

Reminiscences of a World's Series Pitcher

A Few Scattered Recollections Taken at Random from My Experiences as a Pitcher in Four Different World's Series

By EDWARD M. REULBACH

The following sketch by Edward Reulbach is an extremely timely one. This great pitcher who still (so many players say) has more stuff in mid season than any other pitcher in the National League has enjoyed a remarkably rich and full experience in the World's Series line. As a member of that great machine which under the leadership of Frank Chance won world-wide fame, Reulbach has taken part in four different world's series. His reminiscences of past experiences and his opinions on the coming series are all derived from an unusually deep and varied knowledge of the subject.

ON the eve of the world's series it is perhaps not out of place for a pitcher who has taken part in several of these annual big shows, to express a few opinions. In the six years that I have been with the Cubs it has been my good fortune to take part in four different world's series, pitching in something like seven or eight championship games. And the thing which stands out most vividly in my experience is the tremendous uncertainty which governs a world's series, the utter impossibility of anticipating a winner.

In a 154-game season the best club is pretty certain to win, but there is no such certainty in a world's series. No clearer indication of that fact is needed than the famous White Sox-Cub battles of 1906. The Cubs in that year were in their prime. I think no person, however prejudiced, will claim that the White Sox were their equal and yet the White Sox won four out of six contests and made the champions of the National League look extremely foolish to many people. Probably more fans have wondered over the result of this famous series than that of any other in baseball. As I happened to be there and was called upon to take an active and in some respects unfortunate part in those games, I might perhaps be in a position to throw some light upon the peculiar course of fortune which

seemed utterly to desert the previously victorious Cub standards and perched at length upon the banners of the White Sox. Much credit has been given the generalship of Fielder Jones, upon this occasion, and it is doubtful if the wisdom of a manager's policy ever proved a stronger factor in the final result.

Speak of Walsh nowadays, and every one pictures a pitcher; who, in a short series, is almost invincible, but Walsh was not the pitcher in 1906 that he afterward became. Miner Brown was going at a wonderful clip. It was certain that Chance would pitch him in the opening contest. Fielder Jones attacked the problem somewhat in this light. He said: "If I pitch Walsh who is my best pitcher I will probably lose, for Walsh is certainly not as good as Brown. Then I will have opened the series with a defeat and temporarily used up my best man. On the other hand, if I use another pitcher and he loses, I am no worse off and I can bring Walsh into the second contest and probably win."

So he chose Altrock to pitch the opening game, feeling that if Altrock won, it would be a tremendous moral victory, while if he lost it would not be such a serious affair, since no one expected him to win. Jones felt that Altrock might as well lose a game by 15 to 1 as to let Walsh lose by a score of, say 2 to 1. A

defeat was a defeat, no matter how many runs the opposing club piled up. It was by this adroit method of matching his weakest points against the enemies' strongest and his own strongest against their weakest, that he hoped to make a relatively inferior pitching staff show up as effectively as possible against an admittedly stronger one, trusting on the breaks of the game and the gamey spirit of his own great fighting club to bring him the victory.

That Jones was entirely successful in this mapping out of the campaign is now a matter of history. No manager ever had a more splendid triumph than the daring leader of Comiskey's players. But several factors combined to aid Jones, all of which were needful to the accomplishment of his design. One of these factors was the weather, another the remarkable batting of Rohe, and the third, the breaks of the game, that intangible influence which no one can foresee or predict, but which always plays a most important part in the result of any series.

Brown went into the first game and pitched his head off, only to lose out to Altrock by the score of 2 to 1. Fielder Jones had won the first trick by a daring play and started the campaign by a clear cut victory. In the second contest I was called upon to pitch. It was a cold drizzly day. The sky was overcast with clouds. There was no sun and during the game the wind drove the sleet heavily. It is impossible to imagine worse surroundings for a pitcher, and although I managed to hold the White Sox to one hit and won the game, 7 to 1, I used up all my strength doing it. When the game was over I could not raise my arm. I spent the night in a Turkish bath trying to get into condition as soon as possible and two days later went back again. But the first curve I started to pitch was nothing more nor less than a slow ball. I had absolutely nothing and was driven out of the box. Brown did not recover from the initial defeat which had completely used up his strength and the final unexpected batting of Rohe was the last straw. This recruit who was not destined to make good in the major leagues cleared the bases on at least two occasions by a long hit and practically won two games. It was his batting more than

any other single cause which gave the White Sox the championship of the world.

The Tigers never appeared very strong against the Cubs, but as a matter of fact they were fully the equal, if not the superior of the White Sox. The Cubs played with much better luck and won out on every occasion, though they were hardly as strong as in 1906. Much of the brilliant work of the Cubs against the Tigers was owing to John Kling, one of the greatest catchers who ever wore a mask.

I well remember a little incident in a game with the Tigers. There was a man on first and second and Ty Cobb at the bat. Miner Brown was pitching. Kling strolled leisurely out to the box, and said to Brown: "Now Cobb will bunt. If the bunt goes to first base, all you can possibly do is to get Cobb, and you will have to work hard to do that, for he is the worst man in the game on beating out a bunt. But if he bunts in the other direction, there will be a fair chance of nailing the runner at third and in any case the third baseman can get Cobb just as well under those circumstances as any other. Pitch one on the outside." Brown did so. Cobb's bunt shot almost directly into Brown's hands, and he caught the runner easily at third. Crawford was now at second and Kling began to use the same kind of tactics to get him also. As a preliminary, he signed to Tinker to go way off the bag to put Crawford off his guard. He then had another conversation with Brown in which he told him to pitch the next two wide, no matter what he might signal for. Brown did so, Kling got the ball and shot it down to second, catching Crawford off the sack by as neat a throw as I ever saw. Kling then signalled Brown for another wide one, again shot it down to second and caught Cobb trying to steal. It was by such tactics as this that Kling made the Cub's showing so impressive against Detroit.

As a fighting proposition I do not think the odds ever ought to favor one club over another to any extent in a world's series. The odds certainly favored the Cubs against the White Sox, and still they lost by a big margin. The re-

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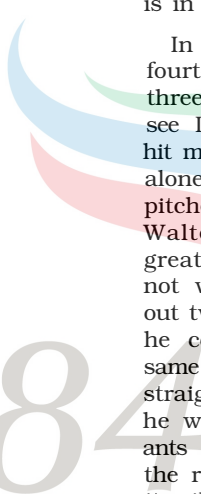
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sult of a world's series is one of the most uncertain things in baseball.

In my own experience, I never found pitching a world's series game much different from any other baseball contest. There is more at stake, to be sure, but I believe the average pitcher can do himself ample justice in such a series. There is one thing in comparing the chances of the Giants with the Red Sox which has not been considered as much as it should have been; that is the fact that Joe Wood is in the midst of a great winning streak.

In my own case after I had won fourteen straight games I lost the next three in succession. So far as I could see I pitched as well as ever, but they hit me. That has not been my experience alone, but the experience of every other pitcher under similar circumstances. Walter Johnson when he completed his great record of sixteen straight, could not win for several games. He struck out twelve men and allowed four hits, but he couldn't win. Jean Dubuc had the same experience after winning eleven straight for Detroit. Marquard, after he won his nineteen games for the Giants was of doubtful value all through the remainder of the season, and I think it will be the same with Joe Wood.



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