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SIDELIGHTS ON THE SEASON

Nobody could kick about the fielding.
In fact, the fielding has grown to a stage
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of mechanical perfection where it frequently takes the breath away, and dazzles the spectators into a sort of awe-stricken, gasping silence. The stars of thirty years ago made some wonderful plays, no doubt, but the fielding glove has made the star plays of the long ago a cinch for the modern fielder, and has permitted plays that the oldtime artist would have been physically unable to accomplish. During the past season, all sorts of magnificent fielding stunts were pulled off by all the clubs, and the manual fielding standard was set extremely high. There is nothing to be done about the fielding, and there are up suggestions to be made—it's too near perfection now.

When it came to the fast-thinking end of the field-work, that's different. Schalk of the White Sox is about the only modern catcher who imbues the game with his personality as did many of the great backstops of the past, and Schalk, in comparison with some of these old marvels, is handicapped by smaller size. The fielding records then and now count for nothing; if Flint, Boyle, Bennett, Ewing and Kelly had been armed with the great fat glove when they began their careers, their records would have been as high, and what a difference in their work as thinking players!

Records, again, are deceptive in the cases of the modern and oldtime pitchers. Apparently, the old boys were far livelier in the field, and got many more grounders than the present slabsters, but in those days they went nine innings per game, as a rule, and weren't changed every little while. Reduced to a basis of nine-inning work, many of the 1916 hurlers were as active in their fielding play as the oldtimers—and some, alas, seemed to think that pitchers have nothing to do but pitch, and ought not to bother with grounders or hot liners.

Both Eddie Collins and John Evers had—for them—poor seasons, and the second base work was, on the whole, inferior in character to that done when these two matchless pippins are leading the parade.

The third basing in both leagues was

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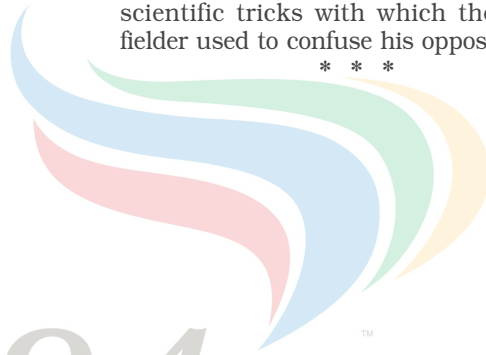
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superb manually, but not marked by much brilliant thinking.

Some rattling good shortstopping was visible, with rather more speed and brainy science than was in evidence at either second or third.

The outfielding approximated the very limit of glove-handed perfection, and it is doubtful if there ever were more real hits stolen from the batsmen than the outfielders grabbed during the 1916 season. Only a few of these wonderful fly-catchers, however, threw surprisingly well, and only a few of them worked the scientific tricks with which the oldtime fielder used to confuse his opposition.

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