



# LA84

## John J. McGraw

*The Man Who Made Manhattan Famous in the  
World of Baseball*

By Frederic Lieb

There are sixteen major league clubs, and sixteen major league managers. Not every city offers equal opportunity for the display of managerial skill, but it is a striking fact that some half dozen managers, no matter what the season, or what the difficulties, are always in the front rank. Among these managers who never lag very far behind first place, one of the most persistent winners, the ablest and most capable is John McGraw. The tremendous success of the National Game in Gotham has been due mainly to the tireless efforts, the shrewd, aggressive methods and the keen baseball insight of the "Little Napoleon."

**I**N the month of August of the Year of Our Lord, 1902, the Secretary of a prominent ball club left New York at noon, and boarded a train for

Baltimore, Md. When he alighted at the Maryland metropolis, it was raining cats and dogs. He hired a cab at the station, and directed the driver to

take him to the address of a baseball man in Baltimore, whose name was a by-word with the fans of the Monumental City.

"Hello, John," said the traveler, "come take a little ride with me." For four hours the two men were driven around the streets of Baltimore, discussing one of the biggest deals ever pulled off in baseball. It was raining by the bucketfuls, the streets were still and wet, but the two passengers in the cab paid no attention to the elements.

The man, who boarded the train for Baltimore, was Frederick Knowles, at that time secretary of the New York Giants. His companion was John J. McGraw, present manager of the champion Giants of 1911, and at that time manager of the Baltimore American League team.

Knowles used every argument he could present to bring McGraw over to the scheme, but John J. would not give him a definite answer. After four hours were up Knowles finally said, "Well, what shall I tell Freedman." "Can't give you a decisive answer. I will have to think it over," replied McGraw.

Before going any further, it will be well to review the conditions that existed in New York in 1902, that is, from a baseball view point. The Giants of 1901 had finished in last place, and the team of 1902 was doing little better. Baseball in the biggest city in America was as dead as a door nail. The crowds that flocked to the Polo Grounds at times scarcely exceeded one hundred.

Andrew Freedman, then owner of the Giants, and a powerful figure in baseball a decade ago, tried every thing in his power to make the Giants a winner. He was losing money daily, and knew something radical had to be done. He made an effort to land Ned Hanlon, then manager of the Champion Brooklynns, but Hanlon was in no position to accept the offer. He then tried to get Joe Kelley, but Joseph was tied up with McGraw's American League Club in Baltimore.

For want of a better manager, Horace Fogel, now president of the Phillies, was given the job. He had poor success, and patronage fell off more and more with each passing day. Then Freedman sent Knowles to Baltimore to see whether he could procure McGraw.

The rest is baseball history. The Baltimore Club was in a bad way financially, and McGraw had several month's back salary coming to him, when Knowles made him an offer, that far exceeded his salary as Commander-in-Chief of the Orioles. After a few days' deliberation, McGraw accepted Freedman's proposition.

McGraw has been severely censured for his action at this time. He made it possible for the New York National League Club to purchase the Baltimore Americans, the obvious intention of which was to wreck the new American League. All the star players on the Orioles, including McGinnity, Bresnahan, McGann, Cronin, and Gilbert, were included in the deal, when the Little Napoleon of baseball signed to pilot the Giants.

However, McGraw did only what almost every one else was doing in those days. He went where he got the most money. He was not even sure of his salary at Baltimore, while he received an offer from Freedman which called for one of the largest salaries ever paid to a manager.

In addition to this, McGraw was anxious to break up the American League through hatred of Ban Johnson. McGraw had scrap after scrap with the corpulent American League executive, and was under suspension oftener than he was permitted to play. The friendship between Little Mac and Ban is on the same basis today as it was ten years ago.

Whether McGraw was unfaithful to the American League will not be discussed here. The fact remains that he, more than any other man, put Manhattan back on the baseball map. As manager of the Giants, McGraw proved a wonder. His team of 1902 finally wound up in the cellar, but in

the following year, he took the tail-enders, and finished them in second place.

This was a remarkable showing, and with McGraw's success, the crowds began flocking back to the Polo Grounds. The fans want a winner everywhere, but in no city have they such little time for a loser as in Manhattan. The fans of the Greater City went wild over their rejuvenated club, and McGraw was lauded to the skies.

If Little Mac was a hero in 1903 he was a dozen heroes in 1904, when he walked away with the National League gonfalon. For some reason or other, the Giants refused to meet the Boston Americans for the World's Championship in that year. McGraw was called a quitter, and it was declared he was afraid of the American League Champions.

Then came 1905. Again, John J. piloted his team home an easy winner, and this time the National Commission had ordained that the two pennant winners of each league should meet in a series each fall. In many sections of Uncle Sam's broad domains, it was believed the Athletics, American League pennant winners of 1905, would show up Muggy's Giants. McGraw's men, however, gave the clan of Mack a bad beating, winning four out of five games. Connie Mack waited six years to revenge that defeat.

John Joyous McGraw, as he is called by some of the wits in the New York press box, first saw the light of day on April 7, 1873, at Truxton, N. Y. He was born of Irish parentage, and his people had a hard time getting along. Little Mac received a public school education, and at an early age, he was asked to help support the family.

Baseball always appealed to the young Irish-American and when just entering his teens, he could play better than most of the older boys in his town. John J. had an early ambition to shine as a professional and at the age of seventeen he signed with the Olean, N. Y., Club.

In the following season (1891) he advanced a peg in his profession, play-



ANOTHER GLIMPSE OF THE "LITTLE NAPOLEON."

ing the infield for the Cedar Rapids Club of the Western Association. The youngster was a wonderful fielder, and hit the ball hard and timely. He attracted enough attention to be picked up by the Baltimore Club, then in last place in the twelve-club National League circuit.

McGraw's real career began when he came to the Maryland town in 1892, then a youth of nineteen. Baseball was in the same way at Baltimore in 1892 as it was in New York, when John J. took charge of the Giants ten years afterwards.

Manager Barney of the Orioles was not quick to perceive the juvenile's ability. He put McGraw on second, where he did fairly well, but he did not begin to find himself until Ned Hanlon was appointed manager of the team in mid-season. Hanlon, one of the brainiest men who ever handled a ball club or recognized talent in an uncouth youngster, took an early liking to the scrappy little second sacker of the aggregation, which was turned over to him.

Hanlon coached McGraw day after day, and switched the youngster from second to third base. John J. took to

playing third like a youngster to a new drum. Before many moons had passed he became the crack third sacker of the National League circuit. Not only was he a great mechanical fielder, but he showed wonderful headwork. It is headwork which makes a star out of a brilliant fielder.

McGraw's abilities, however, were not confined to the fielding department. He also demonstrated his class in all the other branches of the service. He was as agile as a young deer on the base paths and soon after his entry into fast company, he began mauling the leather well over the .300 mark. The youngster was also what is known as a winning ball player. He was one of the brand that fights just as hard when the score is 13 to 2 in favor of the other fellows, as when his team is holding on to a one-run lead like grim death itself. He was a scrappy ball player, and is a scrappy manager today. Perhaps a little too scrappy, but a scrappy team always draws well around the circuit.

Ned Hanlon was a genius at collecting baseball talent. McGraw's side partner at short stop was a young fellow who failed to show any hitting ability with Louisville. His name was Hugh Jennings, the same old Ee-yah favorite. Among other notable members of that great Oriole team were Willie Keeler, Dan Brouthers, Joe Kelley, Wilbert Robinson, Heinie Reitz, and Kid Gleason.

This team copped the pennant in 1894, and set old Baltimore crazy. It was some feat, too, taking a hopeless second division outfit, and bringing it in at the head of a twelve-club procession. To show his pennant of 1894 was no fluke, Hanlon piloted his team to victory in 1895 and 1896.

Baltimore then suffered from too-much-champions. When the team began to totter in 1897, patronage began falling off, and in 1898 and 1899 it became still more manifest that Oriole fans had become so accustomed at howling at a winner, that they could not endure the suffering of watching their pets get licked.

Consequently, when the National League was reduced from a twelve-club circuit to an eight-club league, in 1900, Baltimore was one of the four clubs bounced from fast company. When Baltimore was dropped from the league, she disposed of her stars at the best prices she could procure. McGraw, along with Wilbert Robinson, was sold to the St. Louis Cardinals. The Little Napoleon tarried in the Mound City for only one season, 1900.

In 1901, McGraw plunged head over heels into the new American League. He believed there were still big possibilities for a Major League club in Baltimore, and along with Robinson, he organized the Baltimore American League Club. John J. was a staunch American Leaguer in those days, and he threw every ounce of his strong personality into the new venture.

He gathered together a strong team, but injuries to himself and suspensions kept his team floundering near the cellar. He was injured three times in the early part of this campaign, and, as stated before in this narrative, McGraw and Ban Johnson were never cronies. The feeling of animosity became more and more intense, and finally ended in the Little Napoleon's returning to his first love—the National League.

McGraw's eleven years as manager of the New York Giants has stamped him as one of the greatest leaders the great game has ever produced. From 1902 on McGraw has finished every season in the first division. He has won three championships, one World's Championship, and lost the 1908 gonfalon through a technicality. Every year his team is in the thick of the fight, and have been championship contenders so long that proud Gotham would no longer stand for a loser.

There has not been any luck to McGraw's success. He is a wonderful baseball general, and can get more out of a mediocre player than any other leader in the game, Connie Mack and Frank Chance alone excepted. There are many teams which have made

managers. Hugh Jennings, though himself a wonderful baseball tactician, owes much to the one and only Ty Cobb for the reputation he made with the Tigers.

McGraw never gave a better illustration of his ability than he did in the campaign just completed when he won the championship of 1911 with a young and more or less inexperienced aggregation. Johnny Evers was quoted as saying in mid-season, "The Giants are a second division team, with a championship manager."

The remark was unfair, as the same thing could have been said about the Cubs. However, the fact remains that probably no other manager beside McGraw could have piloted that team into the harbor of Pennantville.

The Giants are a fast, young aggregation, but they are not a great team. The greatest part of the team is its manager. Last season, Sid Mercer, the popular New York scribe, wired to his paper, "The crippled Giants pulled into St. Louis this morning. The reason I say 'crippled' is because Johnny McGraw has received a three-days' sentence from Judge Lynch for sassing his Umps, the Hon. Jim Johnstone, in Cincinnati." Mercer hit the nail on the head. Without "Little Johnny" at the helm, the Giants flounder around like a ship without a rudder.

McGraw on a few occasions last season misbehaved on the field of battle and was given a few days to repent. At another time, Mac was absent from the squad through the illness of Mrs. McGraw. As soon as Mac received his sentence, the team began to slump, and the first day he returned, the new National League Champs would brace up in a most remarkable manner. In no season did McGraw find as little fault with the arbitrators as in 1911. There was a reason for Mac's holding his temper. It was simply a case of have to, as the McGrawless Giants often made a sorry showing.

The little Napoleon is absolute monarch of his team. There is no such thing as a constitutional government

in the ranks of the Giants. The famous prisoner of St. Helena never received stricter obedience than this modern Napoleon of baseball. He is hired to be boss, and as long as he is hired for that purpose, John J. is going to do all the bossing. If the Giants lose, he is blamed for it, so he believes and demands that his slightest word be law.

However, it must not be taken that Little Mac is a slave-driver. He is severe at times, but when a player makes an ordinary error, he is one of the most lenient of managers. No matter how bad a boot may be, or how ignominious a strike-out, with three on the bases the former Oriole third sacker will not utter a word of complaint. There is one thing, however, that Mac will not tolerate, and that is, bonehead plays or overlooking chances.

When a Giant pulls a "Bone," he knows what is in for him when he returns to the bench, and he usually is not disappointed. When McGraw feels in a humor to give a ball player a tongue-slashing, he is in a class by himself. Often what he tells his employee is more forcible than elegant, but it is a cinch bet the player will take a little more pains to use his gray matter the next time.

I recall two plays which happened last season, where Mac gave Larry Doyle and "Red" Murray an inside view of some of his private opinions. Both plays were practically the same. Larry hit a ball to right field, and the right gardener fumbled it. However, Larry loafed going to first, and was not able to take advantage of the enemies' blunder. McGraw was coaching on first, and Captain Larry was compelled to listen to an oration that would have done credit to Daniel Webster.

Murray's case was a little different. It happened on the Giants' farewell tour around the West. The Manhattan troupe was tearing through the West like a young hurricane, until the outfit arrived at the Windy City.

They stacked up against Lew Richie in the opening clash of the series with

the Cubs, and hits were mighty scarce. Murray was the only Giant who could do anything with the Ambler humorist. He spanked him for two doubles, and on his third trip to the pan rammed a single to Schulte's suburb. Frank Wildfire fumbled the ball, and Murray, who had loafed on his way to first, put on extra steam and set forth for second. Schulte recovered in time to get "Red Jack" going to second. Had Murray gone down to first as fast as he went to second, he would have easily made the bag. No, dear reader, John Joyous McGraw was not peeved. Though Murray had made three hits, more than all the rest of the team, the red-thatched suburbanite was advised to desist for the remainder of the afternoon, while Beals Becker was ordered to patrol Murray's beat. This is a little example of John J.'s disposition, when it is aroused.

There is not a manager in the game who is Connie Mack's superior in judging embryo talent. However, the Giant's little manager is not far behind the astute Cornelius. His team of 1911 is a self-made combination and he has shown remarkable patience with some of his players, particularly Rube Marquard.

McGraw was criticized for holding on to the big Rube, when he failed to show class, but McGraw's sharp eyes penetrated the rough stone, and showed him the pure diamond. He was laughed at for holding on to Fred Merkle. Many a baseball man has ventured the remark, "Merkle will never make a ball player as long as he lives." McGraw showed them.

The same is true of other players on the McGraw roster. Few thought "Big Chief" Myers was of big league calibre, when he first joined the Manhattan forces. Today the husky

aborigine is one of the greatest receivers in the business. Snodgrass came to McGraw a green catcher, and was converted into a fast, aggressive outfielder. Devore, Fletcher and Doyle are other of McGraw's discoveries.

They frequently call this baseball strategist "Muggsy." He is believed in many sections of this country to be a dirty player, and a leader who instructs his men in dirty tactics. This is an old myth, and is far from the truth. In olden times, some five or six years back, Mac's team might have gone to extremes in being a scrappy, aggressive team.

I will say this, however, that in the season past, there was not a cleaner team playing baseball than the Giants.

They kicked at times at decisions, as every team will, but on the whole, they were a team of gentlemen.

After the recent big series was over, McGraw stepped over to the Athletics' bench, and gave Connie Mack his hand. "Connie, I want to congratulate you," said McGraw. "You beat us squarely and fairly, and I take off my hat to your great team."

Not such bad sportsmanship from the famous "Muggsy." Mac may have a few black marks to his credit, but when accounts are summed up, there are many characters in baseball far more worthy of blame than he. He made baseball in New York. He made it possible for John T. Brush to build that monster stadium in Manhattan. They say he gets \$18,000 per annum. If he does, he is worth every cent of it. One of the pillars of baseball, one of the greatest managers in the history of the game is scrappy, pugnacious, aggressive "Muggsy" McGraw. All hats off to baseball's "Little Napoleon."

