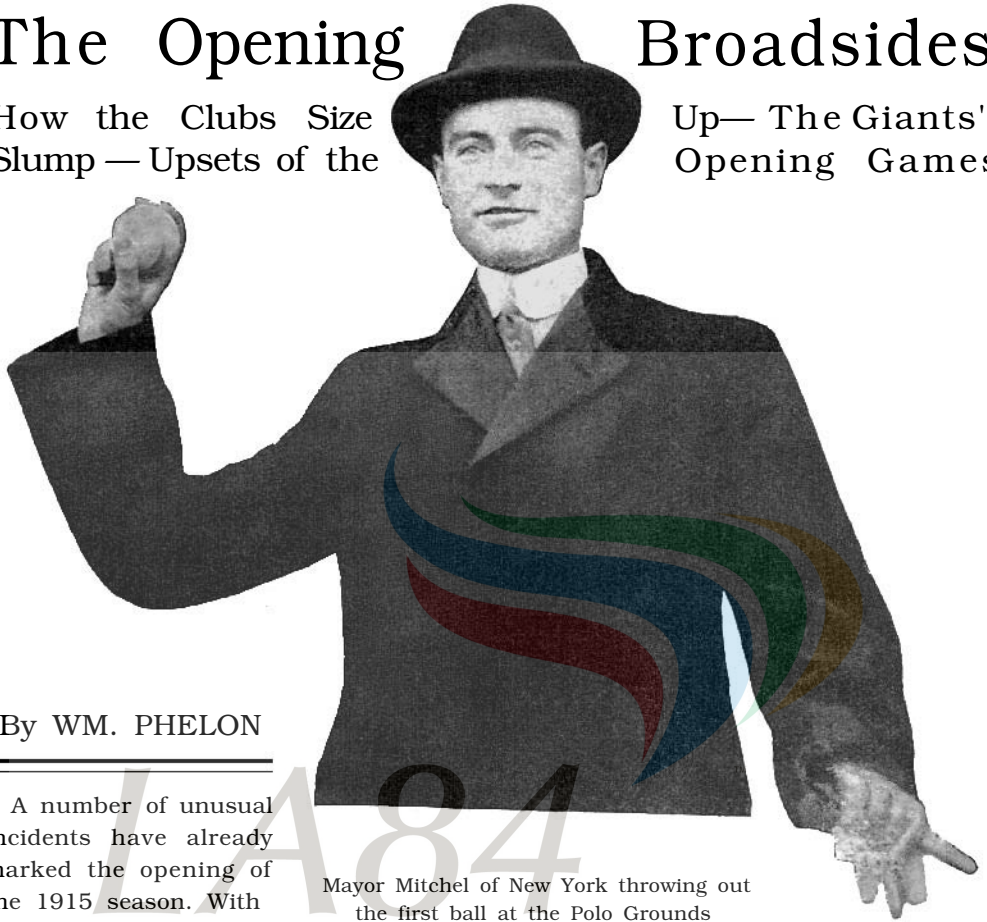


The Opening

How the Clubs Size
Slump — Upsets of the

Broadsides

Up— The Giants'
Opening Games



By WM. PHELON

Mayor Mitchel of New York throwing out
the first ball at the Polo Grounds

A number of unusual incidents have already marked the opening of the 1915 season. With the comparatively few games yet played we have had slumps and winning streaks, slugging contests and no-hit games, the spectacle of weak clubs winning and strong clubs losing. It is as yet too early to obtain a clear insight into the probable outcome of the season, but it is not too early to predict a year of unusual interest in affairs of the diamond.

THE war is at this time of writing only a few days old; the first inter-sectional trip has not yet begun, and the clubs still have numerous games to play, east vs. east, west vs. west, before the western teams start a journey to the seaboard. And yet, even while the campaign is only in a formative or experimental condition, the wild wail of the loser rises on the April atmosphere, and mingles with the cheery chant of the delighted winner. In all the leagues, a scant eight games—eight out of 154—

have aroused turmoil, confusion, and blasts of internal recrimination.

Seldom has a season started with so many shocks, jolts, and whacks abaft the neck for the wise men. Form-cards haven't worked out at all. Nothing has gone true to "dope." Of course, order will (presumably) come out of chaos in the near future; the various clubs will settle to their proper working stride; but, in the meanwhile, there is going to be much happiness in certain quarters, and equal fury in other sections.



Mayor Curley of Boston beginning the season for the World's Champions

NATIONAL LEAGUE.

Cincinnati turned out the biggest actual crowd for the opening day—21,262 bugs and human beings—but the gatherings everywhere were hugely satisfactory. As to the quality of ball played by the eight teams since the gong rang on April 14—draw the veil in some places, and turn the spotlight full on others!

The champion Braves aren't negotiating the hurdles, at the get-away, as befits the masters of the baseball world.

True, they were absolutely last in the early part of July last season, and then rushed up to the top, but the situation this year is totally different. This summer a championship team must get on the job, keep itself up near the top, and be forever ready to come down the stretch with only a small handicap to overcome. Last year a large percentage of gentlemen were not playing bail, save in a purely perfunctory, get-the-money fashion. They were thinking, not of pennants and the thrills of the game, but of Federal League possibilities; the chances of getting away with a successful jump; auto rides; vaudeville engagements—anything and everything except the business for which they were supposed to draw their pay. The Braves, tending strictly to business, came plowing through the ruck, and won out before the other fellows had forgotten their foolishness.

This year things have settled to very nearly a normal, solid condition. The noble athletes are playing ball again instead of dreaming. As the result, even a world's champion club must keep its trademark polished, and the Braves will have to be up and hustling all the time.

Evers was hurt in his third game, putting a serious handicap on the team right there. This accident gave Fitzpatrick, a new accession, the chance to show his speed, and, so far, he has done clever work both at the bat and on the middle station. No novice, however promising, can replace Evers, though. The team is undeniably crippled, and may be set back severely by the time John gets into the harness again.

To make things less enjoyable for Stallings, his redoubtable pitching staff wasn't ready for work at the start-off. James wasn't prepared to step on the firing line for a week, and Tyler, at this hour, hasn't even delivered a ball. The second-string men had to go in, and it was lucky for Uncle George that Rudolph, alone of his Big Three, was ready, while Strand showed considerable development since last season.

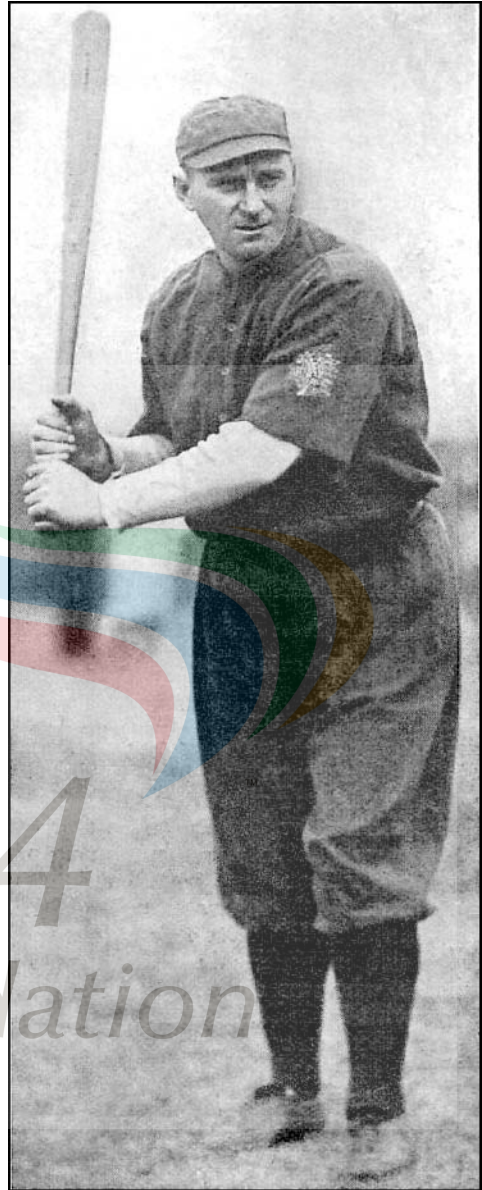
Sherwood Magee, not yet batting up to his real rank, was able to go in from the start, having rapidly recovered from his injuries of the training season. One encouraging sign: the formidable pummeling power shown, right off the reel, by the huge Schmidt. This large Ger-

man geezer, who fattens fast, was almost a wart on the neck of the team at this time last year, and had to train desperately to get into proper shape by June. This spring, judging from the way he is hitting and covering first, he must have worked hard all winter, and put himself into excellent condition.

Brooklyn usually starts with a rush and a roar. Having the batting strength, this team generally does some heavy mauling in the early spring—doubly so if it can play the first few games at home. There are scenic or geographical reasons for Brooklyn's great success in home games during early April. Usually, the outfield at the Brooklyn ballyard bakes hard as a rock in April, the sun seeming to harden it even after a heavy rain. Wheat, Cutshaw and Stengel—not Daubert, whose hits, even though more numerous, are seldom of the bounding, ricocheting pattern—continually rap wallops that bound higher than off the sod of any other outfield in the country. These hits hop way over the head of the hostile fielder, and skip along for double measure in the way of extra bases. As a result, Brooklyn gets a lot of victories early, the Brooklyn fans are all keyed up and hopes are aroused that are all the more bitter when the annual blow-off comes.

This year Brooklyn was up against it for fair. Dalton's absence has been keenly felt, even though Zimmerman has done nifty hitting in his place. Neither Daubert nor Stengel is in good health, and the pitchers have been going in a vague, uncertain way. The first eight games, too, were scheduled away from home, and by the time Robbie's men had a chance on their own field the team was way down in the consomme. Brooklyn is a club which once down does not rally well—is very poor at an uphill fight. The defeats of early April, therefore, are apt to prove a heavy handicap, and one that may hold the team down for a long time to come.

As cheering lights in the Brooklyn gloom, however, may be mentioned the excellent promise shown by Zimmerman, the new outfielder; Schultz, the new third baseman, and a recruit pitcher named Appleton. Best of all, the mighty Rucker seems to be staging a genuine comeback, and his good left arm swings, apparently, just as well as ever.



Sherwood Magee, the Brave's New Slugger

One of the big excitements of the early weeks—one of the most stunning things of recent baseball history—was the thorough downfall of the Giants after a gorgeous start. McGraw's men began by fairly slaughtering Brooklyn at the Polo Grounds, 16 to 3, to make a Manhattan holiday. The very next afternoon was featured by Rube Marquard's pitching a no-hit game against the same unhappy Brooklyn club. Not only are hitless

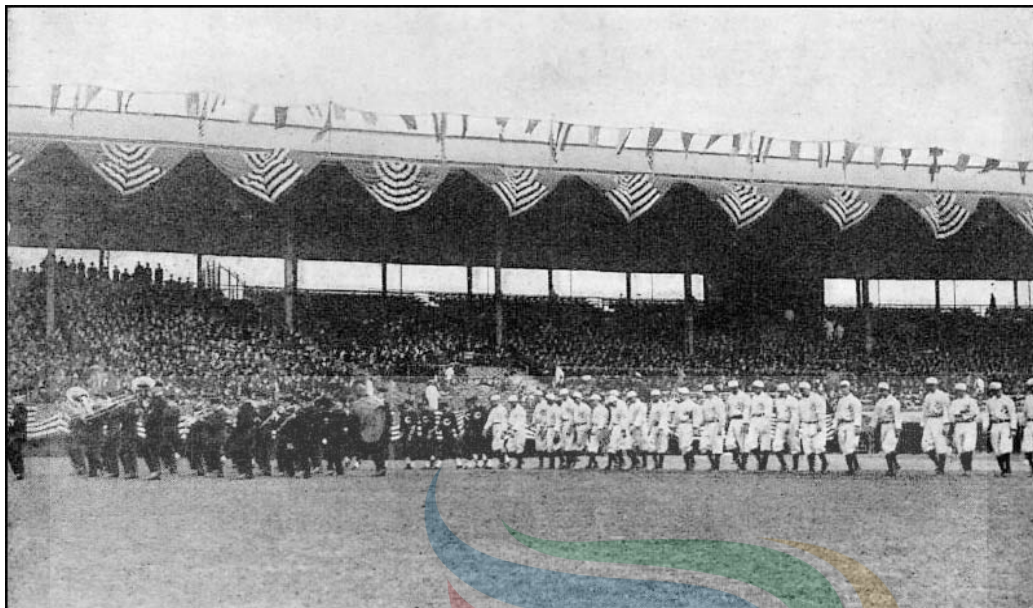


Photo by American Press Association.

Opening Day at the Brooklyn Federal League Baseball Park

games exceeding scarce, but who ever heard of any man pitching one on April 15, at a time when the pitchers hardly have their wings in working order? This sensational thriller seemed to be a jinx, for, the very next day, began a string of New York defeats that were enough to drive Jawn J. McGraw plumb to the dippy-house. Mathewson was knocked off the slab in jigtime in his first game. Demaree, who was chucked in as boot in a trade with Phila., toyed with the Giants and shut them out. Chalmers, whose arm had gone bad, had regained free use of the wing in practice at the Giants' Marlin camp. Having "no room for him," McGraw let him go; he returned to the Phila. club—and stopped the Giants with two hits in his comeback venture! Schauer, whom McGraw bought two years ago for much money, and who has ever since been roosting on the bench to learn, was given a chance to start a game—and was buried under a storm of hits. Altogether Mr. Graw has had a gleeful time with pitching troubles—and with other departments too. Larry Doyle and Fred Merkle are executing a great comeback with the stick, but man after man has failed in right field.

Year after year, it has teen complained

that the Giants' schedule was so composed that they had a cinch on getting a wad of wins off the other eastern clubs before they met the western outfits—but so far this spring, the Giants have been everybody's football in the East, and the whole baseball world is still wondering. Oh, yes—to add to McGraw's other worries—Poll Perritt, the long pitcher whom Jawn "saved from the Feds," and who was expected to make the New York pitching staff pretty nearly air-tight, turned in two losers in his first two endeavors!

The Quakers roused enthusiasm such as they haven't stirred in many a moon by taking a long string of victories away from home. It is, unfortunately, an old custom of the Phils to bag a lot of games early and slump heavily about June 1—hence nobody can tell whether this outburst of success will be a fixed habit or die away as it has usually done. The pitchers are working very well; Alexander is in the best form of his career, and Chalmers is a highly valuable comeback. Bancroft, the new shortstop, has taken to his responsibilities like a duck, and fits in beautifully. Niehoff plays a good second, much better than had been expected, and Whitted, a most desirable player in

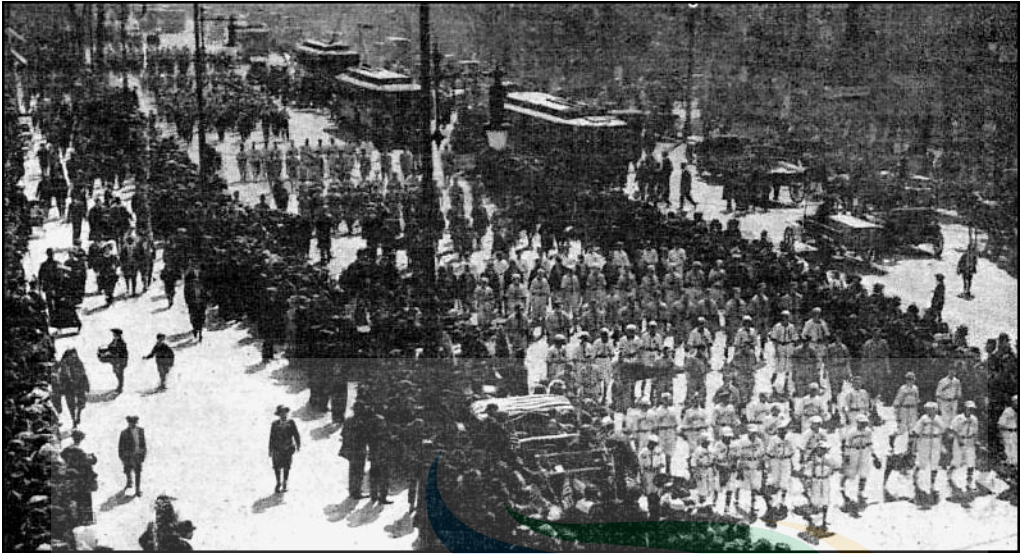


Photo by The Newark Evening News.

Grand Parade in honor of Federal League Opening Day at Newark

every way, is more than making good. The team looks better, more compact, more capable of sustained effort behind the pitchers, than it did at any time last year.

The big surprise on the western circuit is being supplied by Cincinnati. Critics who have seen the Reds in action are solidly picking them for the first division and for the dark horse if that fiery charger comes to life. Herzog has assembled a batting team, full of pepper and ambition; his catchers cannot be surpassed; his pitchers are really topnotchers; his rearranged infield works finely, and the way the Red gardeners take long flies is enough to create a gasping thrill.

The Cubs have cut down their roster in a manner that must have eliminated \$20,000 worth of salaries without actual loss to the playing power of the club, unless it should prove impossible to fully replace Leach. The club, as it is now going, hits well, needs more field practice, and has its pitching staff in rather shaky condition.

Miller Huggins has some good young fellows on his present list—Long, Daringer, Meadows, etc.; Bob Bescher seems to be as good as he was last season, and the catching department has been greatly fortified by getting Miquel Gonzales from the Reds. Nevertheless, the Car-

dinals lost steadily during the first half month of the struggle, failing to bat and fizzling on the few hits they did contrive to make. Seemingly, the club isn't jointed or burnished as yet, and it will be dangerously far back in the ruck by the time it gets to going smoothly.

Pittsburg is playing a middling good game. The pitchers are all right, and Schang is a real prize behind the bat. Wagner works well on second, Gerber bears himself like a marvelous shortstop, Johnston can take care of first, and Viox, though a trifle stiff at third base, is fast picking up its angles. The veteran Hinchinan is a genuine treasure, especially with the stick. Taken as a whole, the club ought to be doing better than it is, but it has been ranging at or under the .500 mark ever since the strife got under way.

AMERICAN LEAGUE

THE Boston Red Sox, generally picked as logical pennant-winners during all sessions of the Stove League, started with an additional advantage: the return to full duty of Heinie Wagner, who was out of it all last season with a wing so lame that it was considered the faintest of chances that he would ever come back. This ad-

vantage was somewhat balanced, though, by the news that Veau Gregg's arm seemed to be gone, and that this crack southpaw, one of the neatest lefthanders of them all, would probably have to give up the game forever. With a most efficient force of substitutes, the Red Sox seemed to have a castiron cinch, but it was generally felt that they wouldn't foreclose their mortgage, early. Carrigan would take no chance on wearing out his men by forcing the pace too soon, and hence nobody was at all surprised when the first few games saw the team barely breaking even. The first few clashes of the American League seemed to indicate a fight where the leader would seldom stand over the .600 mark, and it would be good tactics for Carrigan to hold his team round .550 through the earlier months, doing the steam-roller act after the other fellows had done themselves up trying to snatch a lead. At that, there was evidence of a fierce desire to win, by hook or crook, on the part of the Red Sox in the initial week. Complaints were heard, loud and long, about the way the Red Sox blocked runners, and how Bill Carrigan deliberately bounced them off his shin-guards, even men who had made clear home runs and couldn't have been kept from scoring. Oh, well, as the Yale guard said when he stepped on the Harvard tackle's ear, whadda ya think y'are playing? Checkers?

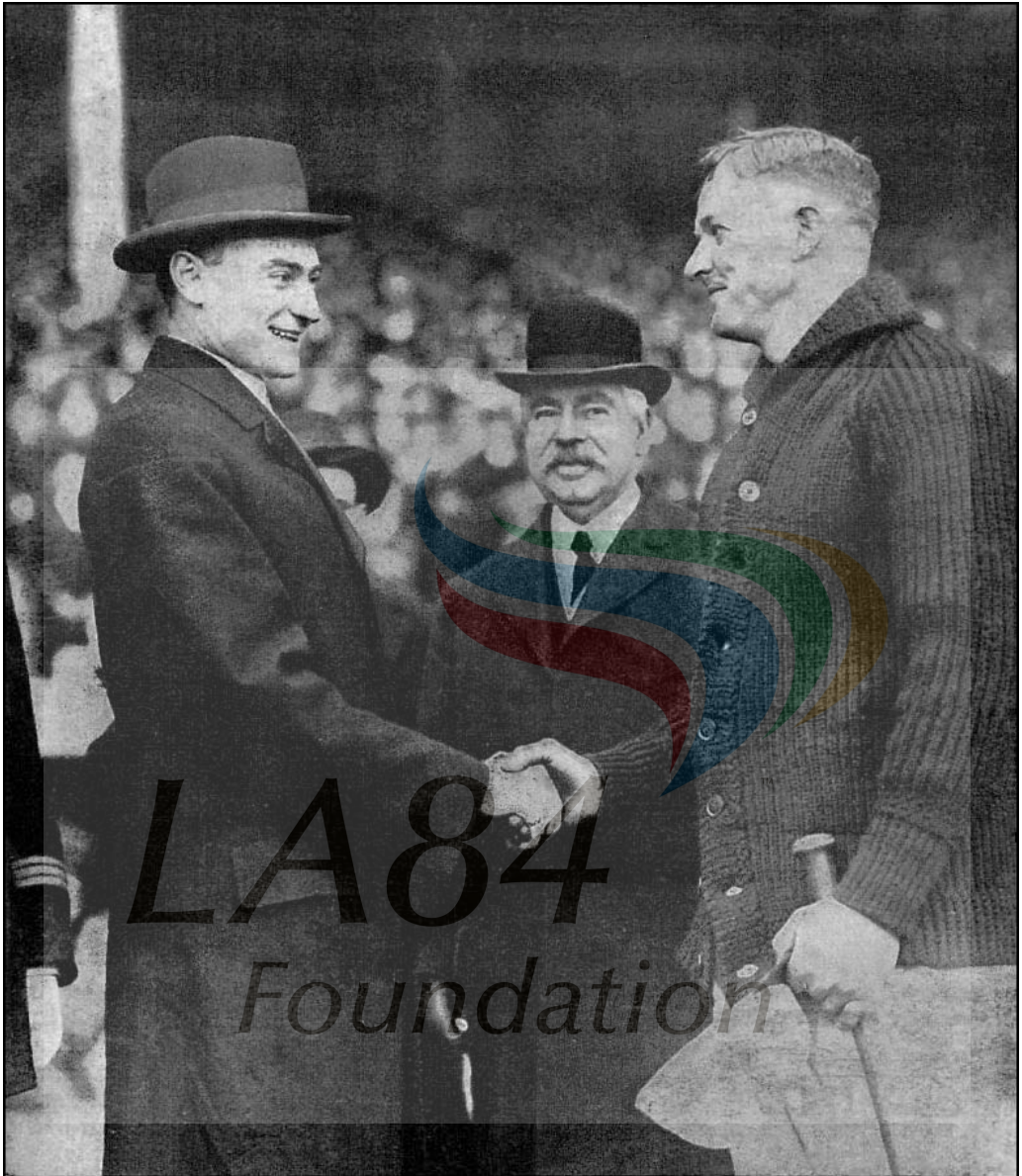
The reconstructed New York club, with its new owners, new manager, and a surprisingly effective arrangement of its line-up, came across quite early with a surprisingly strong article of ball—a style of attack, and a strenuous defense, that had been wholly unexpected. The team that took the field in the first few games had amazing possibilities. It was, of course, a club depending wholly on a stack of "ifs." If Cook and Boone developed as they gave promise of doing, and if Pipp and High made good, the club would show itself far better, both at the bat and in the field, than anything the Highlanders have shown in several years. The whole layout, the strength of batsmen, and the protection of every position, loomed up twice as effectively as had been generally forecasted. To say the least, the club looked better than the Athletics.

Walter Johnson pitched the opener for

Washington, and, according to one of his pleasing customs, registered a shutout.

The Griffkins held up their end valiantly during the first few games, but the club is foredoomed to defeat or, at best, fourth position unless it can get some batting strength to help the pitching. Nothing the matter with the curves—except that there are not enough of them—but the batting power of the Washington club is practically a fixed, understood, and deficient quantity. The regular lineup varies very little, and that same lineup is now known to be unequal to the task of carrying its pitchers to the top. The few men whom Griffith procured in hopes of adding hitting power aren't utilized frequently. Henri Rondeau, who was brought back into the fast company on the stories told of his mighty swatting, hasn't been on display except as a futile pinch-hitter. Little Acosta, the tiny Cuban kid, has been getting into some of the recent games, and has been cracking the leather as his sponsors always claimed he could do if he were given a more frequent opportunity.

Just as I write these lines, news comes that Eddie Ainsmith, whose pleasant task it is to catch Walter Johnson's thunderbolt delivery, has been sentenced to thirty days in the booby-hatch for taking a whack at a motorman, and that Joe Engel, one of the Washington pitchers, has been fined \$50 for participation in the same scrap. The club owners, it is understood, will appeal the case, and fight it to the last ditch, with the idea of at least prolonging the legal battle till the end of the season. After October 8, I presume, they wouldn't care if Ainsmith had to do 130 days on the stone-pile, for at that time of year Johnson won't be pitching anything but hay, and even a Class D backstop can catch the fastest delivery Walter makes of the succulent alfalfa. This is a funny world. Why on earth couldn't the judge have laddled out the decisions so that Engel could make little ones out of big ones for the thirty days, and let Ainsmith pay the fifty bones? As Engel and Ainsmith tell the story, they never touched the plaintiff. They merely had some words with him, and when he learned who they were he was so rattled that he ran madly up a crooked street, met himself coming round a corner, and hit himself two or three

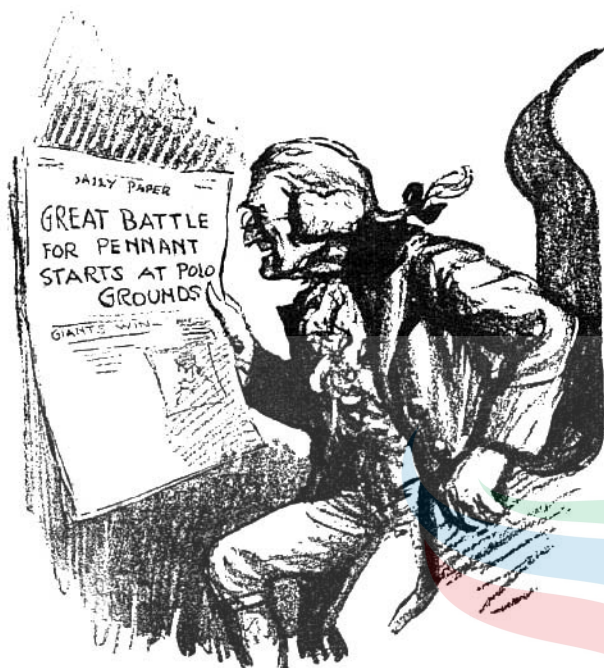


Mayor Mitchel shaking hands with Christy Mathewson on Opening Day

terrible wallops on the snout, bugle, promontory, or proboscis before he realized that he was assaulting himself.

Late reports have J. Franklin Baker positively about to return to his old allegiance and once more station himself on third for the Mackmen. He is imperatively needed. The departure of both Collins and Baker proved a handicap that the Athletics couldn't carry. Na-

oleon Lajoie seems to be playing a corking good game on second. Murphy, who was assigned to third after Oldring, Kopf and Bostick had tried their hands at the job in the training practice, puts up a game that looks extremely creditable in the box scores. Nevertheless, the solid strength isn't there. The team was a distinct failure in its earliest games, and seems to lack the cohesion, the quick

WAR NEWS OF INTEREST.

By Starrett in the "New York Tribune"

grasp of opportunities, the mutual confidence, that marked the former champions of the world.

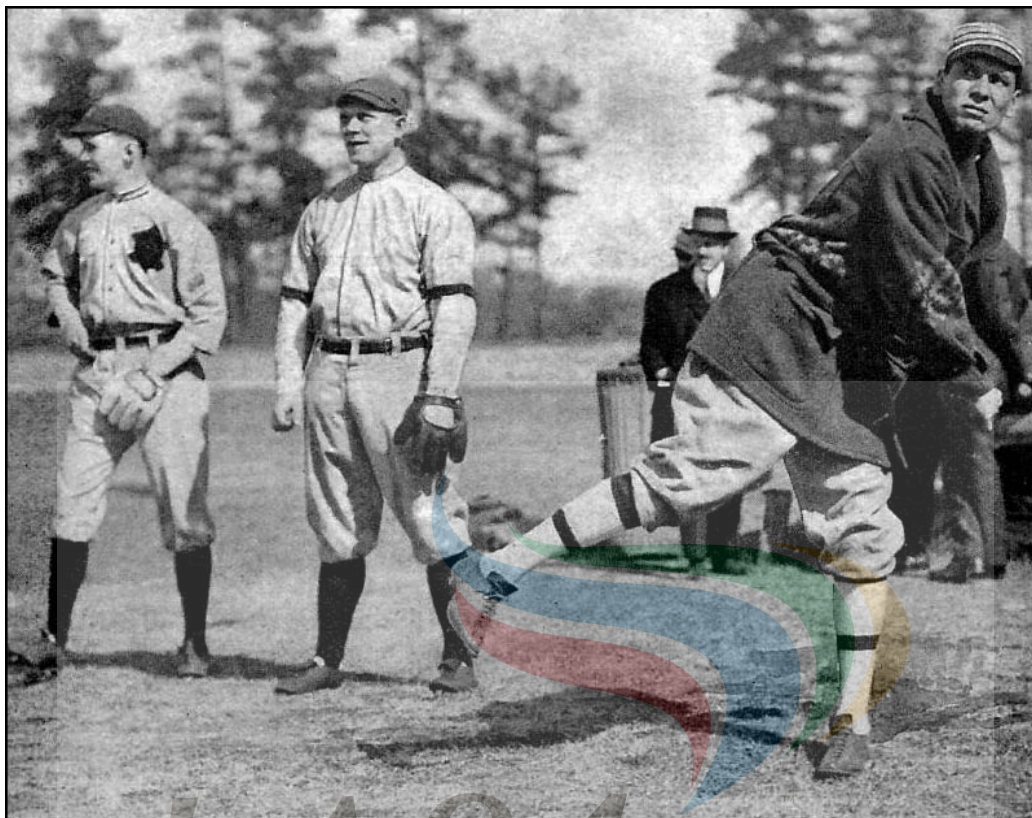
The Chicago White Sox, after the purchase of Eddie Collins, and with the addition of Felsch and Brief, two of the best prospects among the minors, were touted as a sure thing for the first division, and the most likely dark horse of the league, if such brunette equine should come neighing through the ruck. Apparently, however, somebody put a burr under the saddle of the swarthy steed, for he has been bucking horribly and jouncing Pants Rowland, his new jockey, up and down, like an apprentice coon. The games so far played by the White Sox have been like a comic opera parade, both as to the laughs excited and the large number of the chorus. Manager Pants has flung an army into the breach, day after day, and if the 21 limit rule of the National League were enforced in the American he'd have had to get a special dispensation to play the hackman and the bat-boy. Collins has played very good ball. The team has been making a great many more hits than is usually characteristic

of the White Sox—and yet it has been a fearful loser in the early milling. The flocks of athletes tossed into the pastime don't seem to jibe; they don't appear to flock their hits, nor to oppose a healthy defense when the hostiles are bombarding the works. It is also probable that Rowland's pitchers have not yet caught their swing. When they do, with Collins as a central figure, with Schalk as the daily catcher, and with the hitting force that the remodeled team undoubtedly possesses, it will be hard to hold Comiskey's men. The only question really is: Will they get going as they should before the summer is too far advanced?

You can't judge a club's regular work by exhibition games. Seen in preliminary battles, Detroit looked ragged and far from a polished club, but Jennings's men got away in grand style with the gong,

and have kept up a splendid pace. The batting force may be, to some extent, weakened by the disability of Burns, but Cobb and Crawford can always carry the team with the stick, if given the least help from the other fellows. Kavanaugh is playing a very decent first base; Young, the new second baseman, is learning the big league wrinkles rapidly, and a valuable pitcher seems to have been added in Boland. The Tigers have worked their rear-ranged infield very well, and have fought better, in all departments, than had been anticipated. Their victorious start was a surprise, but not as much so as the marked success of Cleveland.

Birmingham's team, as he finally shook it into shape, lined up a good deal better than one would think at a casual glance. Rogers, a new infielder, looks like a man worth giving a good, fair trial to. Morton, a new pitcher, is evidently a find. With Turner holding up as well as a juvenile; with the pitchers getting a little help both behind them and with the stick, with Chapman playing a topnotch game, and Joe Jackson still present with the warclub, the team looks as if it had a



Big Chief Bender (extreme right) warming up for the Baltimore Feds

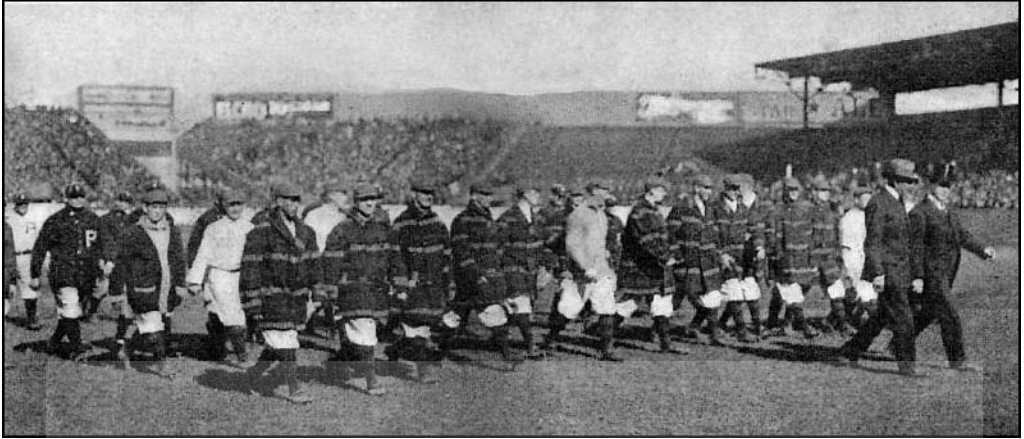
right to hold up its head and even become ambitious.

The St. Louis Browns got away well, but began to droop late in the second week. It was figured, before the season started, that the club's good pitchers would prove its principal asset—but, so far, Rickey has had to do a lot of changing and derricking in almost every game, and his hurlers have not shown the flash and sparkle expected from them. One man—Henry Severeid, a cast-off from the Cincinnati club, which made a colossal error in ever releasing him—has become a popular idol with the St. Louis fans, a game-buster with his long drives, and looks as though he would make himself first catcher in a hurry.

IS it the best plan, nowadays, to take the long chances on the sacks, or is it best to "play 'em safe?" Should a player (taking it for granted that he is a good, fast man, up to the required average in speed) try to stretch his hits or

check himself at the base where he knows he has found perfect safety? Should the coacher bring a runner down from first to second, or from second to third, or take a chance on going home when the chance is slim, and the runner must win out either on dazzling slides or through bad handling of the leather? In short, to sum it up, should the average player try to do the Ty Cobb stuff on every possible occasion, or should he change his tactics, watch the ball, and play it safe, holding his hassock, never advancing for an extra base unless the chance seems absolutely certain?

Not long ago, almost every manager would have answered, without a moment's hesitation, "Take the chance!" and the runners would have been called down, hard, if they didn't make the plunge, no matter how thin the opportunity might have been. Now, there's some thinking, some debating, and some hesitating. "Safety first" is gaining a firmer hold upon the managers—and there's a reason.



Mayor Curley and Manager Stallings leading the Braves' parade around the field

The reasons for doing the Cobb stuff, trying always for the extra base, taking the slimmest chance to move along, were numerous. Here was how the case was argued:

If an outfielder makes even the smallest fumble of your hit, go on. To keep you from making that extra base these things must be done: The fielder must subdue, gather, and pick up that ball. He must locate the infielder to whom he should make the peg. He must make a perfect and unerring throw. The infielder must make a perfect catch; must locate you as you approach, and must, without losing the smallest fraction of time, get the ball upon you. Chances, therefore, were mainly in favor of the nerry runner. The defense had to do a whole lot of things to stop him, and every one of these items must be put through without a hitch or slip, while all the runner had to do was to keep up speed.

Wherefore, then, the change? For this simple reason: Of recent years the mechanical handling of the ball, especially by the man who takes a throw, has become something almost uncanny, almost beyond belief or comprehension. The way in which the gloved hand is manipulated in tending to infield plays would almost make a stranger swear that the glove was an integral portion of the hand, and the perfection with which these things are done comes pretty near to reversing the former situation, and putting the burden of trouble on the runner.

The modern infielder, when a runner is trying to stretch a hit or gobble an extra base on any old pretext whatever, can get the outfielder's throw, even though it goes considerably wide. He dashes over to the right spot, takes the throw in the glove, and spills it so seldom that an error or a muff of this kind is almost a negligible factor in modern scoring. Taking the ball in the glove, he flings himself upon the runner, and, no matter how extraordinary the acrobatic act required may be, he goes through with it. He rolls upon the runner; he stands on his head—now and then upon the runner's head; he hurdles the runner, or lets the runner hurdle him—and always he holds that ball in the old black glove, without a spill or fumble.

It used to be a stock joke that, to stop Ty Cobb, you had better throw two bases ahead of the one towards which you see him pointed. Nowadays, Mr. Cobb is nipped time after time. He scores fewer runs in proportion to his hits, and so do lots of other daring fellows. The infielders get them now, where they formerly got by. Seldom is the ball dropped or fumbled; it is handled with deadly precision, and the runner's chance of escape has been reduced probably 50 per cent. from what it was five years ago. Of course, the daring rush still wins many and many a time—but the "safety first" idea is taking hold, and gaining ground each day.

(Continued on page 116)

THE OPENING BROADSIDES

(Continued from page 28)

MARK ANTHONY spoke well when he said: "The evil that men do lives after them—the good is oft interred with their bones." Too true—too grimly true. Take, for instance, poor Fred Merkle. Through all the baseball aeons yet to come, through all the chronicles of changing years, what will stand forth in blazing letters, written so that he who runs may read? The tale of hits and hits; the story of unflinching valor as he held first base against the crazy throws and hurtling spikes? The glorious narrative telling how this man Merkle helped to win three flags? The story of loyal faith and heroic steadiness that saved fray after fray for old Manhattan and brought flag after flag to flutter in the breeze that blows from Bronx to Battery?

Lykelle, lykelle, as Byron said. The glorious deeds that this fellow did will gain but grudging approbation, but through all time, while the Great Game shall live, they'll tell of Merkle's blunder, of the "bone" he pulled in 1908, and how that bone play cost a flag. And yet, now that it is seven years ago, how many fans remember things like these?

A. That Evers, when the identical play that Merkle pulled came off at Pittsburg a few days before, noted all its legal details in his unflinching mind and talked thereof, in full, to O'Day and Emslie, the umpires who were on that fatal field Sept. 23, 1908?

B. That if O'Day and Emslie had only been "wised up" to that point before the Pittsburg game where Evers showed the inner coilings of the rules, there would have been no squabble on Sept. 23—the Cubs would have been victors sans debate?

C. That the Merkle incident would not have counted for a tinker's damn had the Giants but hit the stolid Polish rookie, Coveleskie, in three games in the season's final week?

D. That an umpire's decision at Chicago calling a long hit foul which even the Cubs now say was six inches fair, knocked Pittsburg out of the pennant in the last October battle?

E. That even after the Merkle inci-

(Continued on page 118)

THE OPENING BROADSIDES

(Continued on page 116)

dent, the advent of Coveleskie, the education Evers gave the umps—after all these happenings, the Giants would still have won the banner had they but rallied and won out in the play-off game upon the Polo Grounds?

Circumstances count for everything. The break the brainy Evers made in Game Three of the 1914 World's Series, as compared to Merkle's bull, was as the royal gesture of a Roman Emperor compared to the beckonings of a Bowery bum. If the break that Evers pulled had decided the series, it would have been talked about forever—as it was, men have forgotten that it happened.

In that memorable struggle, when the fortunes of the game were at their most critical stage, with sundry Athletics on the hassocks, a hot, rakish bouncer struck Evers on the shins, insulted him, and fled. As Evers regained the ball, one runner scored, and another gained third base. The great and brainy Evers, instead of instantly sending the ball to somebody, anybody, picked it up—and held it. Instantly the man on third dashed in—and Evers made never a move to stop him!

The wonderful rally which the Braves sprung immediately after retook what had seemed a hopelessly lost game. Boston won through in the most sensational series of all time. But—had that break Evers made been so timed as to give the Mackmen that World's Series, who, today, would even think of the bone which Merkle pulled?

It's not what you do in baseball, but where it happens, and what comes off afterwards.