

Chance of the Chicago Champs

By James C. Gilruth

Illustration from Photograph

EVERY great event has its leader; that is why the Chicago National League baseball club has won three successive league pennants, and twice has been crowned champion of the world, for Frank L. Chance is its "Peerless Leader."

Who "discovered" Chance? Who has the honor of first seeing and appreciating the germs of baseball ability, which later developed him into the greatest leader of them all?

Henry Harris, former owner of the San Francisco club, or Cal McVey, once a famous National League star, gave the first tip that led to the discovery of Chance. James A. Hart, president of the Chicago club at the time Chance joined it, says Harris sent the first word of the future baseball genius; but Chance himself has always given McVey the credit.

"I have long wanted an opportunity to tell the true story of how the Chicago club got Manager Chance," said James A. Hart. "It was in the fall of '97 that he was first reported to this club. Baseball on the Pacific coast was demoralized in those days, and that fall an amateur tournament for a trophy cup was arranged by a San Francisco newspaper, in an effort to revive the sport. One of the teams contesting in that tourney was the Fresno Tigers. Henry Harris, former owner of the San Francisco club, saw the Tigers play and immediately wrote me of its catcher, a big, husky chap, over six feet tall and weighing about 190 pounds, who looked good. His name was Chance. I opened correspondence with him, soon came to terms and signed him for the season of 1898. After I had signed Chance I learned that he had given Danny Long, a former

player for Oakland and Baltimore, a promise of a commission to place him with some Eastern team. Long wrote me of a promising catcher he had in view, but refused to give his name until I agreed to pay the commission. I was convinced that he meant Chance, and after I had signed Frank, I notified Long that I could not use his player, as I had just signed Chance. Later Long threatened to sue Chance for that commission, but Chance settled rather than fight it out in court.

"About the time Chance signed, Fred Carroll, formerly catcher for Pittsburg, and who lived in California, wrote me of Chance. He saw Frank at the same time Harris did, in the tourney.

"The fourth 'tip' on Chance to the Chicago club came from Cal McVey, who wrote Anson, but not until after Chance had signed. Bill Lange had nothing to do with finding Chance, and never heard of him until I asked Bill to look the youngster over when he went back to the coast that fall."

Such was the entrance of the future diamond star into fast company. Born on Sept. 19, 1877, in Stanislaus County, near Modesto, California, of Scotch parentage, he was taken to Fresno when only two years old, there growing to manhood, playing hookey with the rest of the gang, fighting when the occasion arose, and early showing a fondness for baseball. His first games were at third base for the Fresno Expositors. In 1893-4-5 he attended Washington College, Irvington, Cal., studying dentistry and playing baseball and football on the varsity teams. He played one summer at Sullivan, Ind., while visiting relatives. His work in the state amateur tournament

at San Francisco attracted wide attention and he joined the Chicago club at West Baden, Ind., on the spring practice trip in 1898.

Chance's career since joining the Chicago team is too well-known to call for extended notice. His rise has been meteoric, and today he is recognized the land over as the greatest leader baseball has ever seen.

Joining the team as a catcher in the days of the inimitable Tim Donahue, Chance was later shifted to first base, though much against his will, and there found his natural position. As a catcher he "fought" the ball, resulting in many injuries to his hands; at first base this trouble has been eliminated. When "Bobby" Lowe was dropped from the club, due to injuries, Chance was chosen captain at a popular election held by the players. During the summer of 1905, when Frank Selee was taken ill, Chance was appointed acting manager by President Hart. The team made a gallant fight that year for the flag, but had not steadied down enough.

So level-headed had been Chance's work, however, that the following year, Selee having been dropped from the club, Chance was made manager with full authority, and every year since he assumed complete charge he has returned his club champions of the league.

Quiet, earnest, unassuming and gentlemanly in his daily life, Chance is a fighter the instant he dons his uniform, and by his brilliant personal magnetism has enthused his men to the pitch where they fight with and for their leader. It is this unswerving loyalty to the manager himself that has made the Cubs the wonderful machine they are.

There is nothing of the tyrant in the way Chance handles his men. He is in deadly earnest in everything pertaining

to baseball. When the season opens he calls a meeting of the players, tells them he relies on each to do his best at all times, and that then the club will make the fight of which it is capable. There is no surveillance of the men; it is the honor system entirely, and seldom indeed has a player violated the confidence reposed in him by his manager.

May I be permitted right here to deny a gross libel on the Chicago club, published last summer? The story was started in Chicago that discord tore the ranks of the world's champions; that Chance, Zimmerman and Sheppard engaged in a free-for-all fight in the club house, resulting in Zimmerman breaking

a bottle of ammonia in Sheppard's eyes and then whipping Chance so badly the manager had to be carted to a hospital.

To those who "know" this story is absurd, for it was impossible; but the gullible public has believed it because there was no way of denying it, newspapers being inclined to give bigger heads and more space to a scandal than to a denial of it.

Here are the facts of that "scandal," known to me personally, and which can be proved by dozens of other outsiders.

On the day Sheppard's eyes were injured through the explosion of an ammonia bottle, Zimmerman was sitting in the grand stand, was seen there by hundreds of people, and did not go near the club house, being himself too badly injured to play. The Cubs left for the East that same evening; Chance played throughout the trip; he was in good condition and was not out of the game owing to a wrenched back until after the club returned home, and by that time Sheppard had recovered from his injury. The Chicago National League ball club always has bees and still is one big, happy family.



HUGHIE AND FRANK

Championships of the diamond, in these days of highly scientific baseball, can only be won by teams possessing leaders of more than ordinary ability—men who know the game from every angle; who are naturally leaders of men; who are quick, decisive thinkers; who are strategic field generals. It is the combination of these qualities to a rare degree that has won for Manager Chance his title of "Peerless Leader."

The Chicago club has ever been among the foremost in setting the pace for others. "Record breakers" the Cubs have been in many ways. No other major league club has ever won 116 games in a championship campaign; never before has any club won over 100 games of its championship schedule two successive years; never before, in modern times, has a world's championship club come back and won its league pennant the following season, nor has any club won two successive world's flags since these contests were placed under the supervision of the National Commission.

Clean, hard baseball, using every legitimate advantage offered by an opponent to secure victory, but above all no "dirty" playing, has marked the Chicago club since Chance took the helm, and today the Cubs are known throughout the country as the "model" for others to follow. Time was when it was supposed a winner had to fight its way to the top—assault umpires, cut down opponents, every man more or less of a "rowdy." Chance has effectually disproved this theory; no "rowdy" could hold a job on the Chicago club, for Manager Chance takes baseball too se-

riously and demands the best every man can give all of the time.

Another antiquated idol shattered by the Chicago club, was the belief that a ball player, to have the nerve needed for big league campaigns, must come off the "back lots," with little education but his natural, intuitive ability. Chance has gathered about him a number of university graduates, and the success he has achieved proves beyond doubt that educated men may possess true baseball instinct as well as the lad fresh from the sand pile.

Manager Chance is said to be the highest paid player baseball has ever seen. In addition to his fat salary as player and manager, he owns 100 shares of the Chicago club, which, since the team has been winning championships, has paid big dividends. Thoroughly disliking anything savoring of stinginess, Chance handles his money carefully, investing it in stocks of solid business corporations that pay good returns. For a ball player Chance is wealthy, being worth in the neighborhood of \$100,000. His father, W. H. Chance, was vice-president of the First National bank of Fresno at the time of his death fifteen years ago, and left a snug fortune to his family. Frank's share soon disappeared, and his present bank account has all accumulated within the past six or seven years.

Though a Californian by birth, Chance is now a citizen of Chicago. A year ago he purchased a home in the Windy City and lives there most of the time, but he still loves the salubrious climate of his native state and spends his winters on the Pacific coast.

