

David L. Fultz, President of the Baseball Players' Fraternity

The Story of a Remarkable Career in Varied Athletic Ventures—A Great New Enterprise and its Prospects

By C. P. STACK

No recent topic in baseball has begun to receive the notice given the Ball Players' Fraternity. The new organization has been quoted and misquoted (principally the latter) for so long that the time has seemed ripe for a little genuine information on the subject. To this end the Baseball Magazine is conducting on another page of this issue a department devoted to the activities of the new fraternity. Not a little of the rather hysterical criticism which has been showered upon the order has taken the form of personal comments on its President. We believe that our readers will be interested to learn something about Mr. Fultz, what he has done and what he stands for. For many years Mr. Fultz was known as the man who would not play Sunday baseball. This was a conscientious scruple in line with his high standard of character and this same high standard has been evidenced in all his business transactions. In his day one of the greatest baseball and football players the country has known Mr. Fultz is still an acknowledged authority in various branches of athletic sport, a man in every way fitted by experience, talent and training for the high task he has set himself, in laboring in the interests of the professional baseball player.

THERE is a large black dot on the map of Virginia which marks the site of the thriving city of Staunton. Staunton is a town of some 20,000 people in the heart of the beautiful Shenandoah valley, a region which witnessed some of the bloodiest campaigns of the Civil War. Its natural advantages as the center of a rich, agricultural section speedily erased the effects of that devastating conflict and Staunton has shared to the full in the wave of prosperity which has accompanied the reviving industries of the South. But to no single factor does she owe greater prominence than to the exploits of certain of her citizens.

Woodrow Wilson was born at Staunton and we will all allow he has gained some little distinction. The President-Elect will be glad to know, if he does not know it already, that another of his townsmen has also been prominent in the

public eye of late. And that other noted citizens of this quiet Virginia city is our old friend, David L. Fultz, big league ball player, football star, college coach and referee, lawyer, athletic expert and president of the recently organized and much commented upon Ball Players' Fraternity.

David Fultz, the subject of this sketch, was born as we have indicated at Staunton, in 1877. Here he lived the usual uneventful life of that region until he left his southern home to attend a northern college. Mr. Fultz dismisses all these early years of his life with the simple statement "nothing happened." This is his usual unassuming way of referring to himself, but it does not, we will add, do justice to the subject.

I asked Mr. Fultz when he first began to play baseball. He laughed and said: "How old is a child when he first begins to walk? Some people say they have

played baseball as long as they can remember. I think I beat that record. I am quite confident I tried to play the game when I was two years old or under and I can't remember that far back.

In the days when Mr. Fultz was grasping the scrub diamonds of the amateur teams about town he usually appeared at shortstop. True, he also occupied practically every other position on the diamond except the pitcher's box but shortstop was his favorite. Having graduated from the schools in the district he entered the military academy at Staunton where he took an early and conspicuous part in the athletic life of the institution. From the first he played football brilliantly, always preferring it to baseball, but he was a leading member of both football and baseball teams from the beginning until the close of his course. Having prepared in all the branches which fit for a higher education, Mr. Fultz left home to enter Brown University at Providence. He was largely induced to make this step through a friend of his, a Mr. Donovan, also a resident of Staunton, who had previously entered Brown. At the Rhode Island college Mr. Fultz speedily carved out a name for himself along athletic lines. Entering in the fall of 1894 he made a marked sensation in football although he did not obtain a place on the Varsity team until the second year of his course. He did, however, hold down the center field position on the Brown baseball team for his first year and played second base on the Varsity for the three remaining years of his course.

In his Sophomore year he was elected captain of the baseball team and during this season Brown was a grand success in college baseball. Only four games were lost in a total of twenty-six. Brown split even with Harvard in a series of four games, took three straight from Yale, two from the University of Pennsylvania and defeated such strong clubs as Dartmouth, Chicago and Holy Cross. In his junior year Mr. Fultz was re-elected captain of the baseball team, an honor which would have been conferred upon him the final season as well were it not for the fact that he was called upon in his senior year to captain the football team.

Mr. Fultz's feats on the gridiron were even superior to his fine record on the

diamond. After his Freshman year he played continuously on the Varsity at left halfback. Brown, while no match in those days for such teams as the Big Four were wont to put in the field, played a strong game at all times. She tied Yale one season and lost to the Blue in another game by a score of 18 to 14. Much of this success was due to the left halfback of the team who was throughout one of the most consistently brilliant players Brown has ever produced.

Mr. Fultz graduated in the class of '98 and received the well-won recommendation of his fellow students in his election to the office of permanent vice-president of his class. Up to a short time before the diploma of Ph.B. was handed him he had mapped out no definite plans for the future. But in a way his first job was cut out for him by an offer from the Philadelphia National Baseball Club. Fultz's roommate this year was Bill Lauder who had played most brilliantly at third base. Bill refused to sign a contract unless Fultz would go too, so the Philadelphia club was obliged to sign both players in order to get the one they wanted. This was no reflection on Fultz as a player. At that time Napoleon Lajoie was in his prime, a prime we must confess which has lasted remarkably well, and the chance for an unknown college second baseman to fill the shoes of the great Larry was slight indeed.

With Lajoie in the infield there was no club who needed a second baseman less than Philadelphia, so it is not to be wondered at that they were not so anxious to secure Fultz as they were his roommate. "Up to this time," he says, "I had never considered playing professional baseball. I had never supposed I was good enough, but I was glad to get the chance and accepted the very fair offer that was made me without hesitation." As might be expected under the circumstances, Mr. Fultz played most of his first season on the bench. He took part in some fifteen or sixteen games with a good deal of credit, but his chance to fill in at second base was small indeed.

In the following season of '99 he was sold to Baltimore, which, while still in the National League, was in the final stages of dissolution. John McGraw was manager and his scrappy temperament was even more in evidence than than it

has since become. Under McGraw, Fultz played first, second and third base as well as shortstop. He also played left field, right field and center field. For some reason at present unknown he neither caught nor pitched.

In 1900 Fultz was sold to Milwaukee, at that time one of the clubs in the fast rising American League. This pilgrimage brought the youthful utility man in contact with Connie Mack who was even in that remote day one of the shrewdest men in baseball. When Connie invaded Philadelphia in 1901 he took Fultz with him as a regular player and stationed him in center field. In 1902, which was Mr. Fultz's best season in professional baseball, Philadelphia won the American League pennant. In the fall of that season there was no player more sought after than he. Flattering offers from several clubs came his way, a particularly advantageous one from the Highlanders. The reserve clause was then a thing unknown. When a player's contract ceased he became a free agent. Mr. Farrell, who had taken charge of affairs in the American League at New York was spending a good deal of money in building up the club. He offered Fultz a far more liberal contract than Connie Mack could meet and the famous center fielder became a member of Clarke Griffith's Highlanders.

Fultz remained three years with New York, years in which his fine record was much marred by accidents. He had a great deal of trouble with his legs a good share of the time and this was a severe handicap. Nevertheless, his ability as a player was too well recognized to permit of his retirement at that time. The opportunity to manage a championship team, the prize to which every major leaguer aspires, came to Mr. Fultz in the season of 1904. President Navin, of Detroit, was at that time making a strenuous effort to build up a winning club. He thought Mr. Fultz would fill the bill very nicely. There is no doubt he was right, but Navin banked upon a player-manager and counted a great deal upon Fultz's ability as a regular member of the club. Through all his baseball career (as in fact in all other activities) Mr. Fultz has maintained a high standard of honor. He could not conscientiously allow Mr. Navin to be misinformed as to his physi-

cal condition and he frankly told the Detroit President of the trouble he had had with his legs and what he considered his true prospects. With this fair statement of the case the deal did not materialize much to Mr. Farrell's displeasure, as he had scented a profitable trade with his valuable, though somewhat crippled center fielder.

Fultz's baseball career came to a sudden and rather painful termination on the thirtieth of September, 1905. In chasing a high fly he had a violent collision with Norman Elberfeld then covering shortstop, who was in pursuit of the same fly. Elberfeld's head proved the harder of the two, although he suffered a fractured nose. Fultz's jaw was broken by contact with Elberfeld's compact skull and the curtain immediately rang down on what was to prove the final season of his baseball career. For several winters Mr. Fultz had been prosecuting the study of law, whenever he could find time, and in this same season of 1905 he completed his course and was admitted to the bar. He had graduated from the diamond and embarked at once on his successful career as a lawyer. But although his main efforts were now centered on the occupation he had chosen as his life work, he still retained his full share of interest in athletic sports.

In the years when he was playing baseball Mr. Fultz had also played professional football in the fall. For three seasons he was with the Homestead Athletic Club at Pittsburg. For two seasons he was captain and manager of this team of steel workers and had some strenuous experiences. At different times he coached the football teams at the University of Missouri, Lafayette, Brown and New York University. He also coached baseball teams at Lafayette, New York University, Columbia, Brown and the Naval School of Annapolis.

For several seasons Mr. Fultz has officiated as umpire or referee at some of the leading football games of the year. It is only necessary to state that a successful official at a big annual football contest like the Harvard-Yale game must be an absolute master of the football rules. For only an expert can successfully conduct one of these nerve-racking contests.

Although Mr. Fultz's athletic career

has never been excelled for brilliancy and diversity, he is probably most widely known for the commanding position he has taken in recent baseball politics. The Ball Players' Fraternity is an organization which has long been considered impracticable but the quiet assurance with which it came into being and its steadfast and resolute progress since that date have both put an end to doubtful speculation as to its utility. Although there still persists a somewhat modified spirit of hostility against the new association, this hostility rises merely from jealousy of its influence, ignorance of its true motives or partisan prejudice.

"I have been dreaming of the Ball Players' Fraternity for twelve years," said Mr. Fultz. "It is true that my own career was for the most part free from many of the difficulties which come to the ball player. Still I had my grievances too. When I first joined the Philadelphia club I was given a fair salary for a beginner, one that satisfied me. I also received an agreement to the effect that I should be paid at least as much the ensuing year. When I received my contract, however, for my second season it was exactly one-half what had been agreed upon. This initiation into the ways of the magnates was an experience I have never forgotten.

"However, the main reason for my interest in a movement of this kind was not through any troubles of my own for in the remainder of my major league career I was always protected by contract. But my experience brought me in touch with so many grievances of fellow ball players that I felt as long ago as twelve years that an organization of this kind was necessary. The project was, however, little more than a project until some three seasons ago when several ball players approached me with a proposition to organize the fraternity. A campaign along these lines is always a difficult one to negotiate successfully. Our plans matured slowly and it was not until the beginning of the past season that the movement was definitely set in operation. The trouble of the Detroit players arising over the Ty Cobb incident gave the movement a considerable impetus but it was not, as many people had imagined, the cause of that movement. As a matter of fact, the entire

plan had been launched some time earlier.

"I have only two ambitions which I should care to discuss. One is that I hope to succeed in the profession of law which I have chosen and the second is that the Ball Players' Fraternity, in which I have been so much interested, will prove to be all that the directors and myself hope it will be. There is certainly a great work for it to do and by going about this work quietly but persistently, I have every faith that we may accomplish much to the best interests of the ball player and the game which he represents."

It remained for Mr. Fultz, laboring in his usual unassuming manner, to accomplish what many others had thought of but dismissed as too difficult an undertaking. It is notoriously impracticable to get any large group of ball players to agree upon a given subject, but Mr. Fultz's success is shown clearly enough by the fact that every regular player in organized baseball with the exception of three or four individuals, has united with the fraternity.

At its most recent meeting the directors of the fraternity elected Mr. Fultz president. This was simply a token of the appreciation they felt for the conscientious labors he had expended in their behalf and an acknowledgment of their faith in his strict integrity. At this meeting it was a characteristic action on the part of Mr. Fultz to insist upon receiving considerably less salary for his services than was offered by the directors, and to voluntarily bind himself to the strictest possible supervision in the expenditure of the limited amount of money at his disposal.

To the 286 major league ball players who are members of the fraternity it is a conspicuous advantage that the conduction of their affairs is in the hands of a man who has had so long and intimate an acquaintance with their troubles, who has experienced all the trials of the professional ball player, who is of irreproachable honesty in his dealings, who is an expert in various lines of sport, and who combines with his other talents that intimate knowledge of legal matters so essential to the proper handling of the many problems which confront the new organization.