

# Ice Hockey — The Baseball of Winter

The Prospects of Our International Hockey League Fade  
Before the Coming of the Baseball Season, but  
the Hopes of 1911 are Destined to  
be the Realities of 1912

By F. C. LANE

The star of winter sport is setting in the dawn of the coming baseball season. Ice Hockey with all its court of friendly pastimes must now yield the stage to its great summer rival. But the memories of the game of ice and steel still linger with all its scintillating dash and speed and vigor. Nor can the glare of the pennant race, nor the blaze of the coming world's series wholly dim the great Canadian game and its glittering prospects for the future.

THESE are the days when ice hockey is making history. The wonderful expansion of the Canadian sport in its own country, from Halifax to Vancouver, is but an indication of its still greater expansion in the near future. Canada, from shore to shore, is ringing with the praises of its national game, while our own country is in a turmoil of enthusiasm throughout the border States—an enthusiasm fired by the zest and energy and fascination of this most popular of winter pastimes.

From Boston to Seattle, amateur hockey has won its way to the hearts of all lovers of healthful outdoor exercise as no other game has ever done since the day when baseball started on its world-wide career as the king of modern sports.

The public never grasps the importance of any event until it has passed. The early days of baseball had long gone before the game received that notice which it deserved. Ice hockey is now passing through these initial stages, when its importance is under-rated, and when even the most devoted followers of the sport have not as yet obtained a clear glimpse of the truly great future which lies before it. But any close observer of passing events cannot fail to see the ever-increasing popularity of hockey; how its matchless enthusiasm seizes on the popular fancy, and how it becomes more firmly grounded day by

day. In short, the permanent foundations are being laid which will serve as a basis for the hockey of the future, when it has come into its own, and is recognized as the undisputed king of winter sports.

There are a number of agencies working quietly, but none the less surely, toward the realization of this ideal.

Foremost among these agencies is the work of the leading American colleges and universities. The colleges have always been pioneers in the field of athletics. They have appropriated every good athletic sport in the list, and in every case under their influence such sports have been developed and perfected. The colleges have a true monopoly on several favorite games, particularly football, while they exert a powerful influence upon those pastimes which they incorporate as their own. Their influence in developing hockey may be depended upon to bring to the surface new, fascinating features in this truly wonderful game, to render it still more attractive to its already enthusiastic admirers.

It is certain that hockey is fast usurping as prominent a place among the winter sports of the leading universities as baseball holds in the spring and football in the autumn. True, the game as played in some of these institutions is still decidedly amateur. There have been wanting those years of training which

have developed a long list of football stars, but conditions are notably improved over those of a season ago, and every indication points to a still greater development in the near future.

The second great agency, far more widespread, if less conspicuous than that of the colleges, is the exploitation of ice hockey among the lesser institutions of learning. The spirit of the colleges is reflected in the host of high schools and academies, who pattern their athletic events largely on the model furnished by the universities. These schools being of almost infinite number, thus advertise a sport broadcast throughout the length and breadth of the country as perhaps no other single influence could do. There is no more favorable sign of the ultimate success of hockey than this remarkable interest shown by the schools of the northern United States.

The third great influence in the expansion of hockey is the attitude of the press. The sporting columns are devoting more and more space to the doings of the hockey world. The press was the greatest influence in the development of baseball, and it will always be the greatest influence in the growth of any sport.

The press is both the moulder and reflector of public opinion. It moulds public opinion by giving prominence to a sport, its leading players and patrons. This prominence educates the public in that sport, and teaches them its interesting features. The press is a reflector of public opinion in that no live, progressive daily would long devote space to topics which are not of interest to the public. The fact that the sporting sheets have of late devoted so much space to hockey is a sure indication of popular approval of that sport. This attitude can mean only the awakening of the press to the value of this marvelous game, and the corresponding awakening of the public to its value as a genuine sport of national and international possibilities.

And last, but by no means least of these agencies which are popularizing the great Canadian game in the United States, is the work of the arenas. These palaces of athletic sport, true homes of skating, curling and all other ice games, are ideal institutions for the development of hockey.

The modern arena is one of the most notable features in the world-wide expansion of athletic sport. Buildings of great size, requiring the outlay of capital mounting into the hundreds of thousands of dollars, these arenas are managed by men of keen business insight, who devote their energies to fostering games of strength and skill. The arena furnishes a stable foundation for the development of any sport, since it in itself is so stable. Money is not lightly invested in a costly plant without bright prospects of a permanent revenue. The leading business men of a wide-awake city do not tie up their money in costly enterprises of this nature until they feel confident that the sport for which these institutions are erected will endure.

The arenas, then, have given a permanency to hockey which it perhaps could never attain otherwise. They have done even more than this toward the ultimate establishment of hockey as our own national winter game. As they are business institutions designed solely as sources of revenue, the arenas give a business tone to all hockey contests which are conducted within their walls. Although the arenas as yet cater to amateur hockey, the conditions under which these contests are held, of necessity give them a semi-professional tone. In brief, then, the arenas have taken the all-important initial step toward the establishment of hockey as a permanent professional sport in the United States.

Strangely enough, these very arenas which are so much a type of all that is progressive in sporting circles are in a measure responsible for the backward development of hockey. Their managers have felt that the establishment of a professional hockey league in the United States would not be advisable from a business standpoint. There is no criticism of this attitude as unsportsmanlike, as these men must per force consider a project purely from the business side. Their failure, however, to properly appreciate the tremendous advantages of professional hockey, as a business venture, is another matter.

Professional hockey, it has been argued by these prominent business men, would itself be immediately popular, but—and here is the point where they

evidently fail in progressive insight into the future of the game—professional hockey would end all interest in the amateur sport. The results of this cessation in interest, so they say, would be a lessening of patronage to all except the true professional contests, and inasmuch as these contests could not be staged oftener than twice a week, the interim would be sadly unproductive of that revenue so necessary to the upkeep of such expensive structures.

This view of the case, though it sounds plausible enough, is not, I believe, well taken. The same arguments were used in baseball forty years ago, but instead of lessening the popular interest in the sport, the professionalization of baseball increased tenfold the former enthusiasm in the amateur contests. Where one amateur baseball club existed before the days of the National League, one hundred now flourish amid circumstances of far greater prosperity. Professional baseball has been the foundation of the greatness of the national game, and in this greatness the amateur clubs throughout the length and breadth of the country have shared to the full.

This same condition has been true of professional hockey in Canada. In Montreal, which is the center of the hockey world, nearly five hundred amateur clubs prosper in spite of the tremendous enthusiasm centered in the championship contests of her two great national clubs.

What has been true of baseball, and what is now true of hockey in Canada, would be equally true of hockey in the United States. Professional hockey would not lessen interest in the amateur sport. Intercollegiate hockey games would be as popular as ever, and, in fact, far more so. This becomes apparent when it is considered that placing of a game on a professional basis merely increases its publicity, advertises it more extensively, brings it to the popular attention more thoroughly than could otherwise be accomplished, and, in short, creates for it that popular demand which no amount of amateur playing could ever do.

Intercollegiate hockey contests draw crowds of patrons because those patrons are interested in their Alma Mater, or

have friends who are interested. They have some special desire to see some particular contest, and would have the same desire whether professional hockey existed or not. They would, however, turn out in greater numbers to see an intercollegiate contest if the professional game were also played, simply because they would know more about hockey, and would be more interested in all its games.

The Baseball Magazine is an institution devoted to athletic sport. It has taken a keen interest in the progress of hockey. Under its direct supervision a large amount of preliminary work has been done preparatory to the establishment of a permanent hockey organization in the United States.

Several men prominent in sporting circles have been glad to become identified with this movement, and although the organization is still informal, proceedings have been carried far enough to insure the success of the movement in the coming season.

The labor to achieve even this measure of progress has been attended with supreme difficulty. The mere mental inertia of the public which must always be overcome in launching any new scheme is a formidable obstacle at all times. Then, too, the natural caution of business men who insist upon a knowledge of every feature of the investment before launching their capital is a factor which demands the most careful attention.

There is no lack of prominent individuals whole-heartedly interested in the progress of athletic sport, particularly when it is so flashy and spectacular a game as ice hockey, but the mere act of meeting these men, properly presenting the situation to them and giving them time for deliberation requires an amount of effort and expenditure of time which make it impossible to as yet publish the definite conclusions of the committee appointed for this purpose.

In all this labor the Baseball Magazine has had no selfish financial interest whatever. It has taken the initiative simply because the field was ripe, and no other reputable concern or business interest seemed ready to take the first and most difficult step. As a national pub-

lishing concern, particularly interested in the promotion of athletic sport of all kinds, it could not overlook the pressing need for action in the hockey field.

The friends of this wonderful game may rest assured that its case will be carefully heard, and everything done which can be done to launch it on a successful season next fall. The mass of details which must be considered in this venture have been largely attended to, and will shortly be completed. It is unfortunate that the season is so far advanced as to render the establishment of a hockey league at this time impracticable. Another year, however, will find the field more widely extended, and more ready to receive a new game in its entirety. It will find the public more interested, and the facilities of larger and better equipped rinks more satisfactory.

In other words, the cause of international hockey has not suffered by a temporary check in its advance, but will be all the better able to go forward on the career of its expansion in the fall of 1912.

The Baseball Magazine wishes to urge the many thousands of admirers of this most spectacular game to continue

in their labor of making it more popular, and better understood among the American people. Every agency which works to this end is encouraging a worthy enterprise which will be fully appreciated, if not understood, by the thousands of loyal supporters of hockey, who will throng its arenas in the future. No game can prosper without the co-operation of the public, and this co-operation is especially needful in those early days when a sport is first placed on a professional basis.

The dawn of the baseball season is now almost here. The strength of the winter is broken. The season of hockey is now fast on the decline, while the season of its great summer rival is all but at hand. The Baseball Magazine will not forget, however, the prince of winter sports, even in the rush of the pennant race and the enthusiasm of the coming world's series. It will work quietly and unobtrusively, but none the less earnestly, toward the realization of its great ambition—the establishment of hockey on a permanent professional basis in this country, and this ambition we feel certain now is destined to be realized in full measure in the fall of 1912.

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