



LA84

Foundations  
GRIFFITH'S SUPERSTITION

“ONE of the queerest superstitions ever encountered,” says Jimmy Callahan, “was that of Clark Griffith concerning shutout games. The Little Fox, who was one of the cleverest and most versatile pitchers that the game has ever known, was strongly against blanking the other side. Somehow or other, during his minor league career, he had imbibed the idea that it was extremely unlucky to shut out a team—that ill-fortune would surely repay his unkindness, and that he would lose the next game as a penalty. Hence Griff, while he sincerely strove to win his games, would also fight hard to give the enemy one little run as a salve for their bruises in the ninth inning. Of course, when it was a 1 to 0 situation, and handing out a run would mean lying up the score, Griff would go right along and

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make it a shutout, but even then he would sigh and moan and make a general pest of himself around the clubhouse, with predictions of defeat for his next time on the slab.

"The warriors of the old team, a jolly gang—Lange, Everitt, Dahlen and the rest of that merry bunch—fully understood Griffith's superstition, and respected it. You would have been convulsed if you could have seen the windup of a Griffith game. Suppose he had a team 8 to 0 in eight innings, and the enemy was taking their last time at bat. Well, Griff would lob one over at their first batter. He, of course, would kill the ball, and any infielder at whom it might be hit would dodge as if he saw death approaching on a pale horse. The outfielder to whom the ball now addressed itself would come up slowly, and the hitter would take second. Next man, perhaps, would roll a grounder to third, and the third baseman would toss to first, never trying for the baserunner. Once on third, the fellow would score on a hit, for Griff would just toss the ball over, large as a balloon. The run, once scored, Griff would close up the shop, return to his normal skill, and make monkeys of the enemy.

"One afternoon we all nearly expired with merriment, and Griff went wild with rage. We had Pittsburgh stung 11 to 0, and in the ninth Griff threw a soft one to a Pirate slugger. He drove it half a mile to left. As it chanced, a kid fielder, who was on trial with the team, was out there that day. Knowing nothing of Griff's superstition, and being wild to show his mettle, the boy dashed after that ball and pulled it in. Griff, purpling, threw the next batter a ball big as a barn. Biff—and it soared out for the bleachers. Again that eager kid charged after it—and got it. And when the last man also fell on a soft one, and that fool boy, for the third time, galloped to a successful catch, Griffith went gibberingly mad."

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