

James Lavender A From the Cotton

New Star States

The Man Who Broke Rube
Marquard's Great Winning
Streak and Started the
Cubs on Their Won-
derful Mid-Season
Rally

By F. C. LANE

WHEN Rube Marquard was winning his amazing series of victories partly through good pitching, partly from unparalleled good fortune, and partly by the speed and strength of the great team behind him each successive winning brought him nearer to the grand climax of a broken world's record. When the fourteenth mark was passed and the great modern record held by Reulbach and Chesbro exceeded delvers in history brought to light the remarkable feat accomplished by John Luby of the old Chicago Cubs away back in the season of 1890.

Before Marquard started on that western trip which was to prove so disastrous to his hopes, he confidently said, "I expect to break the world's record. They are all after me, and every club will put their best pitcher in the box against me. But I have beaten them so far, and I expect to keep on."

One part of Marquard's statement proved to be true. The clubs did place their best pitchers in the box in the games in which he was scheduled to pitch. But still his amazing good fortune continued.

Rucker by a dazzling feat holds the Giants to three hits while the weak hitting Brooklyns score nine. Still Marquard wins the game. O'Toole clearly out-pitches him and rain puts an end to the game with the odds in favor of Pittsburg. But the rain clears off and Marquard wins in the end with the same combination of good fortune.

He goes against the Cubs and is taken



James Lavender
putting over his
famous spit-ball

out of the box with a score against him, is clearly beaten, in other words—but his team-mates manage to turn the tide before his successor enters the box, and the National League authorities give the big pitcher the credit for the victory.

No wonder Marquard felt confident with this amazing run of good fortune and the dazzling play of his team mates behind him. But his entry on the great Cub battle field was destined to prove his

Waterloo. Those Cubs, whose pitcher Luby held the record, were not going to see that record equalled by this modern favorite of fortune, and the man whom they picked to rob Marquard of the goal of his ambition on the eve of its attainment was a pitcher, young, inexperienced, untried in the very first season of his major league career, a pitcher who had but a few brief weeks before been saved from the minors solely by a happy accident.

In this hour when the Cubs rallied to the support of their record they chose James Lavender to lead the onslaught, and it was upon his single arm that they largely depended to bring the hitherto undefeated Marquard his first taste of defeat. And the honor of stopping the winning club with their leading pitcher, a task in which all the greatest twirlers of the National League had tried and failed—was accomplished by this unknown slab man.

Few pitchers have risen to prominence in so short a space of time as has Jimmy Lavender. Within a little more than a month he rose from an obscure recruit whose future was trembling in the balance to the leading pitcher of his club.

James Lavender was born at Montezuma, Ga., 26 years ago. Montezuma is a pleasant southern hamlet in the center of the great cotton district. It is a town of about 2,000 inhabitants and of late years has shared in that wonderful revival of southern industries which center chiefly in cotton manufacture. At present Montezuma boasts of five or six factories of its own, and these factories with the various lines of employment which go with them furnish the main business of the community.

Here Lavender has spent the major portion of his life, and here he still resides in the winter with his mother and his three sisters. The many worshippers of that great baseball idol, Ty Cobb, would be interested to know that Montezuma is situated only about forty miles south of Royston, which Cobb has immortalized. Lavender is, therefore, almost a fellow citizen of the Tiger star, and, like Cobb, has proved a wonder in the national game. But, unlike Ty, the days of his childhood were not spent in dreams which centered on the diamond,

nor his spare time devoted to exciting battles between amateur teams.

In a community which has always been noted for its baseball enthusiasm, Lavender held strangely aloof. In all his attendance at local schools he neither handled a baseball nor swung a bat. But a good situation and hopes of eminence in the creative sphere of civil engineering filled his thoughts. In a measure, too, he shared in the southern passion for military affairs, and in his ardent imagination dreamed of laurels to be won on the field of battle.

To this end he left the local schools when he had outgrown their scope and journeyed to the neighboring town of Barnesville where he conscientiously began his studies at the Gordon Military School. This school, whose aim was to uphold some of the best traditions of the South, was represented by a strong ball club. Here, if ever, it might have been assumed Lavender's fancy should have been caught by the spirit of the only game, but it was not so. Four years rolled on, years which bought him well won honor in his classes, but no hint of his future career in baseball. For not until he was 19 years old did Lavender participate even in an amateur contest. When he was 19, however, he did become a member of a local town team where he speedily discovered that he had some promise as a pitcher. Like most other boys, he started as a pitcher, but unlike most others he chose wisely from the start and was destined to prove more and more successful as the years went by.

Lavender never played on the Varsity baseball team, but what is more striking, he did play football for three or four years. Though light, he played fullback from the first and was a uniformly daring and brilliant player. "I always liked football much better than baseball, and I believe I do yet," says Lavender.

In the fall of 1906 Lavender pitched one of his first big games. It was an amateur contest staged at Montezuma, but there was intense local rivalry and a great deal of money was wagered on the game. At the close the grateful backers of the rising young twirler were so much pleased at the result, a victory by a score of 12 to 2, that they contributed

a total sum of \$700 which was presented to the winning pitcher.

It was in 1906 that Lavender went to Augusta in the South Atlantic League. He was retained on the club for a period of about two months, though he pitched in only one game. In this contest he shut out Jacksonville and just why it was not thought prudent to retain a youngster who showed such signs of promise does not appear.

However, the spring of 1907 found Lavender at Danville in the Virginia League. His entry into this position was due to Al Orth, the Highlander pitcher whose famous smile won him a name throughout the circuits. Orth was struck with Lavender's promise as a twirler and gladly gave him a little help at that stage in his career when he most needed it.

It was in the fall of this same year that Lavender first fell under major league influence. Connie Mack, who signs nine out of every ten of the rising young players of the country and who has recruits in every bush league in the world, had, as usual, a representative on the Danville club. This player after a trial failed to make good and was sent back to Danville with an agreement that in the fall Mack should have an exchange of any player on the club he might want. At the end of the season Mack decided that he would prefer Lavender, and consequently Lavender was for a brief space of time an Athletic. Like many another young player whom Mack acquires and never uses, he was sent away, however, without the slightest trial, this time to Holyoke in the Connecticut League. To this city journeyed President Dovey and Frank Bowerman of the Boston Nationals and looked over the young Holyoke twirler, the fame of whose achievements had already reached their ears at the Hub. Apparently satisfied with the examination, they drafted Lavender, but, like Mack, never used him—in fact never gave him a trial. Instead, they sent him a letter ordering him to report to Providence in the Eastern League at the end of the season.

Of this episode, Lavender says: "When I was dismissed in this way from Boston, the Boston National Club was, as usual, at the foot of the ladder. Quite a few of the Providence players joshed

me a good deal on my showing and wondered what kind of a player I must be to prove so poor that even the Boston Nationals would not give me a trial."

With Providence, however, it was Lavender's lot to remain during the years of 1909, 1910 and 1911. True, there were glimmers of sunlight in this minor league gloom, particularly when Detroit obtained an option on his services in 1909.

During this season the Tigers sent pitcher Lafitte to Providence with the understanding that in return for his services they should have another Providence player that they might choose at the end of the season. Lavender was selected for this honor, but eventually the Tigers recalled Lafitte himself, without giving Lavender a ghost of a show to demonstrate his ability.

It was during these lean years of his experience that an interesting episode occurred which partially revealed the conduct of Connie Mack at an earlier period. Duffy, who was at that time managing Providence, wished to secure a certain pitcher from the Athletics, and, being unable to go to Philadelphia in person, he sent Lavender to represent him in the deal.

When the young pitcher was ushered into the presence of the shrewdest manager in baseball, Mack eyed him curiously. "Why," he said, "if I remember rightly, you used to work for me yourself, didn't you?" "I did belong to you once," replied Lavender, "but as I recall it, I never had a chance to work for you." "That is true," said Mack, "but I have never seen you before. If I had known as much as I do now, you certainly would have had a chance, but I was told on the best authority that you were not over 5 feet 6 inches tall and didn't weigh over 130 pounds. I concluded at once that you were too small to be a pitcher and didn't think it worth while to bother any more about it. If I had understood things in their true light, the result might have been different."

This incident well illustrates the peculiar force with which minor incidents frequently mould a ball player's career. Had it not been for a false and perhaps malicious report, Lavender might have

been a winning twirler with the world's champions, but that is another story.

Feeling pretty well discouraged by his succession of rebuffs, Lavender was not particularly optimistic when he was drafted by the Cubs in the spring of 1911, nor did the first few months of service give him any great grounds for hope. It seemed for some time that his experience in Chicago was to be merely a repetition of his experience with Detroit, Boston and Philadelphia—in fact, it was virtually decided to send Lavender to Montreal when the utter chaos of Manager Chance's pitching staff necessitated a trial of some of his younger players. It was owing to this combination of circumstances, and to this alone, that Lavender made his start.

His first game in big league company was against Pittsburg where he worked for two innings. However, his first full game where he began the contest was against Cincinnati. Lavender had the game well in hand up to the eighth inning with a score of 4 to 1 in his favor. In that inning, however, he made a very wild throw to first base, an error which did a great deal of damage and rattled him so badly that before he could pull himself together, the winning score had been turned into a losing one, and victory changed to defeat. However, this was but a faint forecast of his subsequent work. Before that most spectacular day in his career when he met and downed Rube Marquard, Lavender had pitched forty-four straight innings without allowing a run. Twice he shut out Pittsburg, once allowing only one hit, and again defeating O'Toole in a twelve-inning contest by the score of 1 to 0. He shut out St. Louis, and from necessity was selected by Chance to oppose the Giants with their winning pitcher in the box on the eve of tying the world's record.

How Marquard was driven out of the box and how the Giants bowed under the superior skill of this young player has become history.

In this great contest where a young pitcher would naturally be expected to exert himself to the utmost and be in as good condition as possible, Lavender had only one day's real rest. But as he was playing such a wonderful game he felt

sure he could take Marquard's measure, and asked Manager Chance for the opportunity to oppose the Giant pitcher. And Chance, all the more willingly, gave his consent since this new player whom he was anxious to trade to the minors only a short time before was his one best bet.

Lavender did not last through the nine innings, and was taken out in the latter part of the game. But he saw the disconsolate Giant twirler leave the diamond long before him with his almost world's record shattered to pieces and himself with the credit for the victory. "This was undoubtedly my best single game," said Lavender. Not that I pitched better ball on that day than at various other times, for I didn't. But every pitcher wanted to be the one who could defeat Marquard and I managed to succeed where others had failed. It was of course a very satisfactory result from my standpoint.

"I usually pitch the spit-ball," said Lavender. "In my mind it is a great delivery to have. I think it is one of the hardest balls in the world to hit when it is breaking right, and if a pitcher can't get it to break right he has no license to use it. I started pitching it myself without any coaching save the written accounts I read of the way Walsh and other twirlers handled the ball, though, of course most of my training has come in a way from experience since I made my start.

"A great many of the balls I pitch are spit-balls, and I depend upon that style of delivery a good deal though I have tried to develop a good set of curves and a slow ball as well. It is odd how little a pitcher can depend on his real form. Some days when he pitches very confidently he loses and on others when he is by no means so confident he wins. I remember when I once attended a county fair at a town some distance from Montezuma, there was to be a ball game between two rival teams, and the managers of both were anxious to get some capable pitcher. As I was in town, both of them approached me at different times, though neither knew that the other had made me a proposition. Finding that both seemed to want me I made up my mind I could play one off against the other and per-

haps get a fair amount of money for the game. This was all right enough since I had no special interest in either team and looked at the enterprise merely as a business proposition. Neither side, however, closed the deal until the afternoon of the game, when one of the managers came up and made me a proposition. It so happened that the other saw him talk to me, and when the conversation had ended he came up and complained about my negotiating, with the opposite side. I told him I had no special interest that I had made no agreement with him and was perfectly open to bids from anyone. He was so afraid that the other manager would get me that he at once named a figure which I accepted and was hired on the spot to pitch two out of three games of the series.

"In the first game my spit-ball was working in good shape, but I found I couldn't use it. That was the one thing that I had that they seemed able to hit. In fact, the only hits they made—three in number—were made off spit-balls. While I couldn't understand this at all, I did very speedily discover that it was not safe to pitch any more spit-balls to that crowd, so I confined myself to speed and curves and won the game easily enough, 2 to 0, striking out nineteen men. The second game I also won, 7 to 1, and struck out twenty-one men.

"It is odd, but oftentimes a Bush League team or even a club of amateurs will seem able to hit a pitcher at his very strongest when he is capable of defeating a major league club. I have not been in the major leagues enough to be very familiar with the different pitchers, but in my experience I have found Red Murray of the Giants about the hardest man in the game to pitch to. At least he has seemed to take a liking to my style of delivery more than any other batter I have faced. Oddly enough, I have found the Giants the easiest team in the National League to defeat and have, incidentally, defeated Marquard on the only two occasions I have met him.

"Over confidence is never a good quality to have in baseball and I am by no means over confident, for I know too well that it takes only a little thing to change a winning career into a losing one. In fact, I owe my own career, such

as it is, to mere blind chance, for I have been on four major league clubs without having an opportunity to show whether or not I could pitch, and probably would not have had an opportunity on the Cubs had it not been for the accidents to the pitching staff which prevented my being traded to Montreal after the deal had been thoroughly planned.

"I realize that I began to play baseball much later than the majority and that I have not many years remaining for me in the big leagues even under the best possible circumstances. Nowadays the player when he is in his prime foresees all too clearly the day when he will be through with throwing the ball or swinging the bat, and if he has any judgment or discretion at all, he begins to plan for that day. I am planning for it myself, and already have made a start toward what I hope will be a well equipped farm when I am ready to retire.

"My native town and present home, Montezuma, Ga., is in the cotton district, and I already own some cotton land there which I hope to increase very largely. The industry is a good one, and I think the profits are enough to make a man independent once he has gotten a fair start. Many of the big league players have farms, most of them wheat or vegetable farms. As I am a southerner myself, I shall stick to southern crops and pin my faith to cotton. The South, in my mind, offers not only large advantages in a business way, but there are fine openings for the best sport. A year ago I took a hunting trip down in the neighborhood of Florida which was one of the pleasantest experiences of my life. I thoroughly enjoy hunting and hope to spend a part of each winter in the deer country of Florida. I am also very fond of fishing and believe that one of the finest fishing grounds in the world is situated off the western coast of Florida. Here the giant tarpon offers some of the greatest sport to be found anywhere in the world. To catch one of these big fish on a small line is as exhilarating as it is to win a game from Rube Marquard."

James Lavender is a major league player who is in every way worthy to bear the high title he has won. There is nothing in his bearing or manner to indicate in the slightest degree any undue

elation with his great record. He bears his honors with modesty and is so quiet and retiring that it is difficult to get him to talk about himself.

Lavender is 5 feet 10½ inches tall and weighs about 170 pounds. At first sight he appears slender, but he has very good arms and shoulders which have stood him in excellent stead in his numerous hard-fought encounters.

Lavender is not yet married, though he admits that the southern girls are the prettiest in the world. He lives very

quietly in Montezuma with his mother and sisters and is engaged in the winter time in a salesman's position with a large southern concern.

Georgia is proud of her well-known young pitcher as she has a perfect right to be, and the entire South which has produced such a remarkable collection of star baseball players has by unanimous vote placed the name of James Lavender along with those of its other favorite players, Tris Speaker, Nap Rucker, Joe Jackson and Ty Cobb.

What Lavender Has Done in Baseball

Year.	Team	W.	L.	T.	Pct.	Club's		Bat. Field'g	
						Pct.	Pct.	Av.	Av.
1911	Providence	19	22	1	.463	.355	.190	.930	
1910	Providence	15	22	0	.405	.399	.065	.963	
1909	Providence	14	17	0	.452	.533	.134	.955	
1908	Holyoke	21	17	0	.533	.473	.157	.978	
1907	Danville	18	16	0	.529	.528	.114	.940	

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