

My Best Season

*Why I Believe the Present Year is, Perhaps,
My Best Effort So Far*

By **DODE PASKERT**

ON the twenty eighth of this month, I shall be thirty-seven years old. That ago wouldn't mean much to most men perhaps, but it means a lot to a ball player. For it makes me the oldest regular player in the National League.

By regular player I do not mean a player who takes his position day after day in the line up. Mike Doolan does that at Brooklyn and I believe Mike is older than I. But Mike was out of the major leagues for some time and was recalled this year merely because the draft had created a

great shortage among the younger players. The clubs were eager to resign a lot of old timers whose days of usefulness were supposed to be over, but who could still play a pretty fair brand of ball. My case was different. I have been in the Major Leagues for twelve consecutive years. I began the season as the oldest player on the circuit. And though a few veterans may have

crept in since that date, I believe I am entitled to consider myself the oldest regular player in my league.

There isn't anything particularly wonderful in that fact either. If I was the oldest player in the league and nothing else, I might perhaps, be only the luckiest player, lucky because I had succeeded in hanging on a little longer than the rest. But mere age doesn't tell all the story. For I consider that my season this year has been perhaps the best I ever had.

They say baseball is a game for young men and I suppose it is. How then do I account for my own success at an age when most players have said good bye to bat and glove forever?

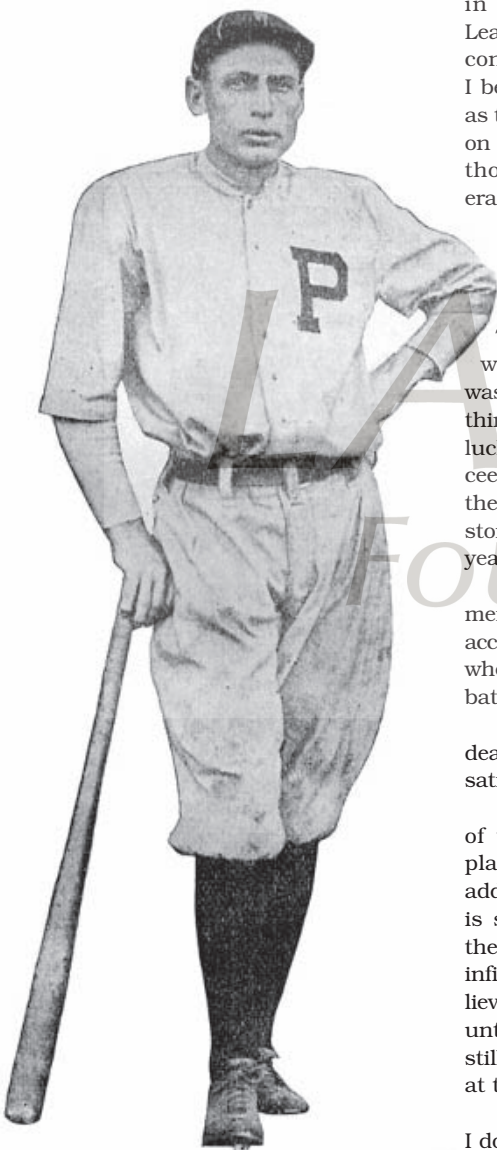
I have, thought, about this thing a good deal of late and I explain it at least to my satisfaction, on two distinct grounds.

First, and perhaps the more important of the two is experience. The older a player grows the more he learns. This added knowledge offsets the fact that he is slowing up a little, can't quite cover the ground he once could or beat out the infield hit as well as he used to do. Believe me if a man could stick in this game until he was fifty or sixty years old and still be anywhere near as fast as he was at twenty-five he would be some player.

There is seldom a game goes by that I do not learn something that is bound to be useful to me sooner or later. No doubt every player does. But I wouldn't suppose



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Paskert is the oldest "regular" in the National League

I would completely change my system of play at my time of life. Yet that is precisely what I did do this spring.

I am not naturally a three-hundred hitter, though I have batted that strong two or three times. This year I started at a gait far above any I ever took before and I am still a bit over the three hundred mark. How did I do this? I changed my style of batting.

Heretofore I have generally choked up pretty well on the bat and usually I have hit into left field. This year I determined to try another tack, so I practised holding the bat by the handle and taking a much longer swing.

I wouldn't suppose that this style would be so good for a player like myself as my old style. But results are what shows and I have been very successful so far. I not only hit the ball harder, but I now frequently hit into right field go the fielders are not able to play my hits as well as they used to do. In fact I believe my hitting this year has been better than it ever was before.

Experience, then, is one of the reasons why I have been able to put up a good game for Chicago. But there is another reason almost equally important. That reason is the fact that I thoroughly like baseball. To my mind a man cannot be a genuine

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success at anything, unless he really likes it. I kow, in my younger years, I had an excellent opportunity to become a mechanic. I did work at the trade until I mastered it pretty well. But I cannot say that I ever got so I really liked it. I was playing baseball at the time, in a semi-pro way, and got quite enthusiastic over the sport. I picked up a few dollars, saw the possibilities in the game, and determined to become a real professional. For I came to the conclusion that it was better to be even a dub ball player with my heart really in my work than to be second rate mechanic without any genuine interest in the job.

Now most ball players like to play ball well enough. But after they have been in the game for a few years they get into the habit of taking things as a matter of course. It is all in the day's work and some items of that work become a burden. But that has never been my experience. I like baseball from the first day in the spring until the last day in the fall. I like to play double headers. There is never too much baseball to suit me. And because I am so wrapped up in the game I believe, is another reason why I am still able to play good ball at my age.

I earnestly hope nothing happens to prevent our taking part in the world's series this fall. I have been in but one series, which isn't by any means, enough to satisfy me. I don't suppose I would ever get in enough world's series games to satisfy me. But at any rate, I surely want to get in one more before I die.

My only experience in the series so far was a fairly satisfactory one. I played centre field against the great Tris Speaker and was supposed to be considerably outclassed at my position. However, I will leave it to any one who saw the games if I was outclassed. True, we lost the series, which was disappointing enough. But we didn't lose it because of any margin which

Speaker showed over me in the outfield or at the bat.

Oddly enough I shall face the same team this fall, but it is the same team in name rather than fact. Speaker won't be in the line up against us, neither will most of the other men who faced us then. They are a good club, the Red Sox. They must be to win a pennant in their own circuit But we will give them a battle, you can gamble on that.

I have a son some fourteen years old whom I hope to train into a professional ball player some day. The kid is willing enough and likes the game. I used to have him out in the field catching flies at Philadelphia, in batting practice. He was pretty good at it. The crowd used to josh me about him, and sometimes when I wouldn't get a fly ball they thought I ought to have caught, they would yell at me, "Why don't you let your kid play for you, he's better than you are."

I once had the insane delusion, I suppose it would be called insane by most people, of sticking around in the big show until that kid of mine was old enough for the game. For I have had high hopes that he would make the big leagues and if I could still be a player in the majors while he was also a player it would give me a distinction which would be absolutely unique in baseball history. But this war has messed everything up so much it is worse than idle to make any plans for the future. All the player can do or all anybody can do, is to live from day to day, taking whatever comes, with as good a grace as possible. I am not in the present draft and the work or fight order does not yet apply in my case. But after the season is over I rather expect to offer my services for whatever they are worth in some branch of mechanical employment. So I won't be the only ball player who has been changed into a bum mechanic by Uncle Sam.
