
Ballplayer Diplomats

"Few people realize," says big Jack Rowan, who has been in several leagues, widely scattered on the map, "that a ball player has to be an Al diplomat, politician, and handshaker. If he wasn't, he'd surely get into serious trouble time and again, and the news columns would record lots of rows, riots, and untimely deaths of gentlemanly athletes. A ball player may, perhaps, live and make his salary in Texas one year, in Ohio the next, and Florida the following season; wherever he goes, he is, especially in the little towns, a prominent character, and must hold conversation with hundreds of the local people. He must always keep his wits about him. He must always remember not to make any remarks to offend the fiery Southerner, the grim-featured Texan, the surly Westerner, or the Northern patriot, according to his temporary location; he must always seem to be in full harmony with the ideas and beliefs of the townspeople, and he must never let his own sympathies or youthful associations crowd themselves forward. He may be Southern-born, and yet be playing in a Northern city when the natives are celebrating in honor of Grant or Sherman; he may be the son of some Union soldier, and the fortunes of the game may put him on a Southern team which has to march in some parade commemorating Jefferson Davis or Robert Lee. And yet, no matter what he thinks, where he lives, who his father was, or what may have been his school-day teachings, he must smother his inward sentiments and chime in with the townfolk—or take some awful chances. Are ball players diplomats? Well, did you ever hear of a case where a Southern player got into trouble among Northern patriots, or a Northern player got unpopular among the sons of Dixie? Finest diplomats that ever lived, and deserving, I think, a lot of credit for it, too!"