

# The All-Cohens Baseball Team

## *The Sad Adventure of a New York Drummer*

By Augustus Wittfeld

"**T**ALKING about baseball," said the haberdashery salesman in the smoker, "reminds me of a game I once promoted in Philadelphia, and over which I've had many a laugh since.

"Among my customers was a fellow by the name of Isidore Cohen, and one day, after I had been kidding him about the lack of interest the Hebrews seem to take in active athletics, and particularly in baseball, he offered to bet me twenty-five dollars that he could get a baseball team together, every member of which would be a Hebrew, that could beat any amateur team that I could get together from my friends in the trade.

"I laughed at his proposition and suggested that if he would guarantee to make it an all-Cohen team I would take him up, and you may bet I was some taken aback when he agreed. I didn't propose to let him bluff me out, however, and suggested that the game be played two weeks later, and that the one who failed to materialize with a team would forfeit the stakes.

"Cohen agreed, and it was up to me to get busy and organize my team. I got a friend of mine, who held down a job in a sporting goods store, to help me, and inside of a week we had our team together and were practising daily.

"For a scrub team they played pretty good ball, and I looked forward with joyous anticipation to the day when I would divorce Cohen from his twenty-five.

"Cohen, in the meantime, had gotten his team together, and I insisted on seeing a list of his players to make sure that he wasn't ringing in any but Cohens on me, and when he showed it to me and I found that I knew most of his players, I was satisfied that the money

was mine. I couldn't conceive of that bunch of collar and necktie salesmen putting up any kind of game, and I thought it was all over but the crowing.

"That's where I made a big mistake, for when they showed up at the grounds of one of the minor leagues on the appointed day and started their preliminary practice, I saw that we were up against a swift bunch.

"The game got started, with the Cohens at the bat, and they sure played some ball. Before we succeeded in retiring them they piled up three runs, and I wasn't feeling so confident about that twenty-five.

"The Cohen who pitched for that all-Cohen aggregation had us spiked to the bench, for my players couldn't land on him at all. At the end of the third inning the score stood 6—0, in their favor.

"After that, my bunch rallied some and we managed to get in four runs by the end of the fifth inning.

"It was funny to hear the captain of the all-Cohens coaching his team, as he had to call them all by their first names to avoid confusion, and once, when he got excited over a high fly that one of our players knocked, and yelled, 'Get it, Cohen,' every darned mother's son of a Cohen started for it and nearly precipitated a riot.

"Well, by the end of the sixth inning those fellows had us beaten to a standstill, to the tune of 10—5, and I was wondering how I could charge that twenty-five in my expense account without exciting comment.

"The all-Cohens were at the bat for the first half of the seventh and they had two men on bases. The third man up knocked a hot grounder past short and

reached first, advancing the other two players. It looked like a Waterloo for us, and just as the fourth man came up there was the clatter and clang of a passing fire engine outside the grounds. My men didn't pay much attention to it as they were having troubles of their own, but as a second and third passed I could see that the Cohen family was getting uneasy. This put an idea into my head, and as I had put in a substitute that inning I proceeded to carry it out. I walked over to the gate and stepped outside the grounds. Spying a husky-looking Jew kid I called him to me and held converse with him for about half a minute. Then I handed him a quarter and went inside again to see how things were going.

"The fourth man was still at bat, with two strikes and two balls to his credit. As I reached the field, the pitcher drove in another one and the umpire called ball three. As the pitcher was winding himself up to deliver the next ball that kid came running into the grounds, calling at the top of his lungs: 'Meester Cohen,

Meester Cohen, your houses iss burning up!'

"The effect was electrical. That fellow at the bat dropped his stick and made a sprint for the gate, and every darned Cohen on the team followed him. In two minutes there wasn't a Cohen within two blocks of the grounds. They hadn't stopped to ask *which* Cohen's house was on fire, and they were all beating it for home.

"After waiting for five minutes I suggested to the umpire that as the all-Cohen team had faded from sight it was up to him to forfeit the game to us under Rule 26, Section 7. He saw the point and gave us the game."

"And you got your twenty-five dollars, all right?" I asked.

"No," replied the haberdashery salesman. "When I paid that kid to bring the game to a dramatic finish, I overlooked one very important point."

"And what was that?" I asked.

"Well," replied the haberdashery salesman, "the man who was holding the stakes was also named COHEN."

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