

# Closing Events of 1918 Baseball Season

*How the Major League Clubs  
Fared in the Final Weeks  
of the Abbreviated Season*

By W. A. PHELON



Outfielder Graney of Cleveland out on a close play at the plate. The great spurt of the Forest City Team was the feature of the month

THE abbreviated season, chopped off nearly five weeks by the stern edict from Washington, was marked by some good ball playing, despite the small number of players who still clung to the banners of the sixteen clubs. Short-handed was no name for it—almost every team was hung up and several were almost wrecked by the evanishment of the valiant athletes, who scattered in all directions like quail before the guns. Some of the boys gallantly went to war, dodging nothing, seeking no quibble and no pretext for escaping active service. Others fled to the Safe Shelter Leagues, the shipyards, steelworks, munition plants, etc. These voracious plants, all boasting star ball-clubs, grew in numbers, ramified and spread their tentacles afar. Almost every big league player received letters begging him to join their forces, and emphasizing the safety from shot and bayonet which would be guaranteed by the Shelter Associations. Many other players sought "essential occupations," and departed to take up various pursuits, such as farming. One player—Bronkie of the St. Louis Cardinals—figured out that tobacco-raising, since the Sammies need so many smokes, was extremely "essential," and went to a tobacco farm. Anyhow, the boys filtered away from their teams, and the managers were hard-pressed to keep the ranks filled. Veterans were brought back from the timber, and men far beyond the draft age got golden opportunities to make a little extra money.

With these shorthand teams, some astonishing good baseball was staged. Pitchers had to work oftener than before; catchers did double service, and the supply of pinch hitters dwindled rapidly. Yet the clubs kept on, and entertained the crowds. They tried to wedge in as many games as possible during the final weeks, and managed to get a schedule of considerable length completed in shipshape fashion.

## NATIONAL LEAGUE

The resignation of John K. Tener from the presidency of the older league was an early August event. It had been known

for many months that Gov. Tener was anxious to give up his baseball duties, owing to the pressure of other affairs, and the Perry case, which so nearly caused a split-up between the two circuits, was only a technical excuse. Success to John K. Tener, a prince of good fellows, and a far abler executive than the critics ever gave him credit for being.

In mid-August an ugly cloud darkened the National League horizon—the first big gambling scandal that had come across the track of the game in forty years. For many weeks, persistent rumors had been floating round the circuit to the effect that the Cincinnati club, one of the most powerful outfits in the league, and the best hitting club in America, was losing games through the manipulations of its play to assist gambling agencies. The climax came when Hal Chase, one of the finest of ball-players, and hugely popular in Cincinnati, was suspended by Christy Mathewson for "indifferent playing," and Garry Herrmann made the suspension permanent for at least the 1918 season. Chase went to Cincinnati, and interviewed Mr. Herrmann, who told him that the charges against him—practically involving the throwing of several games—would be put in writing and submitted to the National League. Both for his own sake and the good of baseball, Mr. Herrmann added, he trusted that Chase would clear himself of the scandal.

Chase declared that the charges against him were baseless, and were the result of exaggerated rumors. "I never made a sizable bet on a ball game but twice in my life," says Chase. "That was when the Reds played Cleveland last fall. I was so sure that Eller could beat Cleveland that I risked \$100 on him; he won, I put the money right back on his next game, and he won for me again. As for these charges—just to show how absurd rumors are—I have been accuse.d of offering \$800 to a New York pitcher if he would let us beat him—and where would \$800 be handled, in a betting way, upon a ball-game?"

Chase's personal popularity in Cin-

cinnati is so great that, at this time of writing, thousands of fans are anxiously waiting for the full publication of the charges filed against him, and for his reply.

This is about the way the clubs plowed along during the final weeks of the 1918 campaign, all doing the best they could against heavy odds:

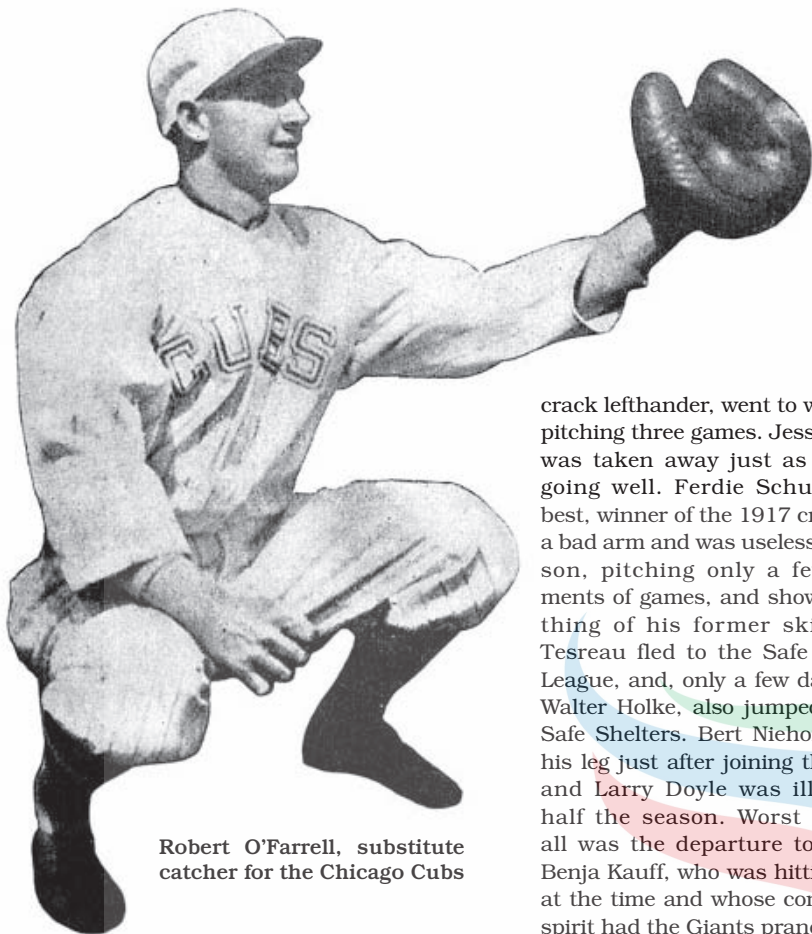
## NATIONAL LEAGUE

### CHICAGO

The Cubs, hindered very little by military affairs, kept bulging out their lead, and rushed down the stretch, winners by a respectable margin. This team was picked by the critics, early in the season, as sure to suffer through the draft—in fact, it was predicted that the team would be shot to pieces. It wasn't—in fact, was hardly jarred after the departure of Grover Alexander. Pete Kilduff departed for war, but was hitting only around .215 when he went, so that his place was easily filled. All summer long, it was daily announced that Billy Killefer, the catching mainstay, and Charley Hollocher, the great young shortstop, must join the colors, but they managed to stick around, and, at this time of writing, are still in there every day.

The success of the Cubs was due to various reasons, few of them even thought of before the season opened. Hollocher proved a wonderful infielder, and a tremendous hitter—quite the equal of the much-touted Hornsby in every detail. He gave the team immense strength in fielding and materially reinforced the batting. Four pitchers did nearly all the work, and fully made up for the departure of Alexander. Vaughn, Tyler, Hendrix, and Douglas had the best seasons of their lives, pitching elegantly to superb support. Strikeouts figured heavily in their pitching, the various Cub flingers fanning about 100 more victims than were whiffed by the hurlers of any other team.

The infield went along with two strong hitters, Merkle and Hollocher, and two



Robert O'Farrell, substitute catcher for the Chicago Cubs

mediocre batters, Zeider and Deal. During August, Charley Pick, from the coast, was added to the infield, which, already having McCabe and Wortman for extras, was better fixed for numbers than any other inner defense in the league. Mann, Paskert, and Flack, the outfielders, covered their gardens faultlessly, and hit for a joint average round .290.

To sum it up—the Cubs had a far better ballclub than had been expected; it was a ballclub that stuck to form when it was counted on to blow up, and it had great good luck in meeting crippled foes besides.

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#### NEW YORK

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The Giants kept on gamely fighting in spite of continual draining of forces, but the last real chance of McGraw's men vanished when the Cubs whipped them, four out of five, at the Polo Grounds. This series was the real settler of the season. Had the Giants won, they not only would have reduced the Cub lead to manageable proportions, but would have given themselves new confidence and seared the daylight out of Chicago. The result of that fatal series put the honors on ice for Chicago.

You have to give it to the Giants for the fight they made against continual discouragements. Robertson quit them before the season started. Rube Benton, the

crack lefthander, went to war after pitching three games. Jess Barnes was taken away just as he was going well. Ferdie Schupp, the best, winner of the 1917 crop, had a bad arm and was useless all season, pitching only a few fragments of games, and showing nothing of his former skill. Jeff Tesreau fled to the Safe Shelter League, and, only a few days ago, Walter Holke, also jumped to the Safe Shelters. Bert Niehoff broke his leg just after joining the club, and Larry Doyle was ill nearly half the season. Worst blow of all was the departure to war of Benja Kauff, who was hitting .324 at the time and whose contagious spirit had the Giants prancing like sure winners. With the going of

Kauff went the Giants' pennant chances, and they did well to stick right up on the heels of the Cubs. Not to disparage the Cubs, who did wonders—but what chance would they have had against the Giants with Benton, Barnes, Schupp, and Tesreau all working smoothly, and with Kauff in center all the way?

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#### PITTSBURGH

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The pirate team, considerably shaken up during the season by the war drafts, and much lighter with the stick than either the Cubs or Giants, accomplished wonders. Their success is a tribute to Bezdek's managements—he had them going fast on bases, taking advantage of openings, working squeeze plays prettily, and doing everything at the right time and the right way. One of the best moves Bezdek made was when he secured Mayer from Philadelphia—at the time this article is written, Mayer had won eight straight games for Pittsburgh, and lost none at all. Babe Adams, the hero of 1909, came back to his old club, and pitched ball of excellent quality. Comstock, the champion wanderer of baseball, also hurled some fine games for the team. This Comstock has been in about ten leagues and thirty clubs, or thereabouts, and is just now showing his classy ability. Cooper, after a long period of hard luck, began winning plenty of games in July and August, and the Pirate pitch-

ing staff became really formidable. Bezdek's infield was changed a little when the lively little shortstop, Caton, went to war. Boy Ellam, a veteran of long ago, was put on the job, but didn't hit, and Danny Boone, formerly of the Yankees, is the latest candidate for the position. Bigbee and Carey, with help from good old Tommy Leach, played well in the field, while Southworth, who has been in the big show before and didn't seem a wonder has demonstrated his mighty hitting powers. At last accounts, this bird was hitting .344 and fielding elegantly too.

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#### CINCINNATI

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The shadow of a gambling scandal, hanging over this club at the present time, is thought to have considerable bearing on the Reds' failure to get second position, if not compete actively for first. This team had the hitting power, a wonderful infield, a great outfield. Its pitching looked feeble, and its star flingers were a sad disappointment, but it ought to have won .550 per cent. of games at the lowest. It is to be hoped that the investigation now under way will show that gambling didn't really upset the Cincinnati club, and that the strange failure of the Reds was due merely to unintentionally poor ballplaying.

Nick Allen, second catcher of the Reds, departed for his Kansas farm during July, and Mike Regan entered military service. Regan, after more than half a season of inefficiency, had rounded into shape, was pitching superbly, and hurled a shutout as his farewell. The club, shorthanded all season and without a lefthander since Bressler joined the army, hit round .275, yet couldn't seem to accomplish much when hits were needed—one of the circumstances to be investigated. After Chase's suspension, Sherwood Magee played first and did it well. Fred Toney was sold to New York; McGraw expected to win the pennant with him, and, such is the irony of baseball, Fred really lost the Giants' last chance by suffering defeat in the first two games he pitched. Two little Cubans, Cueto and Luque, played excellent allround ball for the Reds in the twilight days.

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#### PHILADELPHIA

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Pat Moran tried to reinforce his club by getting Pitcher Fortune and Catcher Devine upon the roster, but Fortune was well whaled in his initial game. Prendergast and Hogg broke even right along in their games, but Joe Oeschger, whom Pat had hoped would succeed Alexander was an awful failure on the season. Jacobs, secured from the Pirates, pitched fine ball—seven wins and two defeats at latest computations. The hitting power of the team was badly jolted by Cravath's

failure even to rap .250, although the old boy still lifts' an occasional homer over the wall. Burns, the little catcher, quit the club, returned to California, and engaged in some "essential industry." Hemingway and Pearce, new infielders, covered ground well, but didn't do much batting.

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BROOKLYN

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Never did a National League club travel so light as Brooklyn in the final stages. Sometimes fat Robbie had only a dozen men, with pitchers and catchers playing the field, and yet the boys stuck together—what few wore left—played earnest, determined ball, and deserved better patronage than was accorded them. Robertson, secured from the Southern League, a pitcher who was almost in the big show several times, proved effective, and Robbie obtained George Smith to help out. The slim Smith is the only National Leaguer to pitch for three clubs this season, the Reds getting him from the Giants, New York taking him back again, and Brooklyn finally landing him.

Rube Marquard enlisted in the navy, but was told to stay in baseball till September. Jimmy Archer, cast off by Pittsburgh, was taken on for awhile. The star of the club, during the dog-days, was Burleigh Grimes, who pitched the finest sort of ball, and, at last count-up, had won .636 per cent. of games.

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BOSTON

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Players come and go rapidly for Stallings these days. His athletes went to war in flocks, and some of them didn't fare badly, either. For instance, four of them, Rehg, Powell, Fillingim, and Kelly, have been enjoying life in a summer cottage near Newport—all in service, but not yet detailed to any special location. Despite the shortage of players, George showed great skill in re-filling the ranks, and if his team couldn't win many games the shortage of percentage could well be charged to existing circumstances. Nehf and Wickland, it was reported, were to join a Safe Shelter plant at Dayton, but, at last accounts, were still sticking to the team. The veteran Otis Crandall, winner of many a great battle for New York, was fished back from the Minors, as was the lefthanded flinger, George. Northrup, a pitcher who ought to have been in the big league years ago, was taken on, and won games as often as he started for quite awhile. Terry, an infielder who was with Comiskey for a time, came in at short in early August, and Chadbourne, an outfielder who was in the fast company years back, appeared in center. Joe Kelly's place was taken, oddly enough, by Jim Kelly, who played beside Joe at Pittsburgh, and who is now cavorting

under his own name of Taggart. Three or four others, only showing in semi-occasional games, were also added to the club. With such a procession, coming and going all the time, the Braves did well to win round .450 per cent. of games.

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St. LOUIS

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Jack Hendrick's first year in the big show was full of tribulations. He had a rattling good ballclub to start with, but draft and enlistments reduced it to a shadow, and he has tried, all season to rebuild, only to have each new formation wrecked about as soon as he would get it working. At last accounts, Jack had an entire new outfield—Heathcote, a kid collegian who promises to make a real star, and McHenry and Anderson, two discards from the Reds, who bear themselves like capable performers. Paulette, the first baseman, has been playing, all over both the infield and the outer gardens, and doing finely. Grimm, a new first baseman, has capered on first whenever Paulette was engaged in other locations. Betzel, recalled from the American Association, has shifted between third and the outfield. Bronkie, the Indianapolis third baseman, played 18 games for the club, then departed to raise tobacco; as an "essential industry." Jackie May, a promising lefthander, was grabbed in the draft early in August. Both of Jack's younger catchers, Brock and Brottem, were seized in the draft, and Miguel Gonzales, the great Cuban backstop, did all the catching from that time on. When last heard from he had caught 61 games in a row, a record for modern times. Bob Fisher, who has been in and out of the Majors so many times, has been covering second and hitting terrifically. Meadows and Doak, supposed to be efficient pitchers, had a bad season this year—14 wins and 29 defeats between them at last census—and it was small wonder that the Cardinals were fluttering on the .400 line.

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AMERICAN LEAGUE

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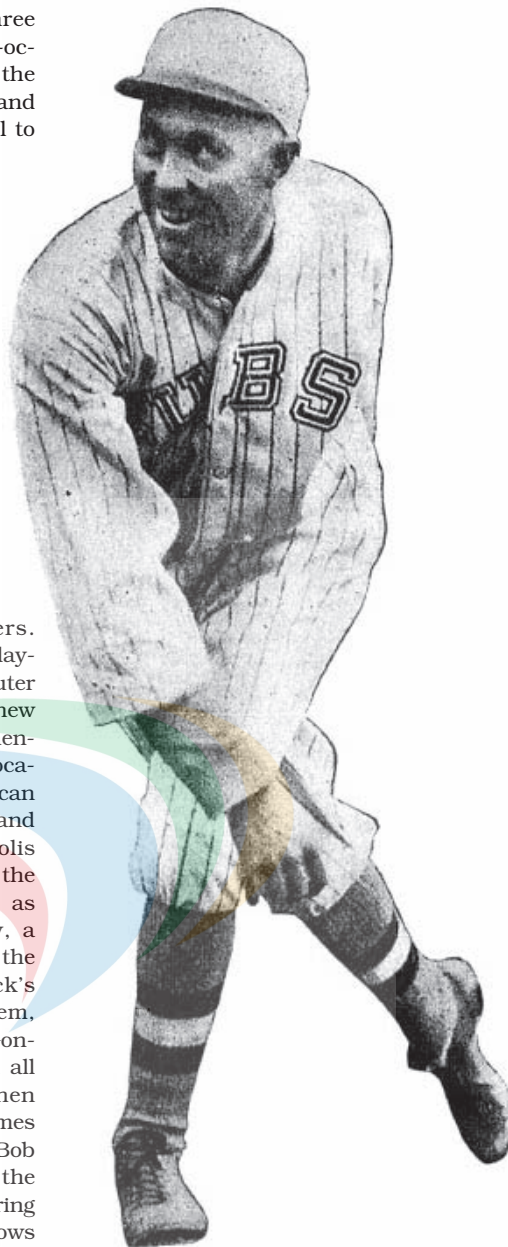
There were no scandals and no resignations in the American League. Nothing but baseball, and a redhot, riotous race, with three clubs having a chance to the very last, while the two leaders, Boston and Cleveland, came down the stretch with noses together.

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BOSTON

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When you remember how the Boston marvels enlisted last fall, and how the whole club had to be rebuilt, almost from stem to stem, the success of this club ought to be remembered as one of the marvels of baseball history. To think that a club can be remodeled during the winter, flung



"Nick" Carter, one of Mitchell's second string pitchers

right into the race, and kept up on top all summer—well, it's a baseball miracle, and you simply have to hand it to Harry Frazee and Ed Barrow. True, the Cubs were molded into pennant winners, by adding Sheppard, Steinfeldt, and Overall, but the bedrock foundation of a mighty club was there in 1906, while the Red Sox of 1918 had little to go on except a few fragments on which the rebuilding had to be done.

Four pitchers did practically all the work for the Red Sox since Dutch Leonard left, and they surely did it well—Ruth, Mays, Bush and Jones. Ruth, of course, helped in more ways than one. His batting prowess was so great that he was used on first base and in the field—in fact, he covered the field whenever he didn't pitch—and out of thirteen home runs driven forth by the Red Sox, up to August 14th, Ruth had whacked eleven! That's a rec-

ord for all time—when one man, and he a pitcher by trade, raps 11 homers out of 13 for the whole team!

Schang, too, a catcher by trade, played well outfield and in, and did some great allround work. Schang and Agnew make up a fair catching staff, excepting for Agnew's batting weakness. Mayer, a clever catcher who has been "third string man" for years in the big show, has been displaying much class recently.

Depleted frequently by war-drafts, the Red Sox infield kept on valiantly and Barrow managed to dig up athletes whenever there was a vacancy. Cochran, an infielder little known to fame, has been covering third for some time, and doing it well. Despite reports that McInnis and Scott were going to war, they have stuck with the team, and contributed materially to its success. The outfield, with Ruth as an added starter, has been a big factor in the victories of the club.

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#### CLEVELAND

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Wambsgans betook himself and his awful name to war—a severe loss to the Indians' allround power. Nevertheless, the Cleveland club kept right up there during August, and its final effort—its furious attack on the Red Sox percentage—was one of the real sensations of the season. As at Boston, four pitchers were doing practically all the work—Coveleskie, Morton, Coumbe, and Bagby. All of them were steady winners, and were finely backstopped by O'Neill, who has enjoyed a wonderful year. Late in the waning month, George McQuillan, erst of Philadelphia, Cincinnati, etc., etc., was signed up to help out in the slabbing.

The Cleveland infield, after the departure of Wambsgans, didn't look at all terrifying, but it played ball just the same. Terry Turner has been doing most of the second-basing, with Joe Wood taking an occasional turn on the bag. Chapman hasn't departed for war, as it was supposed he had to do, and has been a tower of strength to the team, while the veteran Johnston has put up very, fair ball on first. Bob Bescher, once the famous Speeder of the Reds, was taken on in August as extra outfielder, giving the Indians quite a heavy batting set of five gardeners—Bescher, Wood, Graney, Roth, and the terrible Speaker, who walloped that onion in his regular style during the sultry weather. All things considered, there's a world of credit coming to Dunn and Fohl.

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#### WASHINGTON

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Griffith, had his men playing championship ball for quite awhile. The club was hitting better than the general rule with Washington clubs, and the pitchers were getting excellent backing. Johnson, great

as ever, was not only winning games right along but was hitting so well that he was used frequently in the pinches. Ayres, Shaw, and Harper were all going well, and Matteson, a veteran recalled from the smaller circuits, had won four games and lost but one at last accounts. The infield work of Washington was faster and neater than usual, and Griffith, for the first time in years, actually had four outfielders who were all hitting the leather savagely. The team, as now made up, is about the best the Little Fox has commanded in several years, and, with a longer season, might work havoc among the leaders.

Johnny Lavan, supposed to be under military call at any time, has played right through with the club, and the draft hasn't stung Griffith in a long time. If peace comes with the winter, Griff will get Sam Bice back, and the addition of Rice to this ballclub will make it a dangerous factor in 1919.

Huggins, besieged by drafts and desertions, tried hard to keep his team going. Walter Pipp went to war service. Ping Bodie retired to engage in "essential industry." Marsans went to Havana on a visit and did not come back. Hug signed up Jacques Fournier, formerly of the White Sox; good old Ham Hyatt, long famed at Pittsburgh; Silent John Hummel, with Brooklyn ten or more seasons; an allround player named Ward; Hank Robinson, the veteran lefthander, and Keating, who was with the Yanks two years ago. Also Lamar, touted as a bird from Baltimore with a mighty throwing wing, and a few miscellaneous performers. This collection of athletes of varied ages went to work for Hug with great good will, and gave him all they had—such as it was. Robinson, for instance, after los-

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#### BEW YORK

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On July 1, Huggins's team looked as though it might still have a look-in—it had plenty of talent, it was going on nicely, and Huggins was surely handling the club with ease and skill. Somehow or other, all the New York American clubs do a flop in late July and early August, year after year, and so the Yankees simply had to take their annual tumble.

Down they fell, dropping steadily, till they were out of the first division and below the .500 mark. Then, in mid-August, they surprised the bugs and almost broke the hearts of the Boston crowd by going to Fenway Park and lamming the very life out of the Red Sox—did it at a time when the Yankees were thought to be all through, and the Red Sox were skating along in the lead, holding a big margin. Those games blotted out most of that margin, took a lot of starch out of the Red Sox, and gave Cleveland a golden opportunity.



Outfielder Whiteman, of the Red Sox, Babe Ruth's understudy in the field when the great slugger is occupying the pitcher's box



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## CLOSING EVENTS OF THE SEASON

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ing four games out of five, turned in and climbed all over the Red Sox, which was some performance for a comeback veteran.

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CHICAGO

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The world's champions, a shadow of their former glory and a skeleton of the 1917 club, struggled along against heavy odds. Comiskey's heart was almost broken when Joe Jackson and Oscar Felsch deserted the club—two players whom he had treated royally at all times. The desertion of Lynn and Williams wasn't so important, but still hurt the chances of the team to some small degree. Early in August, Swede Risberg and Third Baseman McMullin quit, but with the best

wishes of the Old Roman. Both of them left for the coast to enlist in warlike service, and men who leave the White Sox that way are sure of Comiskey's perpetual friendship and a warm welcome when they come home again. A few days later, Eddie Collins, the great second baseman and star of so many world's series, gave in his notice—he too had decided to join the fighting men, and Comiskey bade him goodbye with a hearty handshake. The Old Roman and his astute manager, Clarence Rowland, have tried bravely to fill the gaps, but you can't replace Collins, Felsch, Jackson, Risberg, and McMullin very easily. An Italian youth named Pinelli has been stationed on third, and somebody will be imported to cover second. Wilbur Good, who has been in the big camp with many clubs, has been put in the outfield; a sturdy catcher named Jacobs has been assisting Schalk, and a coast backstop named Devormer was brought in a few days ago. It's only the ghost of a ball club, though, and Commy will be glad to see the season close.

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ST. LOUIS

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Gerber, the shortstop of the Browns, has been notified to report for martial duties. Austin had been doing most of the short-stopping, anyhow, so Gerber's departure won't seriously hurt the club. The Browns kept bowling along at their proper gait—round .450—occasionally staging a brief flash of speed that caused a lot of trouble for the higher-ups, and then subsiding into innocuous calm—just about the way they have been going for several seasons. The club can hit; hits better than for several years, and is at the top of the league in batting, but doesn't mobilize enough runs for its bingles. During late July and early August, Manager Burke received nice pitching work from several of his twirlers, and, as already remarked, the Browns kept up their hitting, but they couldn't seem to raise their percentage. Of course, the incomparable Sisler continued to slam 'em safe and dazzle the circuit, but the work of the whole team was disappointing and hesitating.

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DETROIT

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The Tigers showed a team batting average of only .248 in mid-August—incredibly light for a Detroit club— and this, perhaps, was one large reason for their failure to get anywhere. Analyzed records of the Detroit pitchers don't look at all bad, but several recruits, put in to fill the shoes of James and Erickson, lately departed for war, were mercilessly sloughed, and their defeats hurt the Tigers' percentage. Heilman, who had been banging the bun in goodly fashion, betook himself to the battlefield, and Jennings dug up Art Griggs, with Cleveland many years ago. Jones, third-basing for the



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Tiger crowd these days, cannot be charged with spoiling the chances of the club, for latest averages had him belting .304. One weakness is in the hitting failure of two catchers, Spencer and Yelle, while the sub-outfielder, Walker, could hit only .196.

The peerless Cobb, who says he will play no more ball after this year till the war is over, has been on a batting spree, and is now binging them round .380—once more the matchless leader of the league. Some hard hitting had been expected from Jack Coffey, signed for second base, but he hasn't, up to date, contributed many wallops.

James and Erickson, between them, had won ten games and lost 17 when they went to join the colors.

#### ATHLETICS

Connie Mack's tail-enders, fitting naturally into their accustomed niche, put up some good, interesting baseball, even when losing. They have hung onto Scott Perry with an iron grip, and have made him work hard, too. At last reports, he had pitched 33 games to a finish, besides sundry fragments of games, doing more work on the slab than any other pitcher. The rest of the staff had shown little ability to win, though some unexpectedly good work had been done by a newcomer named Watson. Geary and Myers are both badly missed, but are pitching for khaki ballclubs now.

The batting work of the Athletics was light during late July and the first half of August, and the club stood at the bottom of the lists, both in team hitting and fielding. Dykes, a newcomer, was guarding second since Shannon went into service, and wasn't batting much. Out in the garden, the little Cuban Acosta, touted as a great hitter—some day—seems to have at last found himself and has been peppering for a .330 average. The smashing hits of Burns, steadily clouting round .350 all through the season, continued to be a consoling feature of the Athletics' daily play.

