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SPORTING GOSSIP OF WEEK

Western League Ball Begins to Look Like Fight for Second.

DES MOINES SEEMS TO HAVE WON FIRST

Denver, Omaha, and Sioux City Will Now Wrangle for the Honor of Being Next to the Top.

When the sky fell Papa Bill Rourke's plate was upside down. Consequently he only caught a little of it. After walloping the leaders and the second place team, and getting good and ready to reap a harvest off the tail-enders, the season's misfortunes culminate in the crippling of two of the mainstay players, and the chance is gone for the rest of the season. St. Joseph contributed to a large extent to the feast we were looking forward to, dropping six out of eight games to the Rourke family, but it should have been eight straight and a couple of double-headers thrown in. Then, when the second soft thing came along in the shape of the crippled Pueblo team, with an opportunity of pulling at least four out of five on the regular schedule, and socking in a couple of double-headers on postponed games, and running up a fine standing in the percentage table, the Rourke family finds itself in such condition that the rain that stopped one game was welcome, and the games provided in the schedule were quite enough. Maybe this hard luck will let up some day, and the team will get back into its right and proper place. The chance to get into second place was good indeed, but accidents barred the way, and Denver and Sioux City are both thankful for the afflictions that have overtaken the champions. Maybe the new pitcher and the return of Ivan Howard will turn the tide.

Young Howard's work in the Iowa league has been of the kind to talk about. He has been fielding very well, and his batting is the wonder of the circuit. He showed signs of this during his practice with Omaha last spring. His hitting promises to be even better than that of his brother, who is winning much fame with Pittsburg, while he is a better fielder naturally than Del. Rourke proposes to give him a chance at short while Dolan is out of the game. Dolan's injury is of a nature that makes his return to the diamond very uncertain. He may get back at once, and he may not be back for weeks. If Howard can anywhere near stop the gap in the field and deliver the merchandise with the stick, he will be the savior of the team. Hall, the pitcher, comes with a fine recommendation from Ace Stewart, and will be given a chance this afternoon to show what he can do. He was looked upon as a wonder in the late Cotton States league, and if he comes up to Stewart's promise, then Rourke has again succeeded in his proverbial luck with pitchers. Bucklin, the Tekamah boy, looks good, but lacks the experience to take his daily turn against the seasoned batters of the Western. His one game down at St. Joe proved his willingness and in a measure his ability, and he will surely be given a chance, if not this season, next spring. Rourke says all he lacks is experience. He is a youngster, and a willing and ambitious performer.

Des Moines is jogging along at an easy clip, winning them as fast as they can be played, and in view of the fact that the Underwriters have only seven more games to play with Omaha, it might not be out of order to award them the pennant now. Omaha is the only team that has been able to beat the Cantillion bunch, and barring some dreadful mishap, it doesn't appear that the leaders will ever be overtaken by any of the others. Denver, Omaha and Sioux City are going to fight it out for second place, and that appears to be about the only argument left in the race this season. It's asking too much to expect the Champions to repeat the wonderful spurt of last season, and even if they did, and won the seven games remaining with Des Moines, the leaders would have the reverse results with the other teams in order to fall far enough behind to allow Omaha to win. Denver lost its chance by the slump during the last home series, and Sioux City's energy was expanded on a meteoric flight early in the season. St. Joseph has justified the preseason prophecy, by making sure of the cellar championship, and Pueblo is far enough behind to feel reasonably certain of fifth place.

Big league affairs are rapidly nearing the condition in which it is absolutely certain that something is coming off. St. Louis is a big loser for two clubs; Boston is much to the bad, and the New York Americans are in wrong; Detroit is a disappointment, and Brooklyn has lost money steadily all season. Jim Hart says that he hasn't retired from the head of the Chicago team yet, but he doesn't say that he will not at the close of the present season. It is Cincinnati money that has purchased a portion of the stock of the Chicago team, and probably a controlling interest. The Boston Nationals were sold early in the spring for fall delivery, and the whole base ball atmosphere is surcharged with certain indications of a change. It is about as sure as anything in the future can be that the circuits in 1906 will not be the same as the circuits of 1905. In this is the hope that Omaha will get into the company to which it rightfully belongs.

The passing of Frank Selee from the game which he has so long adorned will be a cause for sincere regret on the part of all who have the interests of the great American game at heart. For nearly a score of years Frank Selee has been identified with the game in a prominent way. Sixteen years ago he piloted the Omaha team to a glorious finish in the Western league race, and then went direct to Boston, where he won pennant after pennant. Three years ago he went from Boston to Chicago after Tom Loftus had wrecked the Chicago Nationals and began the hopeless task of building up a new team again. He made the Chicagos a factor in the race the first season, pulled them up to a good paying proposition in the second, and this season, when overtaken by illness, had the bunch running smoothly and warring every inch of the road with Pittsburg and Philadelphia, and even taking hard falls from the Giants. He has surely proved himself a prince of managers. Above everything else, Selee is clean in his methods. He deals openly and honestly with players and magnates alike, and has the unqualified respect and friendship of everybody in the game. His retirement, even for the rest of the season, is a distinct loss to the game, and it will be the fervent hope that he will be again found in the ranks next year, leading the Chicago team and fighting for games just as he was when he took sick. The game hasn't enough men like Frank Selee to spare even one.

"A Subscriber" at Fort Dodge, Ia., asks that The Bee explain the "spit ball" and its delivery. The term is applied to a peculiarly prepared ball that takes an erratic course after it leaves the pitcher's hand. The pitcher prepares the ball by soaking it in saliva, tobacco juice preferred. After he has thoroughly drenched the ball he delivers it with a modification of the motion used in throwing an ordinary curved ball. Its operation is uncertain, but differs from the ordinary curve, in that the curve is achieved by the retardation of the ball due to its rotatory motion after leaving the hand. With the ball revolving swiftly on its own axis its course is varied in a direction opposite to its rotation. When it has been sufficiently soaked in tobacco spittle it is apparently subject to another law, the conditions being disturbed by some factor, probably the unsettling of its mass movement owing to the unequal weight caused by the moisture. This causes it to take an eccentric course, and it is said that even the pitcher cannot determine with any accuracy where it is going. The method of delivery is peculiar and can hardly be satisfactorily described i na newspaper without the use of diagrams. The motion used by the pitcher is a combination of a throw and a shove. It can best be learned by observing an experienced pitcher using it. As to its utility, the following from the pen of Charles Nichols, the veteran pitcher, will be found of interest:

Nothing in years has attracted so much attention as the spit ball. This delivery of the ball in which the use of saliva is supposed to cause so much demoralization to the batsman has not been used by me at all for the reason that I have not found it necessary to add to my own effectiveness by recourse to any new style. From what I have heard, the use of this new factor in the work of the pitcher has caused a deal more harm than it has done good. Certainly our pitchers have eschewed it entirely, and those who have tried it say that it will handicap a pitcher more that it will help him. The delivery of such a ball is just like shoving it, as far different from the usual style of delivering a ball as one can imagine. The reason that it is difficult to control this kind of a ball is not difficult to see, for the fingers are wet and difficult to control. Taylor, of our team, uses slippery elm, for the reason that the flow of sliva is increased thereby and not so much effort is necessary to keep the ball wet. Those who have used the spit ball continaully say that in time the pitcher will lose all control of his arm for anything else but this kind of a ball. It will be spit ball or nothing. That is where the trouble arises—The change from one kind of delivery to the spit ball. The one who uses the latter to a degree finds that he cannot throw the other effectively at all. It will not affect the pitcher who tries the ball occasionally, but let him continue to use it and he will find he must let it alone if he desires to continue in the game.

The recent city tennis championship tournament did one thing which was foremost in the minds of the promoters and that was to bring out many new players who are destined to come to the front. The directors at the Field club have striven to wipe away the idea that because this tournament was played at the Field club courts that the play was more for the Field club members. This has been entirely set aside by the manner in which visitors were treated at the Field club. They were shown every courtesy that was within the power of the managers of the tournament and the directors of the club and made to feel at home. Two outsiders won the championship in doubles and this was a complete surprise and also the desire of many. Matteson and Smith were too fast for Scribner and Kohn and surpassed them on certain style of play that won the match.

Many of the younger players showed considerable speed during the tennis tournament and the local entry list for the championship events that come on this month should be large. Many of the better of the younger players were put down and out near the fore part of the tournament. Koch is a comer and won the applause of all who saw the fast game that he put up. Matteson is a new comer, and although beaten in the singles, went along to the semi-finals. Leo Wilson also stayed well down the line and is one of the coming players of the town. Not since Con Young has been winning all of the local championships has there a man come to the front who shows the speed that Scribner has this spring. Frank Haskell was thought to have the stuff in him to deliver the goods, but he quit the game. Scribner has all of the essentials of a good tennis player, but he was beaten in the challenge match through superior headwork on the part of Young. Scribner has a way of loafing through the first part of a game until he is way in the hole and then pulling out. This was characteristic of his style in every match that he played in the tournament. After he had gotten behind in the Young match he was not able to come to the front, for Young did not weaken, as many prohpesied that he would. Dufrene plays an even game, but has not the speed that some of the other youngsters possess. Many of the older players are still at tennis and Billy Baxter, Dr. Teal, Ralph Sunderland and others get as much enjoyment playing on the splendid courts at the Field club as in the days of yore.

With the defeat of the American tennis team in straight matches in the challenge round for the Dwight Davis cup, the last American athletic invasion of England for the summer came to an end. Taken as a whole, the various attempts of the athletes to gain honors abroad this year completely failed. Of the half dozen invasions but two were successful, and it fell to the lot of a mere girl to carry off the only honors garnered in England. Miss Sutton, the former holder of the woman's championship in tennis, succeeded in capturing the English title, but the honor does not fall to this country completely, for Miss Sutton is an English woman, although brought up on the Pacific coast. Then, too, Mulcahy and Varley won the double sculls at Hamburg. The Vesper Boat club crew of Philadelphia failed to get into the finals at the English Henley; the Seventh Regiment Rifle team was defeated at Bisley by the Queen's Westminster Volunteers; the American college athletes now touring England have met with but little success, and the American auto team was unplaced in the race for the international Bennett trophy.

The defeat of the American tennis team was a disappointment to followers of the sport in this country, for it was thought that after the magnificent play in the preliminary rounds that the team had an excellent chance to recover the trophy won here in 1903. That the team would be defeated in straight matches was not expected, despite the caliber of the cup defenders. In some quarters there is a disposition to question the selection of the team in that Beals C. Wright was left out of the singles. All reports from England give universal prominence to Wright's playing, and it was confidentially expected after his remarkable playing against the Australian, Brookes, he would be one of the players to enter the singles. The fact that Brookes defeated Smith, and was in turn defeated by Wright, showed the latter's caliber, for Smith later defeated Larned in the challenge round. There are many close followers of tennis who believe that Wright is the coming American champion in singles. It is reported that he will go in more for single play hereafter. The play showed that the Dohertys are not equaling their game of two years ago, but at that they are a trifle too steady for the American experts. This appeared to be their one great advantage over the players of this country in the Davis cup matches. Regardless of how the scores were set against them, they were never beaten back or flustered, and returned shot after shot while waiting for their opponent's game. Even the English accounts of the play admit that in service and killing returns the American players were equal to or surpassed the home experts. It was at the crucial moments of the play that the Dohertys proved, both individually and as a team, just so much superior to the Americans as to give the margin of victory. Should they accept the pressing invitation to visit this country with the returning Americans and play in the national championships, a further test of their ability should be a great help to the tennis players of this country.

P. A. Valle, the London critic, discussing the doubles match between Ward and Wright and Dunlop and Brookes for the Davis cup, said:

The American pair, Ward and Wright, won their match against the Australians, Dunlop and Brookes, at Queens club somewhat easily by 3 sets to 1. The winners never looked losers from the start. They are without doubt a very fine pair. If they continue in the way that they have been going they may be relied upon to give all tennis players on this side of the water something to think about.

The serving and overhead work of the Americans is very good. Beals Wright particularly excels in the latter department. He does nearly all of his smashing with arm work, but he is so strong and accurate that this peculiarity, which in a less extraordinary player would be a blemish, does not in the least detract from the merit of his fine work in this department.

The Americans showed wonderfully good combination and head work. The latter is, indeed, in evidence all of the time, and the manner in which they seize upon an opponent's weak points and feed them is a treat to see. Whenever they were in difficulties they tossed to Brookes, and this otherwise fine player tapped them back gently when he did not put them out. This is quite useless against men with the resource and agility of the famous Americans. They just ran for them, and if in a bad position tossed them back to Brookes and maneuvered for position. The number of points thus lost to the Australian were was very large. I should have felt this much more keenly than I did had I not been practically certain that even with a win in this event Australia could not have regained the position the previous day's distastrous work had put it in.

Dunlop again proved himself a very fine doubles player, his volleying generally, and particularly his overhead work, being excellent. His service seems to the onlooker very simple, but it is astonishing how many games he wins with it. He serves rather slowly, but this enables him to get into position at the net, and when there he is very difficult to pass. His return of the service is excellent; indeed, in this respect he is probably the equal of any of the quartet. His placing of his volleys was occasionally very fine; indeed, it is hardly too much to say that he was sound all around.

The greatest blot on Brookes' fine game, his overhead work, was again much in evidence. He will not hit his overhead stuff at all. The six-a-side England vs. Australia match has, I understand, been definitely arranged. If I were captain of the Australian team I should make a great effort to lure Brookes into putting in half an hour a day "branding lobs." It might make a great difference to his side. I quite agree with Brookes' idea of winning by placing, but when that is not on, there is only one thing for any one who wishes to be taken seriously as a doubles player to do, and that is to put his return "out of sight" by pace. Brookes, like Beals Wright, does all his overhead work purely with his arm, but he has not the strength of the American.

Splendid fishing is being had at Cut Off lake by the local anglers and every evening a large number avail themselves of the opportunity to fish in these nearby waters. Many fine bass have been caught during the past week with different kinds of bait. The favorite bait is frogs, with which the banks of the lake are lined. Some of the less expert fishermen have discarded the reels and are fishing with sixteen foot poles and a stout line. Of course, this is the best way to land fish, but not the most sportsmanlike. While casting for bass several large crappies have been landed, showing that the lake has a good variety of fish, for sunfish are caught at all times.

No game has made such strides in late years as the old Scottish game of golf. Several years ago it was looked upon in this western country as the game for affected persons, and it was not many years ago that the first links were laid out at the old Patrick farm. Now all classes of sport lovers are engaging in the pastime. Tennis and base ball at the clubs have had to give up many of their best players to the links. There is reason in the advancement of the popularity of the game among many classes of players. No game is now played, better suited for an elderly man, who has an afternoon or evening to put in out-of-doors. For these football could not be thought of, tennis and base ball are too severe, and croquet is too slow, so that golf just fills the requirement. Men who have never engaged in any of the outdoor sports have taken up golf and become enthusiastic players. Some of the best known athletes in the city have also become enthusiastic over golf and play nothing else.

Auto dealers in Omaha, as well as several buyers, are interested in the announcement that the railroads have agreed to a reduction in the cases of freight rates for automobiles west of Chicago. Under the new rule cars will be accepted at less than carload lots at the rate for first-class freight instead of three times the first-class rates. The new ruling makes it possible for a motorist, shipping his car from Chicago to points farther west, to do so at about one-third the former cost.

Mrs. E. H. Sprague will participate in the golf championships at Chicago next week and will then retire from the links. She has been an ardent follower of the rubber ball since the links were first laid out in Omaha and has made an enviable record, winning the Transmississippi for ladies at St. Louis this summer.

A scheme is on foot to revive the ancient and honorable pastime of the Englishmen known as cricket, and it is proposed to place the wickets in Miller park. Time was when cricket was quite a game in Omaha, and this town boasted of a team that did not have to take a back seat to any in the country. Times have changed, however, and the Scottish game of golf has run the cricketers to cover. The enthusiastic cricketers have become just as firm believers in golf. J. B. Reynolds and Harry Lawrie play at golf harder than they ever did at cricket, and J. E. Buckingham and Jack Francis have each switched. Francis writes from Chicago that he is playing a rotten game of golf, but this is taken as a little wrong dope to throw the boys off, so that he can take them on for a more advantageous match when he runs over here some Sunday.

Dr. Maurice Francis Egan of the Catholic university at Washington does not believe, like many of the heads of American colleges, that athletics are carried too far and that they are injurious to students. In a recent address to the graduating class of Villanova college he said:

If you have neglected Virgil a little for foot ball and base ball, do not worry about it. The reasonable growth of athletics in our colleges has done more to train Americans in the science of team work, in obedience and in the subordination of self to the general good than all the axioms of armchair psychologists.

Athletics have driven out the worship of the shirt and the apotheosis of snobbishness and sloth. A man who goes in for good work on the field knows that he must get down to Mother Earth. He soon learns that clothes do not make the man, but that strengh, skill and fair play help. Those mothers who weep over a lost tooth or a broken rib or two should remember that for every bruise that their sons receive there will be a falling off in the consumption of nicotine and alcohol.

The foot ball coaches of the University of Pennsylvania have been working over the game for the last few weeks and it is declared that a new system has been evolved which is revolutionary and startling. The plan, which has been attacked on every side on the checker board, has demonstrated its practicability and it now awaits trial in the field. It is possible, under the rules of 1905, made by the self-constituted foot ball rules committee, which refused to make the changes demanded by all except a few, which should make the game more open. The appearance of Woodruff as an adviser at Pennsylvania after an absence of some years makes it seem likely that the proposed new system will consist of mass play even closer than the guards-back, for which he was responsible.

The new rules have just been published in "Spalding's Foot Ball Guide," and show very few changes from last year. Only one is radical and likely to really affect the game. In the rule regarding scrimmages a change has been made which will permit closer formation than those of last year, instead of the open play, which had been expected. The committee considered the question on several occasions during the winter and spring and the result has been a defination of the line of scrimmage which is most elastic. It provides that six players must be in line in the scrimmage, as was the case last year, but includes the defination of the line, which is absurd. A player will be in the line if either his head, foot or hand is within one foot of it. This will enable a man to stand four feet behind the line, as it was last year, and yet be on it simply by stretching out his hand. The possibilities of this change are great. Two guards may be back of the line and yet be on it, according to the rule. Mass plays may be even closer than they were last year; and who is to decide if a player has his hand within one foot of the line? The player can easily stretch out that foot or two without being found out, and the officials will be absolutely powerless to prevent it. Suppose a man is a good distance behind the line, with his hand outstretched, and the official some distance away, how can the official determine whether he is a foot or a yard from the line of scrimmage? Disputes will be constant and the delays to the game will be more frequent than ever. It is again urged that now is the time to change the rules and make them more rational. It is also argued that the men in charge cannot have given the matter careful study, else such a rule as this would never have appeared on the books.

One of the foot ball authorities at one of the big colleges, commenting upon this rule, said: "You just watch the players on the teams of the colleges represented on that rules committee. It is 10 to 1 that there will be several with an extremely long reach. Changes in the rules have been made every year to fit the incoming teams of the colleges represented on that committee. Some day there will be a rule against biting in the line, and the succeeding fall will find several players with front teeth missing. The whole thing is a farce and the sooner the real foot ball players get together and make rules plain and simple the better it will be for the game. The present rules are an abomination."

Swimming is becoming quite the thing in Omaha since the advent of real warm weather and the swimming instructors at Manawa and Cut Off are having their hands full. Of course there are not so many expert swimmers inland as there are near the coast towns, but Omaha is not without her quota of swimmers who are really expert, swimmers who learned to swim back east on the banks of the Little St. Joe or some other historic stream. One of Omaha's most enthusiastic swimmers is Henry Dunn, chief of the detective department at the city jail. Nearly every evening this month Mr. Dunn has been out at Cut Off lake taking a dip. He believes swimming one of the best of sports—a sport that is particularly beneficial to anyone having sedentary habits or occupation. "I like to take a run out to the lake, throw my clothes off and become a boy again. There is nothing like splashing around in the water. The exercise brings into play nearly every muscle in the body, to say nothing of refreshing one and taking out the kinks," says Mr. Dunn. While Mr. Dunn is an expert swimmer he does not go in for records or for anything of that sort. He has merely acquired his present proficiency by years of practice. Every year he takes a trip to the Pacific coast and takes a dip in old ocean. "Speaking of swimming," remarked Mr. Dunn, "I am surprised there are not more women swimmers in Omaha. Swimming is one of the sports peculiarly adapted to the fair sex and it does them a world of good."

Automobile Sparks.

A. H. Fetters, after an absence from the city of several weeks, is again seen on the streets with his machine.

H. E. Fredrickson expects to visit the different automobile factories this month and make his selection of machines for the coming year.

It is probable that the elimination trials for the thirteen American cars entered for the Vanderbilt cup race will be at not more than 200 miles.

Chairman Morrell of the American Automobile Association Racing board is father of this bon mot, uttered jestingly: "So far as I can see, all the tours this year have been races, and most of the races have been tours."

Already the subject is being agitated of having a long competitive tour next year that shall be open to all. The Glidden tour is for owners only and it is argued that the reputation of some manufacturers suffer through their cars being incapably handled by owners, while the manufacturer is barred from competing.

How long will a spark plug last? The answers to the question will probably be as numerous as the kinds of spark plugs to be found on the market. An English motorist reports that he has run his car 6,000 miles without ever taking off the plug, and this should be pretty close to record. One thing about it is that when one gets hold of a good plug he hangs onto it, fearing the result if he changes it.

German makers favor the adoption of a standard formula for automobile construction. Their association, the Automobile Technische Gesellschaft of Berlin, met recently and decided to collect from all leading firms information as to the actual dimensions used in construction, from which it is hoped standard formulae may be arrived at. The formulae it is proposed to issue in a small booklet, and it is hoped that they will be adopted by all automobile constructors.

A certain motorist not long ago was reminded of the good old adage beginning with, "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings," and thought it was the pattest thing he knew. His gasoline tank had sprung a leak and he stopped at the first town to have it repaired. The repair man looked it over and told the owner that he could not solder the tank because it was full of gasoline vapor, which would cause an explosion. Then a 12-year-old boy who was standing near came to the rescue. "Why can't he fill the tank with water and then solder it on the outside?" asked the lad. "The water will push out all the gas." His advice was taken in a jiffy.

A very successful and most enjoyable automobile trip was made recently by Mr. and Mrs. Willard B. Chambers in their new machine. Leaving Omaha last Sunday morning at 5 o'clock, the party enjoyed the glories and beauty of an early morning ride to Council Bluffs, at which place they breakfasted with Mr. Chambers' parents. After a brief respite they left for Malvern, making the trip there without an unpleasant incident of any kind. The return to Omaha was made last Tuesday. Mr. Chambers has had his machine but two weeks and this is the first time he has ventured so far from home. The machine worked beautifully both ways and even surprised the owner with the power developed in making the hills and bluffs over in Iowa.

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