

How I Tried to Get Into the Polo Grounds

By Albert G. Spalding

EDITOR'S NOTE:—Albert G. Spalding, head of the well-known sporting manufacturers, in this article tells of his experiences in attending the battle of the Giants and Cubs on the Polo Grounds, New York, October 8. To those who did not see the game, and to those who merely tried to, his adventures are very interesting.

SUPPLIED with four box-seat tickets and a complimentary season pass, through the courtesy of Mr. Brush, I invited three friends—L. G. Fisher of Chicago, James E. Sullivan and Charles D. White of New York—to attend with me the Cub-Giant battle on the Polo Grounds last October. Anticipating a big crowd, we started early, or what I thought was early (1 P. M.), in my automobile. When within about half a mile of the grounds, we met the returning autos, whose occupants shouted as they passed, "You can't get in; gates are closed." We arrived at the grounds at 1:30 and were told the gates had been closed for an hour. I can vouch for the fact that the gates were closed good and tight at 1:30. There was an immense crowd outside the grounds. We hurried clear around the grounds, hoping to find a friendly policeman who would take pity on us, or hoping possibly to catch a glimpse of Brush, Knowles or somebody who would pass us through some private way, but without success. Our grand stand tickets and season pass were useless.

Charley White, who knows the ropes and private passageways around the grounds, started out on a reconnoitering trip, confident that he could find a way to get in, while we waited in the automobile line near the automobile entrance. But he came back and said it was no use, and that we might as well go home. "Jim". Sullivan tried his powers of persuasion on his Tammany

police friends, but without results. I then tried my ingenuity; told several perspiring policemen who I was, showed my ticket and credentials, had heart-to-heart talks with several good-natured policemen, but met with the invariable reply, "Sorry, can't do it. See the Captain."

As a result of my efforts to get into the grounds, I soon found myself at the head of a crowd of two or three hundred fans, who recognized me and thought if they followed me closely they would surely get in by rushing the gate when it was opened for me. It was like making a still hunt with a brass band, so I gave it up and returned to my party.

A man came up, introduced himself as a newspaper man from Boston, an old ball-player who had watched me pitch in the early seventies, and asked me if I would please let him stand on the steps of my automobile and ride in with our party. I explained to him that the auto had not moved over fifty feet in an hour, and I saw no chance of its ever getting in. He whispered that if he could use my name he thought he could negotiate an entrance. I told him to go ahead and I lent him some of my credentials. He sallied forth, and in a little while he was waving his hat and beckoning me to a gateway. I went there with a gang of a couple hundred strong, who had pinned their faith on me. The gate was opened slightly to let my newspaper Boston acquaintance and myself in, when my Boston friend

and twenty or more of my hangers-on rushed the gate and got in, but I was captured by a couple of big policemen and rushed back into the outside crowd, barely escaping being arrested for disorderly conduct. I returned to my automobile, and was about giving up any further efforts to get into the grounds, but my party insisted upon remaining, saying there was more fun outside of the grounds than there possibly could be inside.

Near us was a big, burly negro, perched on a narrow platform at the top of one of the elevated supports, smoking a pipe and watching the game. The policeman ordered him down, but he paid no attention. Finally a detective clambered up the post, showed his star and tried moral suasion on the darkey, but the colored man wouldn't budge. A stick was passed up to the detective, who punched the negro with it, whereupon the stick was snatched from his hand and thrown violently to the ground, and the negro's manner indicated that the same thing would happen to the detective if he made any further attempt to dislodge him. The detective finally considered that discretion was the better part of valor, and deserted, leaving the darkey in undisputed control of his perch, much to the amusement of the dense crowd below.

In order to get away from my crowd of two hundred or more hangers-on, I sent my automobile away, and our party lost itself in the crowd. I soon met a big man that claimed an acquaintance, and asked me to follow him as he was a fire commissioner and could go anywhere in New York, and would show me how easy it was for him to get into the Polo Grounds. He flashed his big fire commissioner's badge on one policeman after another, but made no headway. He said he found himself much embarrassed in his negotiations by my crowd of hangers-on, so I gave him my season pass and suggested he go alone. I took the precaution to hold his son as a sort of hostage. In a little while he reported that he had got it fixed, and asked my automobile party to follow him and then for me to make a quick get-away from my hangers-on, and the thing was done. We found ourselves inside the automobile yard with two or three hundred

other people still trying to get into the Polo Grounds. There was still another high fence to climb or gate to pass, and my fire commissioner friend was again working his "influence" over-time. It took him about twenty minutes to establish his "influence" with the inner guard, and in the meantime I found a peep-hole in the inner fence that gave a view of the playing field.

When the fire commissioner came to me and said he had got it all fixed, I asked him if he was dead sure of it, as I did not want to lose my peep-hole on any uncertainty, for there appeared to be about fifty men waiting for a chance at my position. My auto party and I joined the fire commissioner at the only gateway leading onto the inner Polo Grounds, along with all the rest of the men in this automobile stockade, only to find that our fire commissioner's arrangement had gone wrong, and the policeman announced that if another person went through his gate he would lose his job. Kind words and even a proffer of a liberal tip would not swerve that policeman from his duty. I upbraided the fire commissioner for his miscarried arrangements and for losing my choice peep-hole. About this time Donlin made a two-bagger and New York scored a run, and the cheers inside drove us nearly crazy.

While the fire commissioner, my party and myself were holding a council of war, and trying to devise means to break into this American Port Arthur, an ambulance drove up to the gate and demanded admission. Our overzealous policeman at first refused admission, whereupon the imperious driver, in language more forcible than polite, said the ambulance had the right of way everywhere in New York City, and if the gate was not opened immediately that particular policeman would be reported, and that he would lose his job sure. The policeman reluctantly opened the inside gate for the ambulance, but said that no one could go in with it. This was our long-looked-for opportunity. Our party, with many others, caught a good strong hold of some part of that ambulance, and went in with it. I secured a good hold of the harness and felt confident that if the harness held out I would land inside.

One of our party could not keep up with the ambulance and was left outside. I hurriedly explained to the disgusted policeman, who was afraid he would lose his job, that the man in charge of the ambulance was on the outside and he *must* be admitted immediately, and the door was at once opened to admit my friend. As we were leaving this final gate, I overheard the policeman say that he hoped he would never be assigned to another baseball game.

We found our box occupied by persons without the necessary coupons, who moved quickly and without argument.

We got well seated when Chicago started in on its great batting rally in the third inning, which yielded four runs, and as it afterwards proved, the game and the championship of the National League, so I personally felt repaid for my many troubles in getting into the grounds.

I ventured to clap the Chicago team for its beautiful batting streak, but I found that I was all alone in this display of enthusiasm, so for the balance of the game I was as meek as a lamb, for fear that some overzealous policeman would put me out in that automobile pen again.

