



## Who Started Baseball?

### *A Word On the Origin of the National Game*

**T**HE origin of baseball has been a mooted question for years and will probably always remain so. This is because it had no definite beginning, but was simply an outgrowth of an earlier pastime and played in many different localities. However, the first authentic contest took place at Hoboken, N. J., away back in 1845.

The records do not state what teams participated in the first game. Neither has the oldest inhabitant and the survivor of the Mexican War been able to agree on this point. Through many long, hard winters, when they were not posing for their pictures to be used in patent medicine testimonials, they have sat around the stove down at the fire headquarters and argued this question, but never have come to an agreement.

Baseball was an outgrowth of the old pastime of rounders, which was played back in 1825 and which has been played

by men now but little past the meridian of life. To this generation, however, rounders is unknown. The first ball that was used in a game was made of sections of an old overshoe, wound with woolen string and covered with coarse cowhide. None of the players wore a glove, the catcher standing about 30 feet back of the plate and picking up the balls on the bounce. Here is the set of rules used:

The bases shall be from home to second base, 42 paces; from first to third, 42 paces—equidistant. The game to consist of 21 counts, or aces, but at the conclusion an equal number of hands must be played. (This meant that the first team reaching a score of 21 in a limited number of innings won.) The ball must be pitched and not thrown for the bat. A ball knocked outside of range of first or third base is a foul. Three balls being struck at and missed,

in regular turn. No ace on base can be made on a foul strike. A runner cannot be put out in making one base when a balk is made. But one base allowed when, the ball bounds out of the field when struck.

After a few games the rules were changed so that the first baseman did not have to touch the runner in order to put him out.

The first game was played between two teams, chosen promiscuously from a crowd that had gathered on a vacant lot. But on June 14, 1846, a regular game between two teams that really had names was played at Elysian Fields, N. Y. The clubs were the the last one caught, is a hand out; if not caught, it is considered fair and the batter must run. A ball being struck or tipped and caught either flying or on the first bound is a hand out.

A player running the bases shall be out of the ball is in the hands of an adversary on the base or the runner is touched by it before he makes his base; it being understood, however, that in no instance is the ball to be thrown at him. A player running who shall prevent an adversary from catching or getting the ball before making his base is a hand out.

If two hands are already out a player running home at the time the ball is struck cannot make an ace if the striker is caught out. Three hands out, all out. Players must take their strike

Knickerbockers and the New York Citys. No tally record of this game can be found in any book at the county morgue, so it is presumed that the score was forgotten and there were no fatalities.

For thirteen years the game was permitted to drift along, and then, in 1857, a league was formed in New York. No salaries were paid, however, and it was truly a "Fourth of July" league. Soldiers played the game on the field of battle during the Civil War, and, returning home fascinated with the sport, gave it a new lease of life. So speedily did the game advance that in the early sixties umpires began to call balls on pitchers who could not put them over.

In 1865 a bold New Englander started a factory for making baseballs. They were much superior to the old hand-made balls and caused increased interest in the game. Three years later a salaried team was put in the field in Cincinnati. This grew into the famous Cincinnati Red Stockings, who, in 1869-1870, played eighty games without a defeat, setting a record in the pastime that has never been equaled.

When Nat Hicks, catcher, slipped on a mask and moved up behind the plate in 1876 his relatives began to doubt the validity of his life insurance policy with a suicide clause attached. The breast pad followed a few years later. Not until 1886 were gloves used for the left hand by any other player than the catcher.

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