

Mobbing the Umpire

By James Johnstone

National League Umpire

THE joke-artists on the newspapers and magazines are always drawing pictures and writing rhymes about umpires being mobbed and jailed, but I am here to say that when it comes to being the leading man in one of these demonstrations the point of the joke is decidedly blunt.

Two or three rebellions against me are yet fresh in my mind—and I think they always will be. But I carry no harsh feeling against the participants in these uprisings, for I know how the feeling runs in an audience on such occasions. The sociologists call it "the spirit of the mob," and give a psychological explanation of why people thus forget themselves.

Once when a member of the staff of the Southern League, I was officiating at Little Rock, Arkansas, when something out of the routine happened. Several times the schedule of the umpires was changed so that I could be on hand at the deciding games. At this time the final games between Little Rock and Nashville were to be played, and I was sent by a vote of the League to Little Rock to officiate. I also received a wire from President Nicklin to go to Little Rock and stay there until further

orders. Upon my arrival I found already there Umpire Murray, who conducted a resort at Hot Springs, which is not far from the Arkansas capital.

Chattanooga made considerable noise over the deal it had received from the Nashville club, and so refused to play with Murray as the official. Mike Finn, who was managing the Little Rock club, asked to see my order from President Nicklin. When I showed him the telegram Finn said that it meant for me to go to Little Rock, but that it did not mean for me to umpire. I asked him what he thought I had come to Little Rock for. Whereupon Murray promptly declared the game forfeited to Little Rock, and I equally promptly ordered it forfeited to Nashville.

A pretty mess!

That night I received orders from President Nicklin to go ahead the next day as the official umpire. For the next day a double-header was scheduled. Before I was allowed to enter the grounds I was held up and searched by the police. A patrol wagon was driven inside the grounds, and I was given to understand that if there was any trouble



Photo by R. W. Sears

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the conveyance would be for my special benefit.

Crozer was on second, and F. Martin at the bat for Little Rock. Martin singled to left; Barrett, the left fielder, threw to Newt Fisher, getting his man by ten feet. Red Wright rushed over from the bench and gave me a violent shove. I fell heavily on my right hand, injuring myself severely.

In a jiffy I was put into the patrol wagon, and driven to the jail. I must admit that I felt rather down in the mouth. The crowd swarmed to the jail, and made some little racket. Word was passed around that they were going to lynch the umpire, but I felt no uneasiness.

About six o'clock, on some pretext or other, I was given my freedom. I rushed a wire to Nicklin that I had forfeited both games to Nashville on the ground that I had been refused police protection.

But here another hitch came up. The telegraph operator made public the contents of the message. In a few minutes President Aaron Frank and Manager Finn came to my hotel and told me that I would have to go to jail for inciting a riot. The cloud loomed up pretty black, I tell you.

Back to my bastille I was taken. Another hitch, as my bond for appearance had been withdrawn. But as soon as the Nashville men heard it they made up the amount. The next morning I took a carriage for the station and got away without any further trouble.

In 1906 "Bob" Emslie and I were working in New York when a threat was passed around that all umpires would be barred from the Polo Grounds. The trouble had been caused by a decision on Devlin at the rubber in which the player was given out. There was no doubt at all about the play. After the game was over I was informed by McGraw that I would be denied the grounds.

"You will not get in these grounds tomorrow," he said.

I told him "all right," but gave it little heed as it was not the first time that I had been informed that I would be denied admittance. But the next day when Emslie and I appeared at the entrance, gate-keeper Johnson told us that he had orders not to let us by. I tried twice, but was refused each time. Emslie could have obtained ingress, but he would not go in unless I accompanied him. We stayed there nearly an hour in an endeavor to gain access to the grounds, and after exhausting every means in our power, I finally announced that the game was forfeited to Chicago, 9 to 0. "Si" Sanborn of *The Chicago Tribune* and Secretary Williams of the Chicago club were present when I made the announcement. I talked with several detectives, and all said that it was an outrage.

But later the New York club tried to make out that it was the fault of the police. The attempt to foist the blame upon the police was a failure. That explains why there is no detail in the grounds today.

The New York club wanted Nicklin of their force to umpire in my stead, but President Murphy would not stand for it. President John T. Brush and Manager McGraw were on hand during the affair, but made no effort to see that justice prevailed.

The next morning I took my report personally to President Pulliam, who had been at Saratoga. He said no word more than requesting me to report to him the next afternoon at two o'clock.

He took Emslie and me in an automobile to the grounds, where we had not the slightest trouble in getting in. When the door opened to admit us we walked through two lines, and after we had left the dressing room on the way to the diamond a splendid ovation was given us.

Such experiences are but a part of the life, but every day now they are becoming less likely, for the game is gaining a higher level.