

# The Strength of the Cub Machine

*Why I Believe We Are Capable of Making a Powerful Bid for the World's Championship*

By **FRED MITCHELL**  
Manager of the Chicago Cubs



Manager Fred Mitchell who has piloted the Chicago Cubs to their first pennant since Frank Chance was "boss"

My world's series experience has not been as extensive as that of some other men in baseball but it surely made up in quality for what it may have lacked in quantity. For I was a member of the Boston Braves when they set a mark which has never been equalled in all the history of the big games for straight victories. And I doubt very much if that mark will be equalled within the experience of those now living.

My position with the Braves in that record making event was not a very conspicuous one. I was not a star outfielder nor a veteran pitcher. There were many people no doubt, who didn't even realize that I was on the club at all. But for all that my conscience didn't trouble me in the least when I drew my share of the pay, for I felt that I had fairly earned it.

And what was my position with the club? It would take me quite a while to describe it. For one thing I filled every executive job except that of president. I was scout, Secretary, did my share at managing, coached, pinch hit occasionally, and

and every manager would like to get them. But after all the success of the ball club rest very largely on little things, so little that the average person would overlook them altogether. My work with the Boston Braves was to look after some of

performed various other chores. But my main duties were warming up the pitchers and keeping them in shape. And while that task is one of little glory it is of the utmost importance as any manager will tell you.

The success of a ball club does not depend altogether on a smashing attack nor the presence of star players in the line up. True, those things are important,

the little things. And I flatter myself that, in so doing, I contributed my fair share toward the success of the club. At least I never heard any complaint from my employers, so I guess there was no doubt about it.

In any case it was my work that season principally, which secured me my present place as manager of the Cubs. I had been very successful in working out with the pitchers and keeping them in good trim. This work was appreciated by the owners and they heartily recommended me to Mr. Weeghman when he was casting about for a man to build up a winning club at Chicago.

Nor was my experience an uncommon one. My job with the Braves was precisely like that of Robinson with the Giants. He was very successful in developing the Giant's pitchers, particularly Marquard and Tesreau and on the strength of that experience was given the job of piloting the Brooklyn club. And if I am not mistaken, Lee Fohl of the Cleveland club won most of his fame as a catcher in developing pitchers.

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## MAXIMS OF MITCHELL

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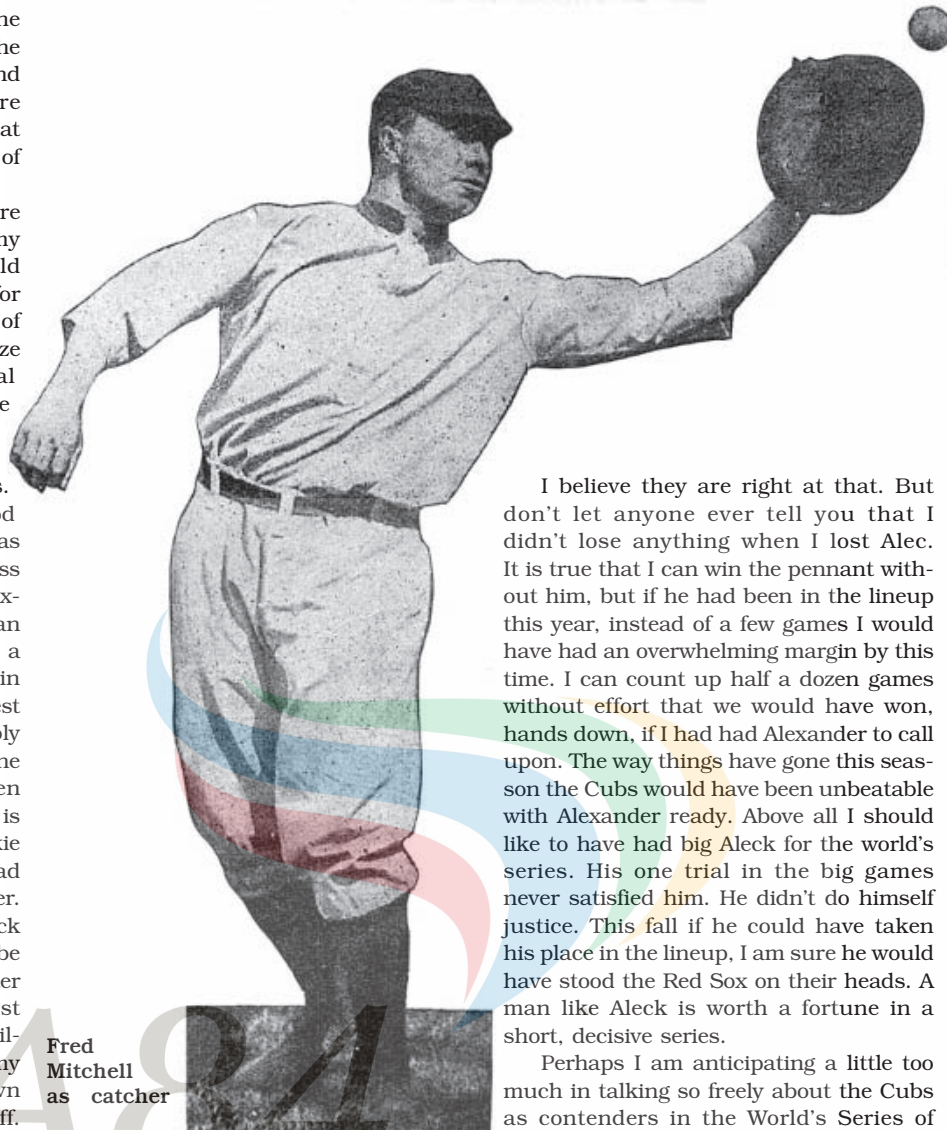


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ed that pitching was 60 per cent of the strength of a club. In my opinion the estimate is conservative. With the trend of modern base ball toward low score games and tight pitching I would say that pitching constituted fully 75 per cent of the effective strength of a ball club.

Consider the Cubs for example. Where would I be today if it were not for my pitching staff? I will tell you. I would be in the second division. Don't think for a minute I am not fully appreciative of the ability of my ball club. But I realize its limitations also. There are several positions that are not over strong. There are others where I have been fortunate to say the least. Some of my older players have been playing the game of their lives. I couldn't reasonably expect such good work from them. I knew that Merkle was a man of large experience and a first class performer. But I couldn't reasonably expect that he would be better this year than he was five years ago. I have long had a sincere admiration of Paskert's work in the outfield. But Dode is one of the oldest men in the game. I could not reasonably have counted on his hitting as he has done this season. Young Hollocher has been the sensation of the circuit. A manager is fortunate who secures an untried rookie with the class of Hollocher. It is too bad that the game should lose a player. But he is young and when he comes back from war (he is in Class 1 and soon to be called to service) he will be all the better for his camp training. And above most other things, I appreciate the work of Killifer who has been the backbone of my defense. But Killifer's work has shown mainly through that of the pitching staff. The pitching staff is what has carried the Cubs through a successful season, and will, I hope, enable them to still retain the championship of the world in the city of Chicago.

I have four pitchers whom I can count upon for as good hurling as any manager has a right to expect. Vaughn, Tyler, Hendrix and Doublas are my four aces, and



Fred Mitchell as catcher

four aces are hard to beat. At that I lost the Joker, the card that would have given me an invincible hand, when Alexander went.

People have said to me, "Well, you didn't get much of a wallop after all when you lost big Alec. You have got the best pitching in the league as things are."

I believe they are right at that. But don't let anyone ever tell you that I didn't lose anything when I lost Alec. It is true that I can win the pennant without him, but if he had been in the lineup this year, instead of a few games I would have had an overwhelming margin by this time. I can count up half a dozen games without effort that we would have won, hands down, if I had had Alexander to call upon. The way things have gone this season the Cubs would have been unbeatable with Alexander ready. Above all I should like to have had big Aleck for the world's series. His one trial in the big games never satisfied him. He didn't do himself justice. This fall if he could have taken his place in the lineup, I am sure he would have stood the Red Sox on their heads. A man like Aleck is worth a fortune in a short, decisive series.

Perhaps I am anticipating a little too much in talking so freely about the Cubs as contenders in the World's Series of 1918. A manager always does well to be cautious in such matters. But some time ago I doped out the situation and I believe doped it out correctly. Brooklyn was too much shattered by the draft ever really to be a contender. The same can be said for St. Louis. The Boston Braves have not had a bad club but I believe everyone, including George Stallings, will agree with me when I say it is not a great club. The Phillies have a good deal of strength but they are far from championship calibre all the more since Cactus Cravath, who used to drive in so many victories, hasn't been hitting them as he used to do. Cincinnati can hit like blazes, but in my opinion that lets them out. Pittsburgh has been playing good ball and deserves a world of credit. But it is my personal opinion that the Pirates are playing at a little better than their normal gait. A club often does this and on the contrary it often plays below its normal gait. It is a credit to the manager and the players of the Pittsburgh club if they are, as I think, playing a better game than an observer would expect from them.

To my mind the Cubs have one rival and that is the New York team. I won't dis-

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Fred Mitchell in  
characteristic  
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pose

count the fact that I have feared the Giants all season. But when we met them in our last series and took four games out of five from them, we placed a hurdle in their path that I doubt if they can surmount. Of course, we can't afford to loaf at all. The minute you begin to count your chickens in baseball, they are apt to fly away with all your pleasant anticipations. But I think I can speak for my club when I say that they are not the bunch of fellows who are apt to take things easy until we have reached a position in the pennant race where victory is a mathematical certainty.

And now for the world's series. The outlook is peculiar. Everything connected with this season has been peculiar and at the present moment the world's series is not a dead certainty. But to my mind the idea of no world's series is unthinkable. Surely the series itself will not delay war preparation nor affect the output of ships or munitions. And the good which the series can and will accomplish is so great that it would be a crime to lose it. I am in favor of liberal contributions to the Red Cross and other charities. Let the series

work full strength for the public good. But don't rob the players of a chance to participate in the big games, a chance that they have fairly won. And don't rob the public of a chance to see, or at least to read about, the biggest thing in the whole

range of sport, a thing so big that it has come to be a national institution, a fixture in the season's history.

I am assuming that there will be a world's series and that the Cubs will be one of the contesting teams. If the lightning strikes, why it is time to figure up the damage afterward. But the man of ordinary horse sense conducts his business on the theory that the lightning is not going to strike. That seems to me to be the only course of wisdom.

Now I have sized up the situation as well as I can. The Cubs were strong enough to win a pennant in the National League. They are therefore a good team for a Marathon route. But they are an even better team for a short, decisive series like the world's series.

Why are they a better team? Because most of their strength is centered in an invincible pitching staff. Barring accident I can be sure to have gilt edged pitching throughout the series. And gilt edged pitching ordinarily is enough to win such a series. For everyone who knows baseball will tell you that pitching is the main thing in any series.

Furthermore I have many veterans on my club. They give a certain dependable character to the team which younger men could not give. Several of my older players have already taken part in world's series. The big games are nothing new to them. They will not get stage fright and be inclined to crack as younger men might do. Of course I am banking on my present line up. I can not be sure of this, but neither can the Red Sox. Both clubs are liable to be affected by the draft.

I am not discounting the Red Sox team in the least. I grant that the club has greater strength than my own in certain respects. But I doubt that they have as well rounded and perfectly balanced a pitching staff as the Cubs and I also doubt if they have

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In figuring the strength of contesting clubs it is never well to take as a basis of comparison statistics covering the entire season. The important thing to consider is how strong the clubs were on the eve of the contest.

A club is apt to get the jump on the other and carry its initial advantage through to the end.

I should like to win and rather think we shall. That's as far as the prudent manager should commit himself.

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Now the thing that deceived the critics was this. The Braves had played wretched ball all through the first half of the season. The Athletics during the same period, had played excellent ball. Therefore when the batting averages were figured out, the Athletics had a much better record than the Braves. But what actually happened was this. Along about the first of July the Braves rolled over in bed so to speak, woke up and from that point on played ball second to none. Figuring from July there were seven players on the Braves with a batting average of .300 or better. There were three great pitchers who had a wonderful record from July on. There was a most formidable infield. The team fielding was good, many of the players were likely to go several games on a stretch without an error. In short the whole team was playing bang-up ball and what is more, were playing it together.

The Athletics, on the other hand, had grown stale. They were actually in a slump when they met us, while we were at the top notch of all round form. There is no team in the world so good that they can afford to meet, while in a slump, another team that is playing top notch ball. The Athletics didn't realize this. The public didn't realize it. So the Athletics, although they were the overwhelming favorites, were more soundly trounced than any world's series contesting team has ever been trounced before.

Were the Athletics a better team than the Braves? In their normal form the Athletics had a better infield than ours and a better outfield. Their pitching was not as good nor was their catching. Pitching is the main thing in a short series and there you are.

That series was a whirlwind finish. I never expect to be in another such series, nor do I wish to be. The Athletics really never got started. They were swept off their feet in the first game and never recovered their balance. The series was too short. That is one of the uncertainties of such a series. A club is apt to get the jump on the other and carry its initial advantage through to the end with a grand rush. However, I believe the coming series will not be a one-sided one. If the Red Sox win I will gamble they will not win four straight. And I have no hallucination to the effect that we shall be able to make it a clean sweep either. But I won't disguise the fact that I should like to win and I rather think we shall. That's as far as a prudent manager should commit himself.

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## THE STRENGTH OF THE CUB MACHINE

*(Continued from Page 464)*  
a catcher who can compare with Killifer.

The dope artists can pick winners readily enough in a world's series. I confess that I have no such power. But neither, in my opinion, have the dope artists. I know I have talked with a good many of them and found that they were as likely to pursue faulty reasoning as the rest of us.

The famous series between the Braves and the Athletics was a classic example of this. The Athletics went into this series top heavy favorites. They had a great reputation and were undoubtedly a powerful club. The Braves had no reputation whatever, and looked, to a good many people, to be hopelessly outclassed.