

Harry Davis

The Captain of the World's Champions

By Frederic Lieb

SEVERAL seasons ago, when the Athletics as usual were in the thick of the fight, Mack's crew were having it out with the New York Highlanders. The late Billy Hogg was serving them up for the Manhattan clan, and up to the eighth inning had the White Jumbos at his mercy. The score stood three to one in favor of the New Yorks, when it came the Athletics' turn to smite in the eighth. There were two out and two men on the hassocks, when a certain Philadelphia favorite stepped to the platter.

A conference followed between Billy and Jack Kleinow, his receiver, at which it was unanimously decided that the Quaker favorite should be presented with a gift, and a chance be taken at the following hit-smith. Kleinow stepped aside, and two wide balls were thrown to him. Billy got just a trifle careless with the third—just a wee little trifle—but then, little trifles often upset nations. He didn't send it over the plate, but just lobbed it over about a foot on the far side. The Philadelphia favorite had been standing at the plate as motionless as a sphinx. Suddenly his form sprang to action; his brawny arms reached out, and tapped the pill amidship. There was a sudden crash, and then a shout from the populace, while Hogg's countenance looked like that of a man who had been relieved of his bank roll, watch, coat and lid.

None ever knew where that bulb landed. It cleared the right field barrier on a line, and was still ascending when it was lost to view. That clout, of course, made the verdict 4 to 3 in favor of the Mackmen, which was the final result of the fray. Sounds a little like a fictitious story, but if any one should care to drop around the Mackmen's

camp, and casually ask who was the hero of the incident, they would be greeted with a smile, and would be directed to Captain Harry Davis. The episode is a standing joke with Mack's veterans, who call it "Harry's walk."

"Cap" Davis is no longer the famous home runnist he was a half dozen years ago. Neither is "Cap" the speediest first sacker in the Ban Johnson circuit. Frank Baker has usurped his home run supremacy these last two seasons, and little "Stuff" McInnis has even swiped Harry's job as Mack's first sacker. However, though Harry's batting orbs have been a little dimmed by Old Pop Time, Davis is still one of the brainiest men who ever trod a diamond.

Few know the game like Harry, and there are many teams that would only be too glad to sign him for a manager. It is Davis' great headwork that has made him the valuable player he has proven to Mack. The introductory story is only a little incident where Harry's gray matter put one over on the other fellows. Mack has always found in him a skillful lieutenant, and whenever the astute Cornelius has been compelled to relinquish the reins because of a sickness or to take a scout through the timber belt, the team has travelled merrily along under Davis' guidance.

Harry was born in Philadelphia thirty-eight years ago, so is no longer a spring chicken. It is a very rare occurrence that a ball tosser spends the best portion of his career in the burg that saw his birth. Danny Murphy is another of the Athletic veterans who first saw the light of day in Penn's burg. Oddly enough, both Davis and Murphy began their major league careers as members of the New York Giants.

Davis' father died while Harry was



HARRY DAVIS

still a youngster, and he was sent to Girard College, one of the grandest institutions in America for the care of orphan boys. Girard College has always been famous in Philadelphia scholastic ranks for her strong teams, and it was here that Harry began to take a keen interest in the national pastime. Harry played almost every position while a member of the Girard College nine, but

showed a special fancy for the outfield. He graduated from Girard College in the class of 1892. Among other pastimers who are Girard College grads are Pitcher Johnny Lush, late with the Phillies and St. Louis, and Ben Hauser, last season substitute first sacker of the Athletics, and now performing regularly with the Indianapolis Indians.

After playing semi-professional ball

around Philadelphia for a year, Davis landed a regular assignment with the Providence team in 1894. Harry then worked for Billy Murray, a few years ago manager of the Phillies. After playing for one season with the Mud Hens, the following season found him hitched up with Pawtucket. In both towns, Davis made a reputation as a fast fielder, and a slugger. He was seized by the New York Giants in 1896, who used him as a first baseman and outfielder. Davis did not last through the season, but was sold to Pittsburg.

At Pirateville, Davis became intimately acquainted with the man, with whom he was later to win renown. Connie Mack was commander-in-chief of the Buccaneers in those days. Mack evidently did not think so much of Davis then as later on, for in 1898 he was allowed to drift to the Louisville Colonels. From the Colonels, Davis meandered to the Washington Nationals, and the following season—1899—found him with the Minneapolis team of the New American League.

It will be seen that Davis was not at that time considered much of a star player. He was booted around from place to place, and, deciding the game was hardly his vocation, retired, and went to work for the Lake Superior corporation in Providence, R. I. This corporation was then in a bad way with the public, and Harry returned to Philadelphia to work for the Pennsylvania Railroad.

When Mack invaded Philadelphia with his Athletics in 1901, he was in bad straits for a first sacker. He tried several, but all had been found wanting. Mack remembered the young clouting outfielder who had played for the Pirates, and an inspiration came to him that Davis was the man he wanted for the position.

Reports of how Davis came to be a Mackman in 1901 are varied. The story that the Philadelphia bugs like best is that Mack procured him at the expense of a nickel, the same being the price of calling Davis up on the phone. The conversation is supposed to have been something like this: "Mr. Davis, this is Mr. McGillicuddy; I want you to play first base for my White Elephants."

"All right, Mr. McGillicuddy, I'll be right out there this afternoon." And Harry went, and has been a White Elephant ever since.

However, there are other stories. One has it that the old lure for the game came back to Davis and he imparted to a friend he wouldn't be adverse to again donning the spangles. The friend happened to be closely associated with Connie Mack, and informed the sage of Brookfield that there was a young fellow employed for the Pennsylvania Railroad who was too good a ball tosser to spend his time adding up the road's receipts. Connie was delighted at the news that Davis intended to come back to the fold, and immediately sent him an invitation to join his forces who at that time were having a merry battle with the Phillies for the baseball supremacy of the town of Brotherly Love.

There is a third version of the story, which the writer believes to be the correct one. Connie Mack, knowing of Davis' batting strength, went to the Girard collegian and asked him to sign. Harry, however, had sickened of the game as he could not get properly started, and was content to retain his position with the railroad, and Mack had to do some tall coaxing to get Harry to finally come around.

The rest is baseball history. From the first day Harry guarded the initial bag he became a star of the first order. His hitting improved from his retirement, and year after year he led the extra base clouters of the league.

In 1902 Davis' renown swept through the circuit. His skillful game at first and his terrible clouting had much to do with giving Philadelphia her first American League pennant. Harry's greatest stunt used to be smiting the horsehide over the right field barrier at the old Columbia Park in the Quaker City.

Old Socks Seybold used to give Harry a great run in the matter of circuit clouts, but Harry always managed to beat Socks out. Danny Murphy, too, got his share of the merry-go-slams, but none could send them out as frequently as Harry. Philadelphia has a grand team in the American League now—they always do have—but though the world's champs of 1910 are a vastly superior col-

lection to Mack's hurry-up champions of 1902, the fans often sigh for the old days. Little Topsy Hartsel, weighing about one-third of Socks Seybold, Rube Waddell, Ossie Schreck, Dan Murphy, Harry Davis, Lave and Monte Cross, and Eddie Plank were a great combination.

Harry was a private until after the Mackmen won the championship of 1905. Old Lave Cross had slowed down perceptibly, especially in the world's series of 1905, when Giant swats went through Lave like water through a sieve. The 1 to 0 game lost by Plank to McGinnity in the fourth game of the series was directly due to Lave's failure to cover more ground than the spot he stood on.

When Lave was cast to the old men's home — Washington Americans — there was much weeping and gnashing of teeth in Penn's burg. Lave had a certain personality that appealed to the bugs, and they imagined he could last forever. It was like the case Frank Chance bucked up against this spring, when he attacked the order of tinware to Harry Steinfeldt. The Peerless Leader must have felt some real regret on parting with "Steiny," but when a veteran goes beyond a certain number of years he loses his value to a championship team.

Lave, however, vindicated Mack's judgment in casting him adrift. He lasted little over a season with the Senators and then journeyed to New Orleans, where Father Time again took him by the seat of his trousers and hurled him into a still slower circuit.

However, to make a long story short, Lave Cross' departure from Philadelphia left a vacancy in the team captaincy, which was offered to Davis, and since then our hero has been captain. Captain Harry sprang to his new duties as a duck takes to water, and soon showed he was an ideal field captain. In fact, Davis at once became far more valuable to Mack's team than the average captain. Harry's duties were not so much to attend to the team's kicking—the White Jumbos do very little of that—but to steady down the inside work, and to attend to the field strategy, at which he had always been a past master.

If ever a man worked hard for a pennant, Harry toiled for a Mack championship in 1907. With a lead of about forty points on Labor Day, the Mack machine began to skid badly, due to a complete breakdown of the hurling corps. Davis' bat tried hard to offset the poor work of the Mack flippers, and it almost got away the feat.

In the never-to-be-forgotten series with the Tigers for the championship of 1907, Harry did his part well. Early in that seventeen-inning tie, Harry drove one of his famous thumps over the right field fence, with two of his comrades camped on the trail. That lick put the fray on ice until the ninth, when Ty Cobb, then a budding infant, duplicated Harry's swat and tied things up. Then Harry came along in the fourteenth, and ripped off a two-bagger to the centre field crowd and Silk O'Loughlin made his fateful decision, calling Harry out because Wahoo Sam Crawford declared a police officer had interfered with his making a catch.

To show the Mackmen have never forgiven Silk for the decision that prevented them from sharing in the 1907 world's series spoil cropped out in a recent series between the clans of Mack and Chase at Frank Farrell's baseball emporium in Manhattan Island. Hartsel was coaching at first base and made an emphatic appeal from a decision that O'Loughlin had rendered at the pan. Topsy then casually mentioned that 1907 matter, and Silk instantly shooed the lit-tie towhead to the coop. Silk is very sensitive about this matter, for had it not been for a huge batch of Quaker City's guardians of the peace, the famous ump would have had the time of his life leaving Shibe's ball yard on that frenzied afternoon.

Mack reconstructed a new team in 1909, which has been one of the sensations of the decade. Few conceded the Athletics a first division berth in 1909, but they came dangerously near copping the gonfalon. Those youngsters that Mack had procured—Collins, Baker and Barry—were built around Davis, and only the Philadelphia bugs know how Harry had to toil to hold them down. It needed a man of experience to complete that infield, and in 1909 and 1910

it was second to none in the country.

Davis' work is through now, as the youngsters have grown into seasoned players themselves, and are no longer in need of careful coaching to keep them from going up in the air. However, though Harry will hardly last more than this season as an active player, his sterling first base work will not be forgotten in a hurry.

Davis has had chances to land a berth as a big league manager. His wonderful knowledge of the game and all its intricacies, learned from close association with Connie Mack all these years, is known from ocean to ocean. Connie Mack has often expressed himself that he will never oppose Harry, should he at any time care to leave the club to try his hand as manager. Davis had a chance to manage the Cleveland Naps this season, but Harry declared he wanted to play another season with a world's champion team.

Philadelphia fandom recently gave a "Davis Day." Harry certainly seems to be in Dutch with the ginks that run the Weather Works. Twice "Davis Day" was put on the blink by the conduct of Jupe Pluvius in seeing how many gallons of water he could pour into Shibe Park, and when the big event was finally pulled off, Rube Oldring had his nose broken in a farcial exhibition, that put him out of the combat for several weeks. However, the day was a financial success and the bugs contributed handily to keep Harry a good distance from the Old Man's Home.

Davis has always been a clouter, and his averages show that from his start in the big leagues, he has been some noise with his bludgeon. The following are his batting averages:

Year	Team	Ave.
1896	New York-Pittsburg	.234
1897	Pittsburg	.309
1898	Pittsburg-Louisville	.271
1899	Minneapolis	.338
1901	Athletics	.307
1902	Athletics	.308
1903	Athletics	.298
1904	Athletics	.308

1905	Athletics	.298
1906	Athletics	.292
1907	Athletics	.266
1908	Athletics	.248
1909	Athletics	.268
1910	Athletics	.248

It will be seen that as Harry advanced in years, his averages declined. As his averages declined so did his extra base figures. However, until only a year or so ago, he clutched on to one title, that of hammering out more circuit drives than any other performer. In many towns of the circuit, Harry holds the record for long drives. He holds the record for the longest hit made at the Highlanders' Park in New York, and I believe also in Detroit. All over the South, any minor league park you happen to drop in, you will find the natives showing you where Harry Davis' ball went after he hit it.

Davis is happily married, and has a daughter of about eighteen, who, naturally, is the Big It in the Davis family. He has also a young son, who does mascot duty and warms up the pitchers at Shibe Park. "Cap" is comfortably situated, and has saved some of his well-earned coin. His parlor is a baseball treasure, and is well worth a visit from anyone who likes to delve in baseball history. Harry's parlor contains portraits and pictures of every man who ever wore the Athletics' spangles, past champions, present champions and coming champions.

When Eddie Collins came to Philadelphia he found in Davis a firm friend and one who took a great interest in his welfare. Until Eddie's marriage at the end of last season, he made his Philadelphia home with the Davis's.

Davis, like most other ball players, is fond of hunting, boating and fishing. Harry is never happier than on his sloop, sailing around some of his favorite nooks in the Delaware and Chesapeake. He is a deserving player, and if he ever embarks on a managerial cruise, he will have the best wishes of the army of fans throughout the American League circuit.