

Baseball Among the Magnates

Affairs in Big League Circles with a Brief Glance at the Manager Question

Problems and Prospects for the Season of 1912

By Wm. A. Phelon

THE December meetings came and went, and there was nothing startling after all. The stars still shine by night, the sun still glows by day, bulls have horns, goats say mah-ah-ah, and Tom Lynch is still president of the National League. The war-clouds have rolled away, although a few of the dignified magnates would like to make us think they are still black and threatening.

After all is said and done, the most interesting thing for discussion right now is the new list of managers. I don't believe that there was ever a time when so many clubs changed leaders as has been the case in the past few weeks, and the new pilots are surely worthy of close attention. All of them, judging from the amount of praise now being showered upon them, are wonders in disguise, and every one of them is sure to win the pennant in 1912. Too bad there are only two flags available—why not whittle a few slabs off the pennant poles as consolation souvenirs?

How do these various marvels shape up when you throw the limelight of unbiased study on their massive features? Joking aside, they look more than good, and the general standard of play—at least so far as craft and generalship are concerned—should be materially lifted in 1912. At one city, at least, we should be able to get an intelligent line on how the methods of long ago size up when compared with those of recent seasons.

It looks very much as if Ed Hanlon and John M. Ward, two of the great generals of the past, would collaborate, as it were, in directing the Boston Nationals, and it will be interesting to see just how their ideas will look after bumping against more modern theories. Many of the older fans will contend, as they always have contended, that the schemes which won banners twenty years ago are far superior to any ideas of the present day, and that such a combination as Ward and Hanlon should knock the spots off the presumptuous campaigners of more recent years.

It is, of course, unfortunate that Messrs. Ward and Hanlon are not provided with a .500 point team, instead of one that finished in the coalhole. A .500 point team would show, with considerable accuracy, just how good or how bad this pair of old field marshals really were. Any gain above that mark would show that their ideas were still perfectly good, and their methods both sound and capable, while any fall below that mark would apparently prove that they were antiquated, unable to keep up with the procession. Still, the Boston team, as now made up, is a tremendous batting organization, and likely to create fearful havoc among the opposition.

Ward and Hanlon were accustomed to handle fast-moving, very aggressive teams, and to send them at the other fellows with all the speed they could muster. Base-running and tricky plays,

both on the offense and defense, were great features with both of these old commanders. Can they get the sort of work out of the Bostons that they will ask for? That remains to be seen. The Bostons are heavy hitters, but much slower, both on their feet and in the thinking department, than such teams as Ward and Hanlon used to handle.

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The appointment of Hank—beg pardon, Mr. Henry O'Day—to the management of the Cincinnati Reds was one of the big surprises of the whole season. He was a dark horse for fair, and, as Garry Herrmann himself told me, his name had never been even dreamed of till a few days before the meeting. The Red directory were at their wits' ends to find a pilot, but this by no means implies that Hank O'Day was selected because they could not get anyone else, or that Hank was taken on as a stopgap or emergency manager. Had Garry Herrmann even dreamed that O'Day was to be secured, he would have given up worrying and copped Hank out of the basket first crack. The news that the old umpire would consider an offer hit the Red boss all in a heap, but he didn't lose any time in closing with Hankerino.

After Mr. O'Day gets his face reset, he will assume the duties of his new job, and ought to make a whale of a success at it. Get his face reset, you say? Surest thing you know! For lo these many seasons, Hank has trained his face to wear a stony, set expression of stern rigidity whenever looking at a ballplayer, and has also trained it to joviality and beaming smiles when greeting another umpire. All this must be completely reversed. Hereafter, Mr. O'Day must wear the frapped, marblized look only when meeting the umpires, and must put on the smiling map when he addresses his players. Some work that, and likely to fracture the foundations of Hank's chart before he gets it properly rehearsed.

Joshing aside, Hank O'Day ought to make a great manager. His talents will get a fair show, too, for the team he is to lead is one that would naturally slip along at the .500 mark, unless given

specially clever generalship. Anything much above the .500 figure will be a triumph for O'Day and will stamp him as a natural leader of men; anything below the .500 mark will stamp Hankibus as a novice in managerial roles. Of course, luck must be figured in. Griffith would have had that team at least as high as .550 per cent. but for the incessant attacks of evil fortune, and it is to be hoped, for Hank's sake, that the mean luck has blown away.

O'Day ought to know how to use the excellent material that Griffith left him. He should know a whole lot about the personal characteristics of every man, for an umpire sees each player in action in quite a bunch of games, and O'Day is an observant individual. He should also know a great deal about the ins and outs of modern ball; the success or failure of all the different tricks, both offensive and defensive, over which he has stood in judgment through the years, and the value of all the theories that have been worked out under his observation. He is also the sort of manager who should have strong influence over his men, and keep them in line without much argument or difficulty. I look for Manager Henry O'Day to be one of the big successes of the coming season.

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The rest of the National League teams will keep the managers who led them in 1911, unless the Fogel-Doooin rioting results in a new deal down in Slepton. Over in the American League, however, there will be some wonderful shifting and changing — the most remarkable shaking up that the younger organization ever had. Take the case of Boston, for example — the once mighty Speed Boys, who have been falling down for two seasons, will now take the field with Garland Stahl as leader. Oh, consistency, thy name is, assuredly, NOT Stahl! Remember a few years ago, when Mr. Stahl was put in charge of the Washington team? He said, after one short season, that never, never again would he consent to manage anybody's ball club. A private in the ranks—that would be plenty good enough for Jakey, and he would consider no man his friend

who ever again even hinted anything about managing a ball club. And now, behold, up bobs Mr. Stahl, ready and willing to again assume the burdens, the most willing little camel, in fact, that ever bowed its hump to receive the heavy load! Was Jake only Stahling all this time, or has he forgotten the troubles that almost wrecked his think-tank a few years ago?

Mr. Stahl will add strength in batting, strength in fielding, and a clever head to the line-up of the Boston team—things that club needed badly. That club cannot fail to make a better showing in 1912 than was the case in 1911, for last season saw it reach the lowest ebb of its fortunes, and it would be impossible, considering the natural strength of the team, for it to do any worse. With Stahl added, the Red Sox are bound to climb. All that Jake has to do is to play his game as he best can do, and refrain from worrying. The boys will do the rest.

Jimmy Callahan, as pilot of the Chicago White Sox, looms up quite impressively. Cal managed that same team for a short while, long, long ago, but in those days Cal had not outgrown his kittenishness, so to speak. He was about as well fitted, right then, to lead a ball club as Consul the Great, but he learned things rapidly after he left the ranks of organized ball. Cal comes to the front again, well fitted with nerve, good judgment, and wisdom gained through the years, while he has cut out all the folly of his salad days. I honestly believe that Callahan will prove himself an able field general, and one of the quickest, brightest thinkers in the ranks of the playing managers. He cannot be expected to grab off any flags first crack, for the White Sox need some reorganizing and at least one season of education, but he will make a corking good showing out of the material at hand.

There isn't any reason why Harry Davis shouldn't succeed with the Cleveland club, for the goods left at his disposal are excellent stuff, needing nothing but a good manager to market them at the best advantage. It is up to the veteran. He has earned the chance by long and faithful service, and now it re-

mains for him to show what he gathered through his many years with Connie Mack. If he can do as well as Stovall did last season, or even advance the Cleveland team beyond the mark that Stovall reached, he will have won his spurs fairly, and shown himself a real star of quick-thinking science. Should the Cleveland club go way up, and the Athletics take a tumble, all baseballdom will forever think that Davis's brains were the real prop and pillar of the world's champions; should the Cleveland club take a Brodie, all the baseball world will be as firmly convinced that Connie Mack alone was the backbone of the Athletic crew, and that his lieutenants were but dummies.

Harry Wolverton faces a puzzling task at New York, and it remains to be seen what he can do with the work that is thrown upon his shoulders. Each of the men who has tried to manage that club has been faced with the same perplexing situation: how to get winning work out of the men upon the payroll. There is something wrong somewhere. Managers come and go, and now and then, usually in the first season of their incumbency, push the Highlanders up close to, but not quite over, the goal line. The second season sees an agonizing flop, and, erelong, another manager comes on. The trouble with that club, so it has ever seemed to me, has been the unevenness of its composition. It has a long list of fine ballplayers, but they don't seem to fit right in their respective places, nor does the club ever seem to master the ins and outs of teamwork. Sometimes there will be three or four shortstops on the infield, all trying their best, but only one of them appearing in his proper place, and the net result, therefore, being jagged and rocky. Sometimes there will be second basemen at three positions on the infield and another second baseman in the outfield, with the same finish as the inevitable consequence. Now and then that club takes the stage with a shortstop on first, a third baseman on second, another third bagger at short, and one or two infielders trying to play the outfield. How comes it that the Highlanders always

load up with a large bunch of gentlemen who are supposed to be experts in just one position, and forget to acquire a full contingent of players who are versed in the other jobs? Did that team ever yet take the field with all nine of the positions occupied by men who knew their business, and who had been trained, each and every one of them, to regular work at the one place where he was stationed? That team has been manned and handled very much as if you were to take nine blacksmiths and give them nine different jobs around your premises. The nine blacksmiths might be most admirable blacksmiths, and be large, burly men of beautiful muscle, but only one of the nine would make a success while working for you, and that would be the one whom you assigned to do the blacksmithing. In all probability, the fellows whom you assigned to tend the hot-house, drive the coach, chauff the auto, and wear the butler's uniform would execute some ground and lofty tumbling.

Harry Wolverton has shown marked ability as a minor league manager, and comes with excellent credentials. Will he lead the Highlanders out of the bulrushes and into the promised land? Yes—if he can ever get the material distributed properly, and keep it where he puts it.

At this writing it looks as if Bobby Wallace will get another show with the St. Louis Browns, leaving Clark Griffith as the last of the new or shifted managers. Griff is a child of both good and evil fortune. He is lucky, because he is in right with Ban Johnson, and Ban has sworn to see that Griff never lacks for employment and big money, and he is unlucky because his best efforts seem to result in failures, his finest edifices falling round his ears when he is doing his cleverest building. I had various differences with Griff last summer, but was forced to see, before that unlucky season ended, that this little manager was the victim of the meanest, toughest, hardest luck on record. Heading a bunch of good ballplayers who were also gentlemen and honest, earnest workers, and putting every ounce of energy and determination into his job,

Griffith nevertheless was a regular loser. If there was a bit of tough luck saved up anywhere along the circuit, it burst when the Reds were in the neighborhood, and as a rule you couldn't justifiably say it was Griffith's fault, either. At Washington things should be different. Griff takes hold of a team that has been proverbially unlucky, and for that very reason the fortunes of both Griffith and the club should change. Don't be surprised if Washington is led up pretty close to the .500 mark next season—a percentage of as high as .470, with the material he has to work upon, will be a distinctive triumph for the little manager.

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I fancy we will not hear so much from our Cuban brothers in the future. They will not crow over us during the season of 1912 as they did after they flailed the lining out of the Athletics in 1910. Good ball players though they are, they have been handed the hot harpoon at last, and the Giants completed the work that the Phils began. The Quakers squeezed out of the island with five victories out of nine bouts, while the Giants, at last accounts, had gathered something like eight out of twelve. This shows that, great as the dark athletes may be, a big league team that goes down there with anything like its full strength, and pays attention to business, can defeat them. The charm of the Cubans, to my mind, is not so much in their ball playing as in their glorious hospitality, the splendid fashion in which they treat any stranger who comes to them franked with the credentials of good fellowship. They have the art of hospitality down to a fine point, and the way they entertain you can find few parallels.

Senor Jiminez, who is the main promoter of the island, knows how to make money, and also how to spend it, while the crowds and the gate receipts at his games approximate very closely those at such a city as Cincinnati. The Cuban players are a great lot of fellows, even the black ones being the most polite and courteous athletes anyone could wish to see.

An odd thing about the makeup of the Cuban teams is the fact the best catchers and pitchers are black, while the crack infielders are generally white men. Most of the outfielders are dusky chaps, Marsans of the Reds not rating as an outfielder in Cuba. This boy, who is of a splendid Spanish family, is classed as an infielder when he is at home, playing either first or second with grace and skill. Almeida, the Red third baseman, Cabrera, the fast shortstop whom the Boston Nationals may try out, and Romanach, the prettiest of the second basemen, are all as faultlessly Caucasian as Walter Johnson or Duffy Lewis. The mixture of white races in Cuba is almost as remarkable as in the United States. Marsans is a Spaniard, Almeida is a Portuguese, Cabrera is a Canary Islander, and Romanach, I believe, is a Basque.

The Cubans are stung some by the defeat the Giants gave them, and will lie low till next fall, while trying out a lot of new talent and developing a swarm of young players. They figure that they can brace up their teams during the off months, and that they will be more formidable than ever a year from now.

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Scout Billy Doyle of the St. Louis Browns says he found the real thing last summer in the way of a speed-ball pitcher, but that he fears the young man will never be seen in the faster company. "Down in a little burg in Kentucky," says the scout, "the natives told

me of a fellow they had near by, who was the Rusie of the whole region. I went out to see him, and found a typical hayseed farmer-boy, who confessed that he could throw some, and explained that he was to throw next Saturday for a team down at the crossing. I couldn't stay over till Saturday, and hence asked him to chuck me a few samples. I figured, as I stepped off the distance and donned a big glove, that this Rube might have a little speed, but I wasn't prepared for what he turned loose. The first ball he threw came in with more speed than a cannon shot, and if I hadn't by sheer luck got the big glove in front of it I'd have been killed right there. The next one went ten feet over my head and broke a barndoor sixty feet away. The third one went twenty feet to my right, tearing up a furrow in the soil, and the fourth ball, passing about five feet to the left, struck a dozing dog, breaking its ribs as if the poor pup had been hit with an axe.

" 'I ain't got 'em workin' right tuhday,' said the Rube, 'but most uv the time I kin put 'em over. Anyhow, the fellers mostly takes three strikes ruther'n take a chanst uv gittin' hit with any uv 'em.'

"I could believe it. I'd strike out in a hurry myself rather than have that catapult hit me. No chance for the Rube in the real game, though—he couldn't get control in twenty seasons. On my word, though, I hated to quit him, for such speed as he had was enough to make you forget you ever looked at Walter Johnson."