

## PENNANT PROSPECTS

NOT since the golden days of 1908, when half the teams of each major league came steaming down to the wire in an almost inextricable mixup, has there been such a flag race as the one now going on in the National League, and, for that matter, it's some little time since the three leading teams of the American League were so closely bunched, with such excellently balanced chances. The National League race is much the better of the two, for, when the halfway post was reached, every one of the eight clubs still had a right to be ambitious. The difference between the first and eighth place clubs in the National League, incredible as it might seem, was less than the difference between the first positions in the American League; the leading National League team actually had a percentage of .542, the smallest, possibly, that the leader in either league has ever had, while the tail-end team—which, incidentally, was the world's champion club of last fall—held a standing of .434—108 points between them.

The leading team in the American League stood .641, the tail-end club .365—276 points between them. Three clubs were down and out, all show for this season ended, and another team was little better off. The three leading teams, however, had every prospect for a great race down the stretch, and the chances for a huge revival of baseball interest, in both leagues, were never better.

In the National League, with eight teams tied up like a convention of fish-worms, the chance for newcomers, for youngsters of great natural ability, was one such as hadn't been offered in many, many seasons. With the teams thus balanced; one husky hitter, one corking good pitcher, might well suffice to turn the whole tide of events. The team that got hold of such slugger or such pitcher by August 1st could pretty nearly walk through the herd, and there would be almost no chance to stop that team, unless some other club had the same good fortune: the discovery of a mighty hitter or a superior slabman.

In the American League, three teams  
*(Continued on page 120)*

## PENNANT PROSPECTS

*(Continued from page 118)*

were in such position that the accession of a great batter or pitcher would probably give the lucky club a margin over the other two. Should such marvel either in batting or pitching be found by one of the five other clubs, the best that club could do would be to knock one of the three leaders out of its championship ambitions—there would be small chance for even a .500 point club to shove up through the ruck and carry off the flag.

### AMERICAN LEAGUE

Reviewing the three top notch teams carefully—Chicago, Boston and Detroit—it seems practically impossible, even at this point of the season, to select one of the three as a sure thing flag winner. The White Sox were, on July 15th, still on top, but the Red Sox were at their heels, while Detroit was only three games away. Most of the close judges were inclined to give preference to the Red Sox, for these excellent reasons:

All of the team's natural hitters, several of whom had not been delivering goods properly in the early weeks, were going well, and runs were being scored or batted round as they ought to be.

The reserve strength of the Red Sox, long dormant, had at last come forth, and the team was braced up accordingly.

The addition of Jack Barry to the Red Sox gave Boston an infield that was cemented and steadied, far better than at any time during the earlier season.

Harmony, apparently at least, had resumed full sway, and all the petty wrangling of May and June had been forgotten.

The powerful pitching staff of the Boston team was fit for any endeavor, and ready to go down the stretch with all sails set.

In short, it was hard to see how the Boston club could fail to be stronger, and to put up a more effective game, during the latter half of the season, than during May and June.

In figuring the Red Sox as logical superiors to the White Sox and the Tigers, the Boston backers drew their inferences this way: The White Sox had brought all their strength into action

*(Continued on page 122)*

## PENNANT PROSPECTS

*(Continued from page 120)*

early. While the Red Sox were still struggling with adverse gales, Comiskey's men were getting into the fullest swing of their powers; they played by far their finest game in the first half of the season, and could hardly hold such a pace during the latter sessions.

Detroit, so the Boston backers argued, was what might be called a forced growth, a team playing beyond its speed, carried by the great work of a couple of stars, reinforced by temporary speed shown by other much inferior performers. Like the White Sox, the Tigers showed all the strength they had, or could possibly display, early in the summer, and during August and September the Tigers, like the White Sox, should be going backward, Boston should be going ever forward.

The Boston argument, especially since the purchase of Barry, looks extremely strong; looks, in fact, like the most logical and likely reading of the future. But the White Sox and the Tigers are surely entitled to their say, and this is how their supporters expound the situation:

White Sox: Rowlands has established an all-season team, not merely one that might make an early spurt, then fall away to nothingness. The White Sox are strong and well-balanced—much better balanced than is even imagined by the Boston critics. It is a club that will keep on hitting all season; its pitching staff is likely to gain strength, rather than fall away, and the catching is far superior to that of the Boston team.

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