

# BASEBALL INSIDE

## YOUNG EDITOR TOLD SOME THINGS OF THE GAME IN THE EARLY DAYS.

### Went Home for a Meal and Found His Father Perusing the Sporting Section and in Humor to Tell Him Some Things About the Game as It Was Played Back in the Sixties.

The young baseball editor snatched an hour to take a meal at home, and found the old gentleman still snorting over his sporting columns.

"I suppose you think that was a mighty fine try-out between your Giant Killers and New York," he said, in disgust, throwing down his paper and the gage of battle before the young man had time to remove his hat. "But what does it all amount to, anyway? Your clubs are all squads of hired men, and the pennant flies over the squad that's backed by the most money."

"Oh, I hope it's not so bad as that, dad. Don't go too far, for I might want to take you to the next series with the Giants."

"At least," persisted the old gentleman, in a more moderate tone and manner, "there's not half the fun in the game as when I was a boy and played rounders and town ball in Philadelphia. Jemima! How we used to sock it at the boy trying to make the bases; hit him in the head—anywhere to put him out!"

"I would hate to get a ball in the head, or even the small of the back, the way they shoot them in to first and second nowadays," remarked the cub laughing.

"I can remember only too well, when I was about 11, along in the forties, how pa came home from New York, after one of those trips abroad, and told how they were getting together unformed men to play ball on their so-called Elysian fields. I felt a sinking of the heart even then, as if the game was being throttled as a popular sport."

With this came a resounding thump against the brick wall, followed by a loud shout outside. The old gentleman ran to the window, rather red in the face.

"I tell you what, bub," he continued, "if those young Indians aren't a little more careful I'll have Reilly after them."

"As I was saying," he resumed, ignoring the cause of the interruption, "I felt as if we boys were being crowded out by the regular men's clubs, but my heart went clear below zero after I had been playing 10 years longer, and quite a young man—I think it was in 1857 when the baseball associations organized and framed up regular rules. Then pretty soon there were little books afloat, with the national rules in them. Everything got onto a cut and dried basis. No more chance for personal opinions. When any good, old-fashioned squabble comes up, out comes a rule book from somebody's hip pocket. Brooklyn came to the front with a pretty good club about this time and had a series of games with New York on the race course at Flushing, I. I. The family was about moving to Chicago, but dad and I saw one good game between the old New Yorks and Brooklyns before we came away."

"How did it compare—honest now?"

"Honest, now, bub, there was no comparison. With that six and one-half ounce ball, rubber center, covered with yarn and leather; bat as long as you want it; pitcher moving around as free as you please, just so that he kept 45 feet from the home base; no spitting on balls, twists or outlandish curves, but straight pitching; all he had to do, according to the rules, was to get his ball 'as near as possible to home base.' No comparison between then and now."

"I should think," put in bub, "that such rules would not freeze a game very stiff, or even have bothered you very much."

"It was bad enough to have rules," persisted the veteran, "but those were lively games compared to what they are now. With a stick long enough to reach a ball within 10 feet of you, and such a lively ball that the good hitters could knock it a hundred feet beyond the fielders—those were games to watch! And they had scores to keep your blood warm in those days but the biggest scores that I remember were run up in Illinois. The difference makes me tired," said the old gentleman wearily. "If you can have a twenty inning game, with a score of 2 to 1, like that one between Chicago and Philadelphia last year, you think it's great. In the fifties and sixties, when the Knickerbocker Mutuals, of New York, the Baltics, of Brooklyn and the Illinois Rockfords were playing it wasn't a real game until after you'd piled up from 50 to 100 runs."

"Easy, dad. Don't mix fish stories with baseball."

"True as gospel, and the records will prove it, although when I came to Chicago with the family, the daily papers weren't giving much attention to the game. I was looking over the old Press, Democrat, Journal and Tribune the other day and not a report of a baseball game could I find for '57, though I know the Unions were organized the year before. My crowd, the Excelsiors, came in about the same time; also the Atlantics, and there was a husky club of country lads from Downer's Grove. The great ball grounds in those days were at the corner of what are now Harrison and Halsted, Washington and Sheldon and in front of the old Bull's Head Tavern, at Ogden avenue and Madison. But, as I said, for a number of years the papers seemed to give the game the cold shoulder. Cricket and boating had the lead. The Chicago Regatta and the Cricket Club, fathered by Her Majesty's British Consul, had the monopoly of the sporting columns, with an occasional old-fashioned prize fight in a saloon—five, \$5 a side."

"Well, when did the Chicago papers commence to limber up?"

"The first record I could find was in the old Daily Democrat of September 14, 1858," replied the veteran baseballist, with an air of satisfaction, if not of pride. "It preserved in the public prints the great game between the Unions and the Excelsiors—30 to 17—rather small score, but a fine game. I remember we had a couple of young physicians for scorers, but didn't need their professional services, though several squalls came up that the rules didn't seem to quell—nor the umpire either. Later the Atlantics got to be the Chicago champions, but for several years were made miserable, as well as all the other local clubs by that interior gang of clerks and country boys, the Rockfords—Al Spalding, pitcher."

"Still we were all amateurs in those days, and the clubs of Chicago, Rockford, Freeport, Evanston, Madison,

Wis., and some other cities, in the last year of the war, when a good many of the boys were coming home after playing with hotter balls than they ever handled in the diamond—I think it was in 1865 that they formed the Northwestern Association of Amateurs. Of course, I was then out of the game and in business, but I still was mighty glad to go to a game. I went and hurrahed with the other old boys, when the old Dexter ball grounds were opened in June, 1867; but I am sorry to say that the Rockfords gave the Excelsiors a trouncing. I commenced to get a little resigned to professional baseball when, after these amateur champions of the Northwest had beaten the Nationals of Washington—the Eastern champions—and thought the earth was theirs, they were tamed in four games, by the Cincinnati Reds, the first salaried team in the country, and for a time invincible.

The Rockfords of 1869 were worse than ever. The papers were now full of baseball, and they all agreed that when Chicago was up against Rockford she was simply pudding. That year the Rockfords won 20 out of the 24 games they played—the Cincinnati Reds won the 4; they made a total of 1,812 runs against 287 for their opponents, and, to give you an idea of some of the games, they won from the Harvards by 110 to 10, and the Liberts of Springfield by 101 to 13. Well, it was Rockford that brought about that meeting in the Briggs House in 1869, when Potter Palmer, Phil Sheridan, C. B. Farwell, George M. Pullman, David A. Gage and other heavy men put up their money and bought some star Eastern players to make up a Chicago club. They were sent South to practice. The Rockford papers made fun of these foreigners, but when our White Stockings beat them 28 to 14—15 runs in the first inning—

"But they were nothing but common hired men, were they, dad?"

"Well, perhaps not, but Chicago had a club at last that it didn't have to apologize to the East for. Rockford was beaten, too. Although I didn't like to see it, I couldn't help it, when, in 1871, was formed the National Association of Professional Baseball Players, and in 1875 their owners organized the league. The first season after the association was formed the Athletics, of Philadelphia, were first, Boston second and Chicago third. The Rockfords were the last of the bunch, but the White Stockings did not feel like crowing so much, because young Spalding, whom everybody said Chicago could never beat, had joined the Boston professionals. When Boston won the pennant in 1872, 1873, 1874 and 1875, with that Spalding still shooting them over the plate, it was a bitter pill for Chicago but she took her medicine humbly until 1876, when she corralled him herself and won the championship."

"Where does Captain Anson come in?"

"He comes into the White Sox crowd just at this stage of the game. He had been playing two years with the Philadelphia Athletics—and a long, raw-boned, heady, good natured player he was too. When the Athletics and the Bostons, as crack teams of the country, made their tour to England in 1874, Anson and Spalding struck up the friendship which has never failed to this day, and two years later joined the White Stockings together. Anson played first base. No baseball crank in the United States need be told what he played for a generation or so afterward. When he and Spalding were in their prime Chicago had no difficulty in recognizing baseball as the national game—took the pennant in '76, '80, '81, '82, '85 and '86. Boston had a long string of victories, too—'77, '78, '83, '91, '92, '93, '97, and '98. New York came next with '88, '89, 1904 and '05; Brooklyn, '90, '99 and 1900; Baltimore, '94, '95 and '96; Pittsburg, 1901, '02 and '03; Providence, '79 and '84, and Detroit, '87. Since 1890 the American league came in, the players ate too many and change too often, with fresh offers of salary, for me to take much interest in the game. But, bub, when the Giants come around again, if you happen to have an hour to spare, old dad wouldn't object to seeing a game or two."

"So you don't take any more interest in the boys who are playing today," reflected bub.

"Not so much in the boys as in the game. When I get to thinking about the old crowd I go around to the City Hall and have a chat with Cap Anse. Saw him the other day. The old baseball red hasn't worn off yet; but I notice that being cooped up in an office gives him a cough. Poor fellow! I don't believe he breathes right yet, unless he's being baked by diamond sun. But he was glad to see me and talk about the bat wielders of 20 and 30 years ago. I had a list in my hand. 'Let's see it,' he says, 'putting down the telephone receiver, which I noticed he handled like the handle of a baseball bat. 'Yes, there's Barnes, of Chicago; he led in '76. I believe he's on the board here. White, of Boston, headed the batters in '77. He's in Buffalo in the optical line with his brother, Dalrymple the Cream City leader of '78, was in this room only a few days ago."

"He was a brakeman before he broke into the baseball game, and he has returned to the railroad business. Anson, of '79. Here, you've got him down twice. Yes, that's right—'79, '81 and '88. Gore, of Chicago, led us in '80. The last I heard of Gore he was in New York City—at the bar, or a first class waiter at a restaurant. Big Dan Brothers led the heavy hitters four years, which is the record, so far—in '82 and '83, when he was with Buffalo, in '89 when he played with Boston and in '92 when he was with Brooklyn."

"Dan is still in the game—so is O'Rourke, who was with Buffalo when his name headed the batting average of '84. They are both in the New England league. I believe O'Rourke has the franchise for the Waterbury, Conn., club. Connors, the star batter of '85, is also playing in New England. Mike Kelly, the great all-round player of Chicago, who led in '86, is dead. Luby, who came from the Texas league and wielded the heavy stick in '90 and '91—he's gone, too. Stenzel, who played with Pittsburg in '93 and was the drum major of the batters for that year, is now running a saloon on the Cincinnati baseball grounds. Hugh Duffy, formerly of Chicago, you know now as the manager of the Philadelphia. He was a Bean Eater in '94 when he headed the list. At this point I broke off," concluded the old gentleman. "The others on the list were altogether too recent."

"And still, dad, it is the Giant Killers who are holding up Chicago's end of the game so far this year."

"True, bub; and remember, though I don't take much interest in the boys of today, I do enjoy a good game, and don't forget when the Giants, or the Phillies, or the Pirates, or the—"

But the young baseball editor had finished his home visit and was on the run for the office.—Chicago Inter Ocean.