



BLASTS FROM THE PAST!



WHO WAS "BONEHEAD" MERKLE?

AND OTHER STORIES FROM THE EXTRAORDINARY 1908 BASEBALL SEASON!

BY JOSEPH BALKOSKI

Consider for a moment the monumental changes which have taken place in the United States since 1908: the incredible development of mass communications, bringing Americans into instant contact with national and global events; the advent of two world wars, pushing the country into a position of world-wide leadership, however, reluctantly; the refinement of methods of transportation which would have astounded Americans only 75 years ago; and, perhaps most horribly, the creation of weapons of war whose destructive capabilities would have made the contraptions of H.G. Wells appear to be mere toys in comparison.

Three-quarters of a century ago, the United States was a vast expanse of territory encompassing 46 states (the 46th, Oklahoma, had been admitted to the Union only in November 1907) and 85 million citizens. Travel between states was possible only by train or by horse-driven coach (the newfangled automobiles were mostly in the hands of the elite). The nation had only just begun to ascend the ladder of global diplomacy after a number of remarkably successful foreign military adventures in lands most Americans had never even heard of. The President, Teddy Roosevelt, was symbolic of America's innocent vitality; his obsession with toughness and physical prowess was just what the doctor ordered for the young nation.

When we look back at the sport of baseball 75 years ago, we subconsciously assume that it was as different from the game that is played today as much as ragtime is at

odds with punk rock. Glancing at old black-and-white photos of ballplayers in their quaint uniforms leads the casual sports fan to momentarily wonder how exactly the game was played in these mysterious days that virtually no one alive today can remember. And for the most part, we take it for granted that these inscrutable faces peering at us from faded photos were not athletes in the modern-day sense of the word; instead, many of them look like paunchy middle-aged men in loose-fitting uniforms and funny little hats! We even begin to wonder whether we would recognize the game as baseball if we saw it played.

However, upon closer examination of the facts, it quickly becomes evident that these notions are very far from the truth. Baseball as played in 1908 was remarkably similar in almost all respects to the game that is played today—what few differences that there were were almost entirely equipment-oriented. The modern baseball fan would be continually surprised at some of the amazing parallels of the two eras—from public adulation of the professional ballplayer (perhaps even more so than today!) to the spitball controversy to managers with remarkably similar personalities to that of Billy Martin! A casual baseball or softball player of the eighties could step back into a 1908 ballgame and feel perfectly at ease.

BASEBALL AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

As San Francisco recovered from its devastating earthquake and Baltimore from

its almost equally destructive fire, professional baseball was in the process of a major transformation—not so much in the rules themselves (which had been fairly constant since 1892), but in terms of organization. The young, upstart American League, which had been formed in 1901 by a sportswriter-turned entrepreneur named Ban Johnson, was just beginning to earn grudging respect from conservative National League fans, especially in the light of the junior circuit's triumph over their elder brothers in the first World Series in baseball history in 1903. Only two years later, the Fall Classic was made an official, regular event every October—finally fulfilling Johnson's dream of making his league truly "major".

By 1908, both leagues consisted of eight franchises apiece. (Ten of these clubs still exist today in their original cities; remarkably, the sixteen major league teams remained in operation without alteration for 45 years, until the Boston Braves of the National League moved to Milwaukee). In the senior circuit, the strongest clubs of the first decade of the 20th century were without doubt the Pittsburgh Pirates, Chicago Cubs and New York Giants. Amazingly, these three teams finished in varying patterns of first-second-third in the National League for eight of the first twelve years of the century.

In the American League, the sources of power were more evenly distributed. Only the Boston franchise had taken two pennants in a row (1903-1904); other teams of

strength included the "Hitless Wonder" Chicago White Sox, the blossoming Detroit Tigers (with a young outfielder by the name of Ty Cobb), and Connie Mack's Philadelphia Athletics. In the 1908 pre-season, the pennant was viewed as being up for grabs among any of these clubs.

THE NATIONAL PASTIME

As Teddy Roosevelt's "Great White Fleet" steamed around the world in 1907, subtly informing the world that the United States was a new power to be reckoned with in global affairs, Americans had already wildly adopted baseball as the "national pastime". However, in the early 20th century, this nation-wide idolatry was as fresh in the minds of most Americans as the nation's new position of authority in the world. At this time, baseball was a young, unjaded sport that was proudly seen as uniquely American. The rules, although outwardly complex and voluminous, were basically quite simple and comprehensible to the layman. The game was relaxing to both watch and play; and unlike British cricket (its closest cousin), it was not very time-consuming. Professional ballgames were usually played in an hour and a half.

Two factors led directly to the adoption of baseball as the national sport by Americans at the turn of the century: first, the stabilization of the rules after frequent periods of change in the late 19th century, leading to a highly-balanced, consistent game whose by-laws and dimensions have hardly changed since that time; second, the slow influx into the sport of numerous charismatic and attractive personalities, building up the image of the professional baseball player from a rough-and-tumble, hard-drinking drifter to that of a highly-respected gentleman-athlete. Christy Mathewson of the New York Giants and Walter Johnson of the Washington Senators were the most obvious cases of hero-worship among fans; this adulation went a long way in establishing America's love affair with the game. "Several ministers and two or three judges were spectators yesterday," wrote the *Pittsburgh Dispatch* after a 1908 baseball game. "Baseball appeals to all classes. It is the one real sport," the article concluded.

NATIONAL LEAGUE RACE

The 1908 National League season will be forever associated with a single play: the famed "Merkle Boner," which took place on 23 September at the Polo Grounds in New York. The circumstances leading to this fabled baseball yarn were complex to

say the least. The long-awaited three team race between the Giants, Pirates, and Cubs took hold at the beginning of July as Chicago and Pittsburgh battled closely for the lead with John McGraw's New York club in hot pursuit. Then, through the two-week period from 3 to 17 September the Giants reeled off an incredible 16 of 17 wins (mostly against hapless St. Louis and Brooklyn), pulling out in front of the two rivals by four and one-half games. Over the next five days, however, the Cubs started a five-game win streak of their own, while the Giants lost four in a row. On the fateful morning of 23 September, the Giants and Cubs stood in a flat-footed tie for first place, with the Pirates only two games out.

On the afternoon of the 23rd, the Cubs and Giants squared off against one another at the Polo Grounds in northern Manhattan. Chicago's player-manager Frank Chance—"The Peerless Leader"—sent the 30-year old southpaw Jack "the Giant-Killer" Pfiester to the mound, opposing New York's immortal Christy Mathewson. With the score tied at 1-1 in the bottom of the ninth, outfielder Cy Seymour—the first Giant batter of the inning—bounced out to second baseman Johnny Evers of the Cubs. The next batter, third baseman Art Devlin, singled. Moose McCormick then bounced to Evers, who forced Devlin at second—leaving McCormick at first on the fielder's choice, 19-year-old Fred Merkle, starting this first and only game of the year at first base for New York, then singled to center, sending McCormick to third. The situation: runners at first and third with two outs, the runner at third representing

the WINNING run. Up stepped shortstop Al Bridwell who promptly "socked one on the nose" (his own words) into centerfield for the game-winning hit. McCormick trotted home from third as most of the park's 20,000 fans streamed joyously onto the diamond.

BUT WAIT! The Cubs' aggressive second baseman, Johnny Evers, was frantically calling for the ball from centerfielder Solly Hofman. Fred Merkle, the Giant runner at first, had trotted off the field upon watching Bridwell's hit fall into the outfield and had failed to touch second base! The possibility of a force play on Merkle at second base still existed even though the go-ahead run had seemingly scored already! What happened next is a matter of conjecture, for no two accounts agree—and how could they with 20,000 screaming fans on the field and the National League pennant at stake?

Apparently, Hofman immediately recognized Evers' scheme, for he rocketed a throw to second base; the peg, however, was off-line, hitting a spectator or player and rolling towards first base. Giant first base coach "Iron Man" Joe McGinnity also realized what was happening and raced for the ball in a mad scramble against Evers and other alerted Cubs. The Iron Man won the battle and picked up the ball. He promptly heaved it as far as he could towards leftfield while Cub players furiously tried to pin him down. A second-string Chicago pitcher named Rube Kroh somehow retrieved the ball (or perhaps another ball) amid the tumultuous mob, transferred it to Evers, who ran to second



base as fast as he could. In the confusion on the field, Evers and manager Chance ran up to umpire Hank O'Day to plead for a decision.

By this time, such a huge throng of fans had descended on the field that things were beginning to look ugly for both the umpires and the Cub players. Almost all of the New York "fanatics" (as fans were still sometimes referred to in this era) were convinced that the Giants had won as were the

New York players themselves. The great Christy Mathewson, a highly-respected pillar of truth, even claimed later on that he physically dragged Merkle to second during the mad scramble for the ball among Chicago players and fans. "Maybe Evers got the ball and touched second base afterward. If he did, it didn't prove anything," Matty concluded.

The game's two umpires huddled in a small room beneath the stands as Frank Chance

pounded on the door for a decision. One was soon forthcoming; it was decided that Evers was right: Merkle was forced out at second despite the apparent game-winning hit. As a result, the run did not count; the score still stood at 1-1 and conditions for continuing play were now completely unacceptable. The game was declared a 1-1 tie, a decision that was corroborated by National League President Harry Pulliam on the next day. The Cubs and Giants remained tied for first place. "There have

BASEBALL 75 YEARS AGO

OR, A GUIDE FOR SPORTS FANS PLANNING A TRIP BACK IN TIME

Although the sport of baseball as played 75 years ago was for all intents and purposes identical to the game that is played today, it is interesting to consider some of the subtle differences that have evolved in the national pastime over the past three-quarters of a century. And even more fascinating to the modern fan are some aspects of the Grand Ol' Game that bear uncanny resemblance to the wheelings and emotional dealings of the Steinbrenner Era of the eighties. Would it shock today's fans to discover that Mr. Steinbrenner probably would have fit quite nicely into this past era without any more commotion than he already causes?

What follows is a summary of some of the most obvious differences between baseball in the two different eras, followed by some of the remarkable similarities:

1. What first strikes the modern fan upon glancing at photos of old-timers is the seemingly bizarre equipment donned by the competitors. The modern fan, attached as he is to his ubiquitous baseball glove, is usually most shocked by the miniscule size of the mitts worn by old-timers. It was only in the late 19th century that the use of gloves had come into vogue at all—and even these were intended more for protection rather than defensive enhancement. By the early part of the 20th century, gloves were growing, but were still laughable by modern standards. Nevertheless, one sportswriter lamented in 1908: "We have no desire to revert to the gloveless game, but there is a wide margin between no gloves and the present huge mitts which enable the veriest dub to face a cannon shot. The big mitt should be confined to the catcher; the first baseman should be restricted to a small mitt; the pitcher and

infielders should wear only small gloves; and the outfielders should wear no gloves at all." Imagine what the author of this piece would have to say if he saw the modern gloves!

2. When Roger Bresnahan, the New York Giants' great catcher in 1907, donned shin-guards for the first time, there was widespread criticism and mockery drifting around the pressbox (even chest protectors—which had evolved around 20 years previously—had a hard time gaining acceptance). One journalist wrote of Bresnahan's innovation: "It is not fitting that anything so remindful of such a dull game as cricket should be introduced in such a live sport as baseball. This latest protection for catchers looks rather clumsy, besides delaying a game while the guards are strapped above the knee and around the ankle, and it is doubtful if the fad will ever become popular."

3. The modern ballplayer is used to an almost fanatical regard for the actual baseball used in play, should there be any scratches, blemishes, or scuff marks—then out she goes! In 1908, individual baseballs were treated with far less respect. A ball hit into the stands was supposed to be returned by the fans (they almost always were) and it was fully expected for the ball to last for more than a few innings of play. Considering the ball was much less lively than the modern horse-hide, it is not surprising that hitting for power was a rare feat in 1908, especially after a few innings with the same ball. In fact, on 4 August 1908, the Dodgers and the Cardinals played an entire game with a single ball!

4. Batting helmets were not employed in

1908. It took a tragedy, which took place on 16 August 1920, to spark a movement to require the use of helmets by batters. In a game between the Yanks and the Indians on this day, Cleveland shortstop Ray Chapman was hit in the head by a pitched ball thrown by Carl Mays. Chapman fell into a coma and died soon thereafter.

5. These days, ballplayers flaunt their personalities and quirks with uniforms that blare out not only their numbers, but their names as well! 75 years ago, players had neither of these features on their uniforms, so fans had to be well acquainted with the appearances of ballplayers in order to remember who they were! And what's more, the uniforms of the old-timers were amazingly baggy and ruffled. It was obvious they never heard of permanent press, or double-knits; instead it looked like their uniforms hadn't been ironed in months!

6. Tarpaulins to cover the baseball infield during rainstorms first came into effect in 1908. Pittsburgh was the first club to employ the tarp—a \$2,000 monstrosity that was dragged onto the field by a truck.

7. Spitballs were legal in 1908, although there was a growing movement to have them abolished. One writer noted: "It is hard on the catchers, injuring their hands; it causes fielders to make wild throws; it is repulsive both in name and to the view of spectators, and its abolition would do much to increase batting." Ed Walsh of the White Sox was baseball's master of the spitball—a legitimate Gaylord Perry!

8. Only two umpires worked games in 1908. Only a few years previously, a single ump had worked each game, but as the Man in Blue could not be everywhere at

been some complicated plays in baseball, but we do not recall one like this in a career of monkeying around with the national pastime," wrote a Chicago scribe.

There were now only two weeks remaining in the season and all three teams kept up their sizzling paces. On 4 October, Pittsburgh closed out their season with a 98-56 record. On this day, the Cubs stood in first at 98-55 with only one game to play. That game was the make-up of the game that

was declared a tie on 23 September. The Giants were 95-55, which meant that they had to sweep a three-game set with Boston to be given the chance to tie Chicago and play-off for the National League championship. The Giants completed this sweep handily and on 8 October, the Giants and Cubs—each with identical 98-55 records—prepared to face each other for the flag. With New York's sweep of Boston, Pittsburgh was mathematically eliminated from contention.

In a Polo Grounds packed to the gills with rabid Giants' fans, Chicago's Jack Pfeister squared off against the best in the business: New York's "Big Six" Christy Mathewson.

The Giants started off well, knocking Pfeister for a single run in the first, but Chicago manager Frank Chance immediately brought in his tired ace Mordecai "Three-Finger" Brown at the first sign of trouble. The Cubs scored four times in the third off the great Matty, which proved to

once, an additional arbiter was deemed necessary. But even with two umps, players of this era got away with a lot more subtle intimidation tactics (e.g., blocking the base-paths) than they do today.

9. Pitchers were allowed only five warm-up pitches at the start of each inning and when entering the game as a reliever in 1908, not eight as is the case today.

10. In 1908, ground rule doubles were not in effect on balls that bounced over the outfield fence. Such hits were deemed to be home runs at this time.

11. In 1908, the home team had the choice of batting first or last in the nine innings of the game. This rule—although rarely used—remained in effect until 1951, when the home team was required to bat last in each inning.

12. In many cities, baseball was prohibited from being played on Sundays. These "blue laws" of baseball were slowly falling by the wayside in the first two decades of the century, but many players—notably the great Christy Mathewson—refused to play on Sundays even in cities in which games were permissible.

13. An average ticket at a ballgame was 65¢ in 1908. Most baseball parks were small and cozy, and crowds of over 25,000 were considered huge (although accurate attendance records were not kept at this time). The one remaining authentic ballpark from this era is Boston's Fenway Park, which opened up in 1912; however, even this park has been subtly altered over the years. As far as salaries were concerned, a yearly paycheck of over \$5,000 per year was considered monumental. This was the great Honus Wagner's salary in 1908; young Rube Marquard of the Giants—one of the first "Bonus Babies"—received an \$11,000 premium for signing with John McGraw in

1908. This was an unheard of sum and led to widespread criticism of the youngster's ambition among fans and writers. Considering that tickets have gone up in price about tenfold over the past 75 years while salaries have risen over a hundredfold, either old-timers were underpaid or modern players are overpaid. Take your pick.

14. If rained out games had not been made-up by the end of the season, there was no specific league rule requiring their make-up—even if they had an effect on the pennant race! This rule omission may possibly have cost the Cleveland Indians the 1908 American League flag and in the ensuing commotion, the rule was soon changed.

15. Do you think that Earl Weaver and Billy Martin beef at umpires too much? Well, you should have seen the players and managers of 1908! In general, protestations over controversial calls by the arbiters were more widespread in 1908 than they are today. Very often, players and managers probably felt that their cause was just, considering that there were only two umps on the field at any given time—and of these, many were not of the highest quality. Ballplayers were ejected at an alarming rate in 1908. Manager John McGraw of the Giants was the league's leading umpire-baiter; it was not unknown for McGraw to be ejected from the premises only for the umpires to find him rushing out of the dugout later in the game to protest another controversial call!

16. Baseball games were played in an amazingly short amount of time in 1908. Whereas the two-hour game today is a rarity (nationally-televised games consistently go over three hours), games 75 years ago were usually played to completion in an hour and three-quarters. One game during this season was played in an hour and a quarter!

And now for some elements of the game that

are strikingly similar to today:

1. Billy Martin didn't invent "Billy Ball." 75 years ago, with a strong emphasis placed on baserunning skills and scratching out runs, basepath antics were not uncommon. With runners on first and third, Honus Wagner once tried to steal second while the pitcher was holding the ball. While unsuccessfully trying to put Wagner out, the runner on third scored. In 1908, Fred Tenney of the Giants and Germany Schaefer of the Tigers both stole first base while already occupying second! This steal in reverse was attempted in order to give a runner on third the opportunity to score while the opposition was napping.

2. On the morning of 11 October 1980, George Steinbrenner announced that his third base coach, Mike Ferraro, would be discharged because a runner that he waved around third was easily thrown out at home. Baseball analysts question Steinbrenner's sanity; these things happen in baseball and to fire a man for such an act would only make the next man gun-shy.

On 17 July 1908, the following incident occurred when Joe Tinker of the Cubs was rounding third and heading for home with the winning run: "Zimmerman, coaching on the line, seized him and forced him back to third . . . Joe took a look, saw that there still remained the slimmest sort of chance, and shook off [Zimmerman] furiously. He plunged for the plate and Bridwell, throwing with a strange slowness, beat the ball by an eighth of an inch . . . Tinker steamed on to the bench; Chance [Cub manager] rose, and called in Zimmerman. What happened in the doghouse, screened by red awnings, no one knows . . . Whatever happened, H. Goat Zimmerman came forth to coach no more." ■

be more than a sufficient margin of victory for Brown; the Cubs' stocky pitcher gave up only one more run for the remainder of the contest, winning the game by a score of 4-2 and clinching Chicago's third straight National League pennant.

AMERICAN LEAGUE RACE

Overshadowed by the remarkable race in the National League was a spectacularly exciting and controversial competition in the junior circuit. By the beginning of July, the lineup for the September onrush was set: the Detroit Tigers (the 1907 American League champs), Cleveland Indians, Chicago White Sox, and St. Louis Browns all stood in contention. By mid-September, the Browns had folded although the remaining three teams still hung tough; amazingly, the three clubs were all tied for first as late as 29 September. Three days later, Cleveland's Addie Joss pitched only the second perfect game in baseball history in a critical win against the White Sox. Still, the Tigers clung tenaciously to a one-half game lead over both of their rivals; right up to the last day of the season, all three teams were in contention but the Tigers prevailed by defeating Chicago 7-0 on 6 October. The final standings: Detroit, 90-63; Cleveland, 90-64, one-half game behind; Chicago, 88-64, one and one-half games behind.

Experienced baseball fans may wonder: how can a club win a pennant by ONE-HALF game? It can be readily noticed that Detroit played one less game than the regularly scheduled 154 contests! The answer is this: Detroit had a rained out game in late summer that was never replayed; had this game been played and lost by the Tigers, Cleveland would have tied Detroit for the flag. However, there was no specific league rule which stated that games not made up by the end of the season must be replayed—even if they had an effect on the pennant race! Cleveland's vociferous complaints that this bizarre rule may have cost them the 1908 American League pennant did not go unheeded; the rule was changed for both leagues soon thereafter.

THE WORLD SERIES

The Fall Classic matched up the talents of "Peerless Leader" Frank Chance of the Cubs and the "Georgia Peach," Ty Cobb of the Tigers. This was the second straight year that these two clubs squared off in October for the world championship; in 1907, the Cubs had demolished the Tigers in four straight games. And this time, Chicago again proved its superiority by taking the Series in five contests. Cub pitching proved to be too much for the

Tigers to handle, as Mordecai Brown and Orvie Overall combined for four wins and an 0.62 ERA. The Tigers didn't score a run for the last 23 innings of the Series, despite Cobb's .368 batting average. For Chicago, player-manager Chance led the attack with .421. With the Cubs taking eight of nine games against the Tigers over the two World Series, the conservative baseball fan laconically concluded that the new league was not yet ready to compete on even terms with the National League.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anyone interested in delving further into the 1908 season could not do better than to pick up a copy of G.H. Fleming's masterful work, *THE UNFORGETTABLE SEASON* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1981). This is a collection of contemporary newspaper clippings dealing for the most part with the National League race. The insights into early 20th century baseball are sensational. Also: Lawrence Ritter's *THE GLORY OF THEIR TIMES* (New York: Collier Books, 1973), Anthony J. Connor's *BASEBALL FOR THE LOVE OF IT* (New York: Macmillan Publishers, 1982), and Daniel Okrent's and Harris Lewine's *THE ULTIMATE BASEBALL BOOK* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Books, 1981) are treasures of baseball folklore. ■



"YOU CAN'T TELL THE PLAYERS WITHOUT A SCORECARD!"



A 1908 WHO'S WHO OF BASEBALL



NICK ALTROCK

Pitcher, Chicago White Sox

Altrock and his teammate Al Schacht were the legitimate forerunners to the San Diego Chicken. Both on and off the field, their comical routines of baseball were extremely popular for two generations. All the while, Altrock was a moderately effective pitcher, even winning 20 games for the 1906 "Hitless Wonder" White Sox.

FRANK BAKER

Third Base, Philadelphia Athletics

Frank "Home Run" Baker was a 22-year old rookie who played in only nine games in 1908. However, Baker's more tangible contributions to Connie Mack's "\$100,000 in-

field" would come during the next season and would last for well over a decade. Baker led the American League in round-trippers from 1911-1914 with respective totals of 9, 10, 12, and 8! In the pre-war era, characterized as it was by the non-cork centered "dead" ball, this was considered a remarkable accomplishment. Within the next ten years, Babe Ruth would shortly lead fans to laugh derisively at Baker's nickname. Baker never played a position other than third for his entire 13-year career.

CHARLES BENDER

Pitcher, Philadelphia Athletics

"Chief" Bender was another of the "Mack Men" who pitched excellent baseball for

the A's from 1903-1914, winning 208 games in his career. In an era in which a large percentage of baseball players were saddled with sublime nicknames by writers, Bender earned his by being an olive-skinned Chippewa Indian from Minnesota. He was one of the most highly-respected and well educated athletes in baseball during the pre-war era.

ROGER BRESNAHAN

Catcher, New York Giants

The first catcher to be elected to the Hall of Fame (1945), Bresnahan was primarily known as Christy Mathewson's battery-mate during his seven-year stint as backstop

for the Giants. In 1907, Bresnahan was the first catcher to don shin-guards, a revolutionary event at the time. "When Roger works behind the bat, there always seems to be more life and aggressiveness on the field," wrote a New York newspaperman during the 1908 campaign.

MORDECAI BROWN

Pitcher, Chicago Cubs

A childhood accident to his right-hand gave Mordecai Brown his nickname of "Three-Finger," although in actuality he lost only his index finger, while his fifth finger was partially crippled. Brown's disability actually helped him develop a baffling sinkerball that kept batters on edge throughout his 12-year stint in the National League. He was a 229-game winner over his career; he posted a 27-9 record with a 1.47 ERA in 1908 while pitching the Cubs to their second straight World Championship.

FRANK CHANCE

First Baseman, Chicago Cubs

The player-manager of the 1908 World Champion Chicago Cubs earned the nickname "The Peerless Leader" for his cool leadership and charismatic personality, despite the fact that he took over the helm of his ballclub at the young age of 28. A great run producer and batter, Chance batted .296 over his career. Recognizing Chance's indispensable value to the Cubs, Fred Snodgrass, a young Giant rookie in 1908, tells this story of New York's method for disposing of the "Peerless Leader" before their critical playoff game in October 1908: "Before the game, we talked over in the club-house how in the world we could get Chance out of there. Matty was to pitch for us and Frank always hit Matty pretty well . . . So it was cooked up that Joe McGinnity was to pick a fight with Chance early in the game. They were to have a knockdown, drag-out fight and both would get thrown out of the game . . . McGinnity did just what he was supposed to. He called Chance names on some pretext or other, stepped on his toes, pushed him, actually spit on him. But Frank wouldn't fight. He was too smart."

JACK CHESBRO

Pitcher, New York Highlanders

"Happy Jack" Chesbro was the American League's premier pitcher in the first years of the 20th century. Toiling for the Highlanders (as the Yankees were known at the time), Chesbro won 41 games in 1904 with a 1.82 ERA—the modern record for victories in a season by a pitcher. He won fully 45%



of the Yankees' games! In 1903, Chesbro first made headlines by jumping from the Pirates of the National League to the Highlanders of the upstart American League. Here, he pitched for seven more years.

TY COBB

Outfielder, Detroit Tigers

The premier member of baseball's immortal "Select Five" (Cobb, Ruth, Mathewson, Wagner, and Johnson—in that order) as selected in 1936 for the initial inductions into the Baseball Hall of Fame. The modern image of Cobb is well-defined: a brilliant, wildly aggressive player with a violent temperment who did anything to win. This impression of the "Georgia Peach" is for all intents and purposes accurate, but when taken out of context may seem distorted to those who knew Cobb. Certainly, Cobb was one of the greatest offensive players in history: his lifetime batting average (.367), hits (4190), and runs (2245) are all long-standing records. (Babe Ruth's figures were: .342, 2873, and 2174, respectively).

Cobb's violent style of play must be considered by the modern reader in terms of the era in which he played. With a premium placed in pre-war baseball on baserunning skills, and also considering the fact that the game was a more aggressively competitive sport than it is now, Cobb's bellicose attitude should make more sense to the present-day baseball fan. "If any player learned I could be scared, I would have lasted 2 years in the league, not 24," Cobb wrote. "Don't let anyone ever tell you I was a dirty ballplayer though. When you're out on those paths, you've got to protect yourself."

Cobb came up to the majors as a taciturn southerner, extremely mistrustful of strangers. "He sure wasn't easy to get along with," said his teammate Sam Crawford. "He wasn't a friendly, good-natured guy, like Wagner was, or Walter Johnson . . . Every rookie gets a little hazing, but most of them just take it and laugh. Cobb took it the wrong way. He came up with an antagonistic attitude, which in his mind turned any little razzing into a life-or death struggle."

"The older men tried to make my life miserable," Cobb said in his defense. They didn't confine themselves to cutting remarks. They also played tricks on me . . . I made up my mind they wouldn't succeed."

EDDIE AND JIMMY COLLINS

Second and Third Basemen, Philadelphia Athletics

The Collins boys (they were unrelated) both played for Connie Mack in 1908, one (Eddie) at the beginning of a brilliant 25-year career as the second baseman in the "\$100,000 infield" and the other (Jimmy) in the last year of an equally-sensational 14-year career as third baseman for the Braves and Red Sox. Both ended up in the Hall of Fame.

SAM CRAWFORD

Outfielder, Detroit Tigers

Never heard of "Wahoo Sam" Crawford? That's because he played in Ty Cobb's shadow in the Detroit outfield for most of his 19-year career. From 1902-1914, Crawford never batted less than 550 times. His 312 triples are the most by any ball-



player in history; no player active today is within 150 triples of his total!

MIKE DONLIN

Outfielder, New York Giants

"Turkey Mike" Donlin was a spectacular outfielder and a vital cog in John McGraw's Giant club in 1908. In the early years of the century, Donlin had almost unlimited potential; he was considered on a par with the best in the game—even Honus Wagner. However, Donlin's personality problems and accident-prone career kept him shuttling from team-to-team and he never found a comfortable niche. He even served six months in jail for drunkenness in 1902.

JOHNNY EVERS

Second Baseman, Chicago Cubs

Evers was immortalized in poetry by newspaperman Franklin Adams' "Tinker to Evers to Chance" lament in the early 20th century. Evers spent 18-years in the majors as a fiery 125-pound dynamo (he was nicknamed by his teammates "The Human Crab") and was a key figure in the "Merkle Incident" on 23 September 1908. Casey Stengel recalled the first time he encountered Evers: "I took off for second. I was 20 feet from the bag when I saw Johnny Evers with the ball. I tried to slide around

him but it was no use. He really crowned me. As I was laying there, he pulled up one pant leg. 'Oh, trying to spike me! Why you busher, you! Next time you come down here you better wear a tin helmet because I'm gonna shove the ball right down your throat!'"

MILLER HUGGINS

Second Baseman, Cincinnati Reds

Miller Huggins, known throughout his career as "Mighty Mite" because he was 5'6" and weighed only 140 pounds, was known more for his sensational managing career with the New York Yankees from 1919-1929 than for his playing days. As a manager, he led his team into six World Series and captained the supposed "Greatest Team of All-Time"—the 1927 Yanks. In 1908, he was a 30-year old second baseman, hitting .239.

WALTER JOHNSON

Pitcher, Washington Senators

"The Big Train" was perhaps the greatest right-handed pitcher in the history of the American League, winning 413 games, compiling a 2.17 lifetime ERA, and still possessing more strikeouts than any pitcher in baseball history. Johnson pitched for the Senators for 21 straight years, 1907-1927, at one stretch winning 20 or more games for ten consecutive seasons! In August 1907, Ty Cobb wrote of his first encounter with Johnson: "I watched him take that easy windup—and then something went past me that made me flinch . . . Every one of us knew we'd met the most powerful arm ever turned loose in a ballpark."

ADDIE JOSS

Pitcher, Cleveland Indians

Joss was a superlative although relatively unknown pitcher who won 160 games over a nine-year career, 1902-1910. Joss's 1.88 lifetime ERA is the second best figure in the history of baseball. In 1908, Joss made big news by hurling a perfect game against the White Sox in the middle of a tight pennant race on 2 October. Tragically, in April 1911, Joss died of meningitis at the age of 31. The first American League All-Star team was organized in Joss's honor to raise money for his widow.

WILLIE KEELER

Outfielder, New York Highlanders

Cy Young (41) and "Wee Willie" Keeler (36) were baseball's senior citizens in 1908; Keeler, who had been playing professionally since 1892, was a lifetime .341 hitter and was the originator of the "hit 'em where

they ain't" batting philosophy—a logical course of action considering Keeler's 5'4", 140 pound frame.

BILL KLEM

Umpire, National League

A National League arbiter for 37 seasons, Klem was instrumental in establishing the peerless code of conduct and authoritative style of what we recognize today as the major league umpire. Once fiery John McGraw of the Giants was thrown out of a game by Klem.

"I'll have your job for this!" McGraw roared.

To which Klem coolly retorted: "If it's possible for you to take my job, then I don't want it!"

When Klem retired in 1941, he explained why: "I walked away from a beefing ball-player saying to myself, I'm almost certain Herman tagged him." Then it came to me and I almost wept. For the first time in my career I only 'thought' a man was tagged."

NAPOLÉON LAJOIE

Second Baseman, Cleveland Indians

"Nap" Lajoie (pronounced by many as "La-Joey") was such an institution in Cleveland throughout his stint as a player and a manager from 1903-1914 that the team became known as the "Naps." Lajoie was a lifetime .338 hitter and is currently tenth on the All-Time hit list. He made huge headlines when he jumped from the National League to Philadelphia of the fledgling American League in 1901 (a period that was known as "wartime" to the shuttling players). Emotions ran so high in this league-jumping war that Lajoie was prohibited by court order from playing in Pennsylvania. A pitcher once said: "If you pitched inside to him, he'd tear a hand off the third baseman, and if you pitched outside he'd knock down the second baseman."

CONNIE MACK

Manager, Philadelphia Athletics

Cornelius McGillicuddy, usually known as "Connie Mack," never played a game of professional baseball in the 20th century. Instead, he made his mark on modern baseball with an unbelievable 53-year managing career, 50 of them with the Philadelphia Athletics. It always seemed as if Mack's teams were either fabulous or terrible. After winning four of five pennants (1910-1914), the A's finished last seven straight years (1915-1921), only to establish another

superlative team from 1925-1932. Mack managed until 1950, when he was 78 years old. "Nothing can equal in volume my lifetime of memories from baseball," he once said.

RUBE MARQUARD

Pitcher, New York Giants

Richard "Rube" Marquard was a highly-publicized, 19-year old rookie phenom who came up to the Giants in late summer of 1908, just in the nick of time to join New York's incredible pursuit of the Cubs and Pirates. Although he was to make a name for himself only two years later (and pitch until 1925), Marquard's debut on 26 September 1908 (only three days after the "Merkle Incident") was an unmitigated disaster. Christy Mathewson recalled: "Kane, the right fielder on the Cincinnati club, was the first man up, and although he was one of the smallest targets in the league, Marquard hit him. He promptly stole second, which worried Rube some more. Up came Lobert, the man who broke Marquard's heart . . . Lobert whacked out a triple to the far outfield and stopped at third with a mocking smile on his face. Some fan shouted the fatal, 'Take him out.' Marquard was gone and was two years recovering from the shock of that beating."

CHRISTY MATHEWSON

Pitcher, New York Giants

Christy Mathewson exerted more positive influence on the sport of baseball than any player before or since, except perhaps for Babe Ruth. Not only was "The Big Six" probably the greatest pitcher of all-time, but his gentlemanly character, high level of education, and sportsmanlike conduct (he was never once ejected from a game) was instrumental in establishing baseball as the "national pastime"—one that could be watched and enjoyed by almost anyone, as well as a profession that children could make their parents proud of if they succeeded in a baseball career. Mathewson was a workhorse for the New York Giants for 16 seasons (1900-1915); over one stretch (1903-1914), Matty AVERAGED 27 wins per year with a 2.01 ERA! This achievement was head and shoulders above other contemporary pitchers. "Matty was the greatest pitcher I ever saw. He was the greatest anybody ever saw. Let them name all the others. I don't care how good they were. Matty was better," wrote a baseball analyst.

JOE MCGINNITY

Pitcher, New York Giants

"Iron Man" Joe McGinnity was a 37-year old old-timer on John McGraw's 1908 Giants squad, in the last year of an illustrious career in which he won 20 or more games for eight of the ten seasons in which he participated. In 1903, McGinnity once started and won both games of a double-header THREE times within one month. It is interesting to note that he did not earn his nickname by being a workhorse; instead, he entered baseball from an iron foundry!

JOHN MCGRAW

Manager, New York Giants

"Little Napoleon" John McGraw was probably the most influential manager in the history of baseball—one which modern managers would emulate, whether they realize it or not. McGraw managed the Giants for 30 incredible years, 1902-1932, winning ten pennants and compiling a .589 winning percentage. McGraw was a short, irascible man who made hundreds of enemies in his playing days at third base in the late 19th century, employing such antics as grabbing baserunners' belts on the base-paths when the umpire wasn't looking or stepping on the first baseman's feet. But it was McGraw's school of managing that left his mark on the game: steals, sacrifices, working out walks, punching singles—in short, scratching out runs and letting pitchers do the rest. But his aggressive personality, umpire-baiting, and Pattonesque drive had its drawbacks. One of his players wrote: "He was rough as a manager. Very hard to play for . . . You couldn't do anything right for him, ever. If something went wrong, it was always your fault, not his. He was always so grouchy."

EDDIE PLANK

Pitcher, Philadelphia Athletics

Eddie Plank was a native of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania who pitched for Connie Mack for most of his career (1901-1917), winning 325 games. Ty Cobb once named him as one of the best pitchers he ever faced. Until he jumped to the Federal League in 1915, Plank was the heart of the A's pitching staff in their glory years, 1911-1914—labeled by a writer "the team that could not lose."

GERMANY SCHAEFER

Second Baseman, Detroit Tigers

One of the most colorful characters in baseball history, Herman "Germany" Schaefer was a journeyman infielder in the

American League for most of his 15-year career. Schaefer's most well-remembered antic was stealing first base when he had already occupied second in a game played between Detroit and Cleveland in 1908!

TRIS SPEAKER

Outfielder, Boston Red Sox

A 20-year old outfielder with only limited playing time in 1908, the "Grey Eagle" was destined to become one of the greatest ballplayers in history in his 22-year American League career. His .344 lifetime average is sixth highest in the baseball record books and only four players (Cobb, Aaron, Rose, Musial) have more hits in their careers.

GABBY STREET

Catcher, Washington Senators

"Old Sarge" Gabby Street's two claims to fame in his mediocre eight-year career were that he was Walter Johnson's battery-mate in 1908 as well as being the first (and only) player to successfully catch a ball thrown from the top of the Washington Monument, 505 feet high. This feat was accomplished on 21 August 1908 after 12 unsuccessful attempts.



LUTHER TAYLOR

Pitcher, New York Giants

Luther "Dummy" Taylor was a deaf-mute pitcher, winning 113 games in a nine-year career. John McGraw, the manager of the Giants, demanded that all members of the team learn basic sign language in order to communicate with Taylor, who soon became one of the team's most popular and humorous players. Interestingly enough, this method of communication later developed a purpose of its own on the baseball diamond, although McGraw's method of employing signs on the field was extremely basic: he simply used to spell out in Taylor's hand language what he wanted his players to do—steal, bunt, hit-and-run, etc! Once, Taylor was ejected from a game for baiting an umpire. It is interesting to speculate on what exactly was exchanged between the pitcher and the arbiter!

JOE TINKER

Shortstop, Chicago Cubs

The shortstop in the everlasting baseball poem "Tinker-to-Evers-to-Chance," immortalizing the Cubs' infield of the early 20th century. Tinker was an aggressive ball-player who never hit for average (lifetime: .262), but was a superb fielder with moderate power at the plate in an era where homers were as rare as a blue moon. It is interesting to note that Tinker did not get along with Evers and almost never spoke to him.

RUBE WADDELL

Pitcher, St. Louis Browns

In 1908, Rube Waddell was a 32-year old lefty who had his best pitching years behind him. Waddell was one of the star players of the National League who jumped to the newly-formed American League during the "war" between the two circuits in the early years of the century. With Connie Mack's Philadelphia Athletics, Waddell made an everlasting name for himself, once winning 94 games over a four-year span. "Rube was just a big kid, you know," recalled one of his teammates. "He'd pitch one day and we wouldn't see him for three or four days after. He'd just disappear, go fishing or something, or be off playing ball with a bunch of 12-year olds in an empty lot somewhere. You couldn't control him 'cause he was just a big kid himself."

HONUS WAGNER

Shortstop, Pittsburgh Pirates

Many label "Hans" Wagner the greatest baseball player of all-time. And when one examines the statistics of the "Flying Dutchman," it is hard to dispute that claim. Over

CONT. PAGE 13

PENNANT RACE! TEAM CHARTS FOR 1908

The following team rosters for Avalon Hill's new baseball game, PENNANT RACE!, allow you to recreate the National League race and the World Series for this incredible year. Only four teams are included: the New York Giants, Chicago Cubs, Pittsburgh Pirates, and Detroit Tigers. If readers demonstrate sufficient interest, it is conceivable that a complete roster booklet, with accompanying schedules and special rules, can be published by Avalon Hill in the near-future. If you would like to see such a treatment, write to AH and let us know (or on any other of your favorite seasons, for that matter). When employing the following charts for PENNANT RACE!, all normal rules are adhered to, save one: any time the Relief/Defense Chart calls for Relief to be employed, use the team Relief Value (note that individual pitchers are not given their own Relief Values). Also, ignore all rules for Parks, the Minors, and Right-Handed and Left-Handed Pitching/Batting.

1908 CHICAGO CUBS (NL)

BAT 26	ENDURANCE B	ROTATION B	WEATHER Zone 3		
STARTERS	POS	BAT	POW	SPD	FLD
FRANK CHANCE	1B	3	2	4	0
JOHNNY EVERS	2B	5	2	5	0
JOE TINKER	SS	3	3	4	+1
HARRY STEINFELDT	3B	2	1	2	0
WILDFIRE SCHULTE	RF	1	1	2	0
JIMMY SLAGLE	CF	0	0	3	0
JIMMY SHECKARD	LF	1	1	3	-1
JOHNNY KLING	C	4	2	3	0
BENCH	POS	BAT	POW	SPD	FLD
SOLLY HOFMAN	INF/OF	2	1	3	0
DEL HOWARD	OF	4	1	3	-1
PAT MORAN	C	3	0	1	-1
HEINIE ZIMMERMAN	INF/OF	4	2	1	-1
KID DURBIN	OF	2	0	0	-1
JACK HAYDEN	OF	0	0	1	-1
PITCHERS	R/L	START	END	REST	
MORDECAI BROWN	R	7	5	4	
ED REULBACH	R	6	4	4	
ORVIE OVERALL	R	6	3	5	
JACK PFIESTER	L	6	4	5	
CHICK FRASER	R	5	4	6	
CARL LUNDGREN	R	2	3	6	

TEAM RELIEF VALUE: 0 (-1 if used on 3 consecutive days or more)

1908 NEW YORK GIANTS (NL)

BAT 29	ENDURANCE A	ROTATION A	WEATHER Zone 3		
STARTERS	POS	BAT	POW	SPD	FLD
FRED TENNEY	1B	3	1	3	0
LARRY DOYLE	2B	5	3	3	-1
AL BRIDWELL	SS	4	1	3	-1
ART DEVLIN	3B	2	1	3	0
MIKE DONLIN	RF	7	4	5	+1
CY SEYMOUR	CF	3	1	3	0
SPIKE SHANNON	LF	1	0	2	0
ROGER BRESNAHAN	C	4	2	2	+1
BENCH	POS	BAT	POW	SPD	FLD
BUCK HERZOG	INF	5	2	4	-1
TOM NEEDHAM	C	0	0	0	0
FRED MERKLE	1B/OF	3	3	0	-1
SAMMY STRANG	INF/OF	0	0	2	-1
FRED SNOODGRASS	C	2	0	0	0
PITCHERS	R/L	START	END	REST	
CHRISTY MATHEWSON	R	7	5	3	
HOOKS WILTSE	L	6	5	4	
DOC GRANDALL	R	5	3	5	

JOE MCGINNITY	R	6	1	6
DUMMY TAYLOR	R	5	2	6
RED AMES	R	6	1	7

TEAM RELIEF VALUE: 0 (-1 if used on 3 consecutive days or more)

1908 DETROIT TIGERS (AL)

BAT 30	ENDURANCE A	ROTATION A	WEATHER Zone 3		
STARTERS	POS	BAT	POW	SPD	FLD
CLAUDE ROSSMAN	1B	5	3	1	-1
RED DOWNS	2B	0	0	0	-1
GERMANY SCHAEFER	SS	3	1	5	-1
BILL COUGHLIN	3B	0	0	1	-1
TY COBB	RF	6	4	5	-1
SAM CRAWFORD	CF	6	4	3	0
MATTY MCINTYRE	LF	5	2	3	0
BOB SCHMIDT	C	3	1	0	-1
BENCH	POS	BAT	POW	SPD	FLD
CHARLEY O'LEARY	INF	2	1	1	-1
DAVY JONES	OF	0	0	3	0
IRA THOMAS	C	5	1	0	-1
RED KILLEFER	INF	0	0	1	-1
DONNIE BUSH	INF	4	1	1	0
FREDDIE PAYNE	C/OF	0	0	0	-1
PITCHERS	R/L	START	END	REST	
ED SUMMERS	R	7	4	4	
WILD BILL DONOVAN	R	6	5	5	
GEORGE MULLIN	R	4	5	4	
ED WILLETT	R	6	5	5	
ED KILLIAN	L	4	4	5	
ED SIEVER	L	4	3	7	

TEAM RELIEF VALUE: -1

1908 PITTSBURGH PIRATES (NL)

BAT 27	ENDURANCE A	ROTATION A	WEATHER Zone 3		
STARTERS	POS	BAT	POW	SPD	FLD
HARRY SWACINA	1B	0	0	0	-1
ED ABBATICCHIO	2B	2	1	3	+1
HONUS WAGNER	SS	8	6	6	+1
TOMMY LEACH	3B	3	2	4	-1
OWEN WILSON	RF	0	0	2	-1
DANNY MOELLER	CF	0	0	0	-1
FRED CLARKE	LF	3	2	4	0
GEORGE GIBSON	C	0	0	0	-1
BENCH	POS	BAT	POW	SPD	FLD
ALAN STORKE	INF	2	1	1	0
JIM KANE	1B	2	0	1	-1
EDDIE PHELPS	C	1	1	0	-1
DOC GILL	1B	0	0	1	0
BEALS BECKER	OF	0	0	0	-1
CHARLIE STARR	INF	0	0	3	-1
PITCHERS	R/L	START	END	REST	
NICK MADDOX	R	6	4	4	
VIC WILLIS	R	6	4	4	
HOWIE CAMNITZ	R	7	4	5	
SAM LEEVER	R	6	4	5	
LEFTY LEIFIELD	L	6	4	5	
HARLAN YOUNG	R	4	2	7	

TEAM RELIEF VALUE: 0 (-1 if used on 3 consecutive days or more)

one 14-year stretch (1899-1912), Wagner never batted UNDER .320 and never batted less than 490 times. During that span, he hit over .350 six times, stole 40 or more bases eight times, and knocked in 100 or more runs seven times—all in an era in which a common team batting average was in the .250 range, roughly comparable to today! And when it came to fielding, one of his teammates recalled: "Honus was the best third baseman in the league, he was also the best first baseman, the best second baseman, the best shortstop, and the best outfielder . . . As well as the best base runner."

ED WALSH

Pitcher, Chicago White Sox

"Big Ed" Walsh was a right-handed flamethrower whose lifetime 1.82 ERA in a 14-year career is the best figure in the history of baseball. In 1908, Walsh won more games than any pitcher in the game, posting 39 victories against 15 defeats, with a 1.42 ERA. Walsh was a master of the spitball, which was entirely legal in 1908. "I think that ball disintegrated on the way to the plate and the catcher put it back together again," recalled one of his teammates. "I swear, when it went past the plate it was just the spit that went by."

HOOKS WILTSE

Pitcher, New York Giants

George "Hooks" Wiltse put together the best season of his career in 1908 when the Giants made their spectacular and controversial bid for the National League pennant. Wiltse pitched in the shadow of the great Christy Mathewson for 11 years, but only managed to win 20 or more games in the "unforgettable season" of '08, when he went 23-14.

CY YOUNG

Pitcher, Boston Red Sox

The pitcher whose name was immortalized in baseball's award for pitching excellence was already a 41-year old old-timer by 1908, still pitching superbly (21-12, 1.26 ERA) for the Red Sox. Young's 511 wins are the most by any pitcher in baseball history, although almost 300 of these belong to a different era of baseball—the game played before 1900. Young continued to pitch until he was 44, ending his career in the National League with the Boston Braves. It is interesting to note that in one of his last appearances ever on the mound on 12 September 1911, Young was matched up against the Giants' Christy Mathewson. Youth triumphed over experience in this battle as Young was knocked out of the box in the second after the Giants scored nine runs. ■