

Who's Who on the Diamond

Thumb Nail Sketches of Baseball's Leading Stars

LESLIE G. NUNAMAKER

ALTHOUGH Les Nunamaker has helped win one pennant and one world's series, is known among baseball players as a steady, heady catcher, and among pitchers as a super dangerous hitter, he has never been rated at his real baseball value.

For example, glance over his work in 1916. That season he caught 91 games for the Yankees, handled the pitchers in such superb style that the New York staff was rated as nearly the best in the country, and hit for .296, including many extra base wallops. And this season, for the St. Louis Browns, Nuny is going better than ever before in his career.

Les was born in Lincoln, Neb., August 25, 1889. He started his diamond career with the city league there, playing first base occasionally as well as catching, and his batting attracted the attention of the local Western League owners, who signed him in 1909. That season he hit for .278 in 26 games, but was sent to Dubuque and the following year was tried by the Chicago Cubs.

After finishing the season with Bloomington he was signed by the Boston Americans in 1911 and remained with them until 1914, helping the Red Sox win the flag in 1912.

He played most of the season of 1914 with the Yankees and remained with them until this year, when Miller Huggins traded him, with others, to the St. Louis Browns.

In 1915 Les batted only .225 and appeared to be slowing up. In fact many critics insisted that his big league career was about finished. But in 1916 he had the best year of his career and this season has been one of the most valuable members of the Browns.

Nunamaker is a strapping big fellow, 6 feet 1½ inches tall, and weighs close to 200 pounds. He is slow in action but a steady, willing catcher, knows pitchers, and can bust that old onion so it travels when he connects.

HAROLD W. CHASE

FIFTEEN years ago a nineteen-year-old college kid cavorted around first base on the Santa Clara, Cal., college team,

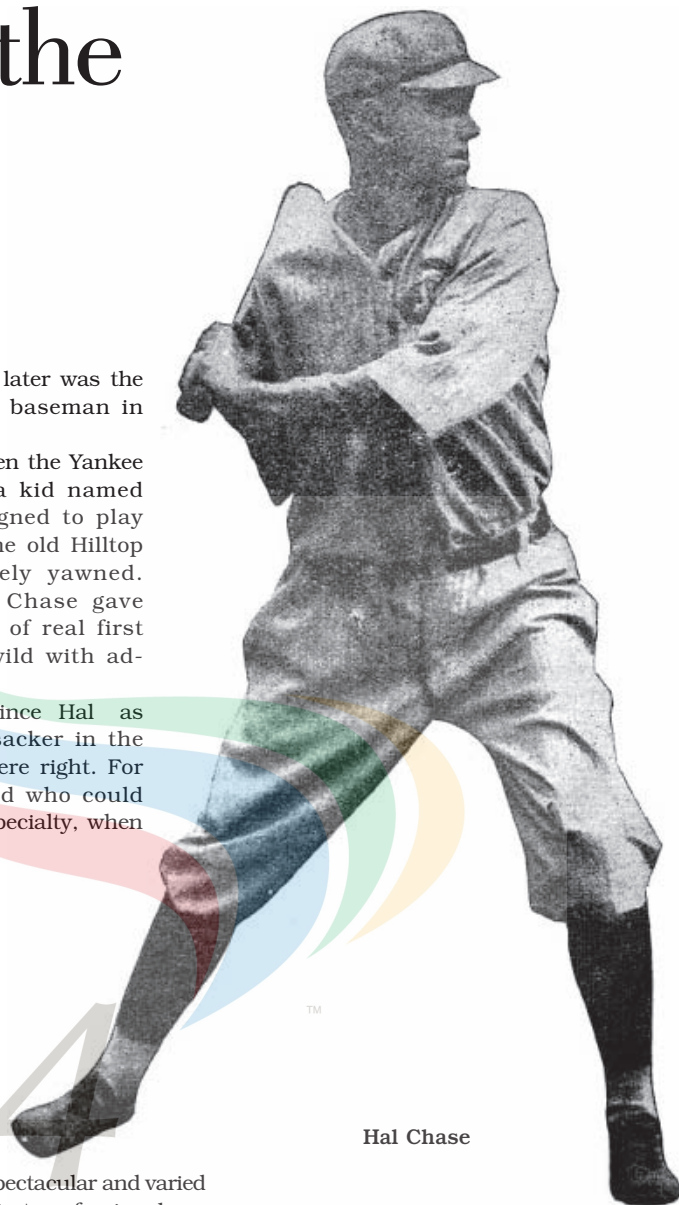
and just three years later was the most talked-of first baseman in the game.

Back in 1905 when the Yankee fans learned that a kid named Chase had been signed to play the initial bag on the old Hilltop grounds they merely yawned. That spring when Chase gave them an exhibition of real first basing they went wild with admiration.

They claimed Prince Hal as the greatest first sacker in the world. And they were right. For no player ever lived who could equal Chase at his specialty, when at his best. Hal is one of the most graceful player in action who ever wore spikes, and what he doesn't know about playing the bag could be written on a mosquito's wing with a white-wash brush.

Chase has had a spectacular and varied baseball career. His first professional engagement was in 1903, with the Victoria club. His first real test was with the Los Angeles club the following year, when he hit .279, stole 45 bases and astounded the league with his flashy fielding. And his first nation-wide prominence was gained from the moment he stepped onto a major league ball ground, in 1905.

In 1908, his fourth year with the Yankees, Chase was made manager of the club, and dissension in the club followed, to such an extent that he left the Yanks and played with the Stockton club of California, toward the end of the season. He rejoined the Yankees in 1909 and continued with them until 1913, when he was traded to Chicago. In 1914 he jumped to the Buffalo Feds, and for a time after baseball peace was declared he remained unsigned by any of the clubs and for a time it looked as though his career was finished. Matty, however, signed him with Cincinnati in 1916, and to prove that the Old Master hadn't made a mistake in giving him a chance, Hal went forth and led the



Hal Chase

league in batting, hitting for .339.

Like a good many other geniuses, Chase is temperamental and has proved a troublesome player to handle, at times. But he has gotten along with Matty in great style and is still the most finished first sacker in the game.

FREDERICK C. MERKLE

PROBABLY no ball-player has been more unfairly censured than Fred Merkle. Ten years ago, then a rookie on McGraw's great club that was then fighting tooth and nail for the pennant, Merkle thoughtlessly failed to touch second base. This little act of omission cost the Giants the game, pennant and thousands of dollars. It brought Merkle more publicity than any other single baseball act, won him the nick-name of 'Bone-head,' cost him probably a hundred percentage points in his batting the following year, when his batting fell to .191 and threat-

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ened to destroy a most promising big league career.

Such is fate. Dozens of players had been failing to touch second base for years, after cracking out the winning hit in the last inning. They escaped the title 'bone-head,' though, because no Evers had brought the fact to an umpire's attention before and declared them out.

Merkle later helped win three pennants for the Giants but this will be forgotten will still linger in their memories.

As a matter of dry fact Merkle has always been a smart player, the exact antithesis of the bone-head type. For years he was counted one of the best first sackers in the game. Always a long hitter, a quick thinking, sound defensive player and a good base stealer, he long ago repaid the Giants in sterling, conscientious diamond service for his single lapse back in 1908.

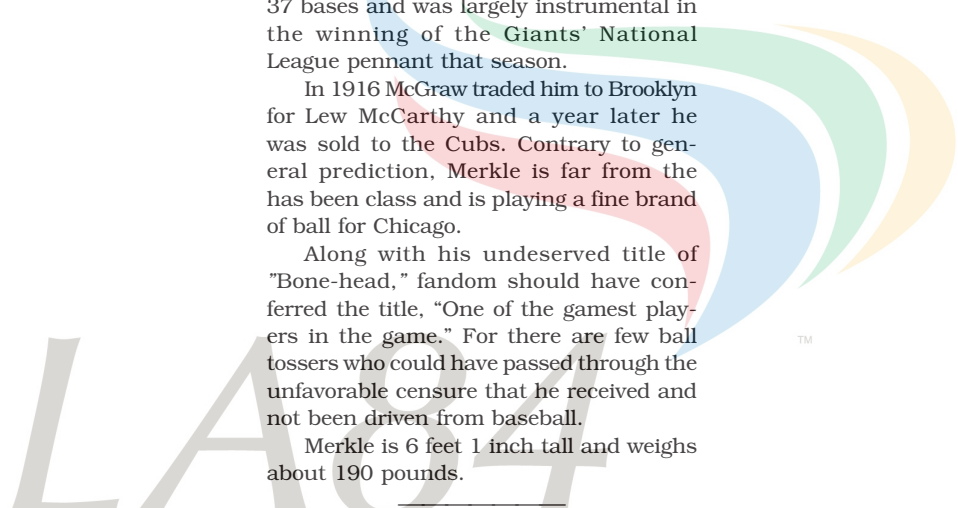
Fred was born in Watertown, Wis., back in 1888. He attended the public schools and the high school, is an unusually intelligent chap and would undoubtedly have made good in a profession other than that of baseball. Newark, O. gave him his first real diamond trial, when he was but 18 years old.

Tecumseh, of the Southern Michigan League signed him to his first regular baseball job. He played for them two seasons, 1906-7 and late in 1907 was signed by the Giants. Fred's best season was in 1912, when he batted .309, stole 37 bases and was largely instrumental in the winning of the Giants' National League pennant that season.

In 1916 McGraw traded him to Brooklyn for Lew McCarthy and a year later he was sold to the Cubs. Contrary to general prediction, Merkle is far from the has been class and is playing a fine brand of ball for Chicago.

Along with his undeserved title of "Bone-head," fandom should have conferred the title, "One of the gamest players in the game." For there are few ball tossers who could have passed through the unfavorable censure that he received and not been driven from baseball.

Merkle is 6 feet 1 inch tall and weighs about 190 pounds.



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