalty of the south side crowd beyond doubt that won for the team. That fall the Chicago Tribune's composing room was about equally divided between the followers of the two teams and so bitter was the feeling that the foreman was compelled to separate them and send them to different sides of the building to maintain peace. It was civil war all over Chicago.

It is a magnificent crowd, wonderful in its spirit and in its intense loyalty. There are few things that shake an opponent like the incessant: "Get a hit," "Get a hit," which is the war

the National league players last year when they saw the wonderful Brush stadium was that the crowd could not make itself heard on the field as it did in the old stands. The Polo grounds crowd is odd. Somehow fans who occupy box seats either are not as rabid as those in the cheaper seats or they are on their good behavior, and a fringe of box seats is an effective shield for players. Strangely enough the crowds on the New York American league park, although quite as noisy, are much fairer, than the crowds at the Polo grounds.

One would think that visiting players would like to play on grounds where the home team is unpopular through defeat or other causes, but they do not. They rather resent the home crowd abusing the home men.