



Upper View: President Hempstead, of the New York Gintts; Left: John Foster, Secretary; Right: The Late John T. Brush, Who Made the Giants the Greatest Baseball Property in the World; Lower Centre: Manager John J. McGraw

My Pet Ambition

How the Season of 1916 Brought the Realization of a
Twelve Years' Hope

BY JOHN J. McGRAW

Every baseball player has his pet ambition. And so has every manager. John McGraw now admits that he has entertained a pet ambition for many years, and what is more to the point, 1916 brought its realization.

EVERY ball player has his pet ambition. Usually this ambition takes the form of leading his league in batting or making the record

number of put outs at his position or some similar freak fancy. Ty Cobb had the unusual wish to lead his league ten years in succession, and I was rather

sorry that he couldn't quite reach the goal this season, although it must be confessed that he has had more than his share of the high places. Depend upon it, every ball player has his own ambition according to his ability, and every manager has his as well. Now that it has actually happened, I am willing to confess, that my pet ambition was to manage a team that broke the world's record for consecutive victories.

That old mark of twenty straight games has proved an impossible mark for over thirty years. In that time many managers have had a try for it. Away back in 1904, I believe it was, I had my first glimpse of the mark. In that year the Giants won eighteen straight games, and I was beginning to have high hopes when the series collapsed like a soap bubble. One little defeat, however narrow and close, spoils the whole thing.

I had come within two of it, but the old mark stood.

Fielder Jones made a spirited dash for the bunting along in 1906 and beat me out. Fielder annexed nineteen straight—within one of the bull's eye. But that was his farthest north.

Clark Griffith went on the war path a few seasons ago and carried things with a rush for seventeen straight—when he was thrown for a loss within sight of the goal posts. And I had my chance again this season.

I had waited a matter of some twelve years for another good try, and had almost forgotten that I had ever nursed such an ambition. But it was there all right, tucked away somewhere in the back of my head, and when the Giants pulled themselves together after a disastrous spring beginning and tore things open in the West, I began to sit up and take notice once more. At first I was merely relieved to know that we had at last got on the winning road, but when we had won twelve games I began to take account of stock. For a time I wouldn't admit it even to myself that I had that old Providence mark in view. I kidded myself into the belief that I wanted to break our own record of eighteen straight. But there isn't much difference between eighteen and twenty, and if we could have reached that mark

—but what's the use. We broke after winning seventeen straight games, which was a good little run in itself, but a bad disappointment just the same.

I had about forgotten my pet ambition along in September. I had come near the mark a dozen years ago, and had to wait all that time for another distant sight of the goal. There was no telling how many more years I would have to wait, and perhaps I would never get another opportunity even to approach the mark. But baseball is a game of uncertainties. Instead of waiting a dozen years more my chance showed up in the very same season. I knew that the acquisition of Herzog would mend our infield, and that Zimmerman ought to add a much needed punch. I felt confident in our outfield and had a world of interest in young Holke. But I had no idea that we would start on another winning streak. Such a thing was unheard of in baseball.

Well we did it. It's all history now. We reached that old mark for the first time in thirty-two years, and we didn't stop there. We kept right on climbing while the going was good and added a few more games for good measure. The next manager who tries to break the record will have to look not at a twenty-game mark, but at twenty-six. Far be it from me to say how long that record will last. It may be smashed next year. But I hardly think it will. Everything has to break just right to make such a sweep in the major leagues, and everything doesn't break just right very often.

I have been asked how the Giants of the present compare in my opinion with other great teams in the National League. I believe they would hold their own with any team in the world in such form as they showed when they were breaking the record in September. Personally, I believe they would have defeated any team in the world. But empty predictions don't get very far.

The team that comes first to view in the National League is the old Cub combine.

As manager I am perhaps prejudiced in favor of my own men. I naturally would be. But I believe our infield would compare well with that of the old Cub machine without going into details,

and I think our outfield is considerably better.

Burns is a great outfielder. His record has suffered in the opinion of those who know little of baseball. As a matter of fact Burns is much too good a man to play in the lead-off position. But I have no man on the team who is really fitted for that role. It handicaps Burns to lead off as he is naturally a free hitter, and having to wait them out a good deal bothers him. Then a lead-off man usually comes up with no one on the bases, and the pitcher is able to give him undivided attention. With a man on he could not do this.

I have always had a friendly interest in Bennie Kauff. He started the season under the hardest possible conditions. The newspapers made it a tough job for Bennie, the crowd used to kid him a good deal, and the opposing pitchers would break their backs trying to show him up. Bennie had a hard row to hoe. But he showed me that he has it in him to be a great all-round player. I shall be surprised next year if Bennie doesn't come close to the .300 mark, and perhaps go beyond it. And he is one of the fastest men in the league. His peculiar style of catching the ball has been criticized. But that doesn't bother me in the least. I have no interest in how my outfielders catch the ball so long as they catch it.

I have felt that Robertson could have made himself a greater player than he is if he had some of Ty Cobb's ambition. Robertson has a good throwing arm, is tremendously fast and is a strong hitter. He actually batted over .300, so his work can speak for itself. But I believe when he corrects a tendency to pull his hits into right field he will go much beyond that figure. All in all, I have an unusually competent outfield, better, I believe, than the Cubs ever had in the days of their glory.

My pitching staff has proved my big problem. I have not yet found anyone to take the place of Mathewson, and it is not likely that I shall. Mattys are as rare as Ty Cobbs. My pitchers' are all good. Schupp finished the season in unhittable form. But I couldn't consistent-

ly expect him to keep up that pace indefinitely. Tesreau is big and strong and should pull through in fine shape next year. Perritt is a willing worker and is a good pitcher with a great deal of stuff. Benton had a good year, and I have always admired Slim Sallee's cool, confident style.

I have felt that the team I managed in 1906 was about the best I ever had under my charge. At any rate I was more certain of a pennant in 1906 than I have ever been before or since. But Mathewson had diphtheria, and McGann broke his arm, and we had a series of accidents that completely disrupted the club. Those things are always likely to happen in baseball.

We did well as it was to stay in the first division. It cured me of predicting pennants. I leave that for the newspaper boys. I have learned by sad experience that a good many things enter into the winning of pennants.

The only point where my team leaves something to be desired is the lack of a top-notch pitcher like Matty or Alexander. In 1905, for instance, Matty won 36 games, if I remember, and McGinnity won as many. Those two men between them carried the club to victory. I have good pitchers, but no one man on whom I could count for work like that. Such men would have bolstered a weak club to the front.

What we shall do next season I will leave next season to say. Barring accidents, it looks as though we would put a good club into the race. Behind the bat we have two good catchers in Rariden and McCarty. McCarty is a slugger and a valuable man. Rariden had to work too hard this year. I felt sorry for him when I used to call on him to catch, especially toward the last of the season. He hasn't the build to stand work like that, and the long strain told. But he proved himself a grand backstop.

Nineteen hundred and sixteen has brought me the realization of my pet ambition. Perhaps I ought not to complain whatever happens in 1917. Still with our powerful club it would seem—but I promised not to make any predictions.