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The

Base

Ball

... Coach

—BY—

L. A. SEAMSTER

BENTONVILLE, ARK.

1911



Price 25 Cents

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THE TRAINING

THE very first thing to do, is to learn the rules of base ball. This work is too short to enclose them here, but you can procure them from your local sporting goods dealer or he can tell you where to get them if he does not keep them. After you learn them and especially learn the rules, about the position you are going to play, then comes the training and you should train according to your physical ability. You should work off all surplus flesh by running and throwiug, batting and punching a punching bag or any kind of exercise. You must not over-work yourself at any time and especially at the beginning, do not run too long or throw too much so as to make you so sore that you will not be able to work for a week or two.

But begin easy and do a little more each day, and you will naturally grow in good condition, as a small blade of grass grows to a large bunch.

Don't exhaust yourself before you stop but

always stop while you feel good, then you will be anxious for training time to come.

Some have to train a month, while others, who are light and thin, can get in good condition in ten days. Always, after training or a game, take a good warm bath just before retiring. This will keep up circulation and keep you from getting stiff, by rubbing yourself down good all over as a good horseman does his horse after a long drive. This will keep you limber and in good shape.

THE SIGNALS.

THE whole team should work like machinery, every man on the team should know what ball the pitcher is going to throw.

The catcher should give the signal to the second baseman and he, in turn, give it to the rest of the team.

Team work consists of the team knowing the signals well and being able to give them, so the other side will not catch on or find out the signals, and of being able to execute the plays when you have the chance.

The catcher can give the signals to all of the

in-field and the first baseman give it to the right fielder. Second baseman to center and third baseman so left field.

You should not rely on a single code of signals all the time, not for any one game. If the other team finds them out you will have to change them, but not unless they do.

Heretofore the amateur teams have relied on the pitcher and catcher to do all the signaling, or that their signals were all that was necessary but that is not the case.

The whole team should know what the pitcher is going to throw.

First, the catcher should know, so he would be able to catch it, if the batsman misses the ball, or fails to strike; but the batsman does not always fail to hit, and when he hits is when the rest of the team should know what the pitcher throws, so they will know where to play for the batted ball or where the batsman is most likely to knock it. Hence, if the pitcher throws a slow ball close to a right hand batsman he is most likely to knock the ball toward third base, or if he hits a fly ball, into left field; a left hand batsman would knock it, most likely, by first base, or in right field. But if the pitcher should throw a fast ball on the outside or far

corner of the plate from the batsman, the left hand batsman would probably knock it where the right hand batsman would if it had of been slow and close to him. And the right hand batsman would probably knock it in right field or by first base; or usually a batsman will be more likely to hit a low ball on the ground and a high ball he will likely hit a fly, unless it is a batsman who hits with a dipping stroke, he is apt to lift a very low ball into the air. So you see if the whole team knows what the pitcher is going to throw they will know where to play to get the ball if the batsman hits it and he is going to hit it a part of the time. Then, if everyone is paying close attention to catch the signal they will be more apt to be the game all the time and not be watching the crowd or something else, when he is needed the worst.

Anyone can form a code of signals with a little thought. For instance, putting your left hand under your right arm might be a signal that the pitcher was going to throw a low fast ball on the outside corner of the plate. Then the first and second basemen would expect a ground ball to come their way and the right fielder should come in a little to back them up. Of course these signals could all be given in an instant and the batsman would know nothing of

it until he had hit the ball into someone's hands and the crowd would think it just luck, or that the fielder who got the ball happened to be in the right place. If you can do that every time you will be apt to win your game. Anyone could fix a signal of some sort for every ball pitched, or if there is a base-runner on a base, have one for the catcher to give the baseman and one to give the pitcher at the same time, then you would be able to catch the runner asleep and the baseman would be expecting the throw.

You should fix some natural movement for the signal so the opposite side would not be so likely to catch on to the signal.

You should think out a code of signals that would cover every important feature of the game.

THE PITCHER.



THE PITCHER.

THE most important position in the game and the one the most responsibility rests on, is the pitcher. Therefore he needs the most careful training to be a good pitcher. You must have a desire to play ball and have an ambition to pitch. The thought of the money that a good pitcher makes never makes a good pitcher. To get in shape to pitch is the most difficult proposition to overcome. The best way to get your arm in shape is to have someone to throw to. Stand the same distance apart that the pitcher and catcher stands in the game. Throw very easy in the beginning, not too long, either. The muscles in the arm are very tender, especially in those that are not used to manual labor.

If you are not used to throwing, the muscles used in the throwing are very tender. You must be careful not to over exert yourself at the beginning. Begin easy and work on up with a little exercise every day, a little more each day for about one month will generally put an arm in good condition, especially if it has begun to warm up in the spring. When you get through practice bathe your arm in warm water, rub dry, and be very careful not to let your arm chill or get

too cold. Before retiring at night bathe the arm good in warm water and bake dry around the fire. Then go direct to bed and keep warm. This will keep your arm from getting stiff and sore.

Never go in a game and throw hard after you are in shape, till you have thrown easy awhile and got warmed up or your arm used to the regular motion. If you have no one to throw to put up something to throw at or if you have only limited space in a building or anywhere, fasten a string to a ball and tie the other end of the string to something over head, then you can throw the ball and it will return to you. Anyway to get your arm used to the motion you have to go through with to pitch the ball. That is, it will take some a month while others can work out in ten days. But one with any surplus fat on it will take about a month. He must work that off. Don't work too much if you are thin and in very good shape. Don't risk losing the snap and ginger it takes to make a good pitcher. While doing this practice you should always try to hit a particular spot, if not real, imaginary, for control is the most important thing about pitching. Without it you can never be a successful pitcher. Never attempt to curve a ball until you have practiced for quite awhile,

and have your arm in condition to stand a good deal of hard throwing without feeling sore. A whole lot of speed is a good thing to have but a bad thing to depend on altogether; because, the harder the ball is thrown the faster it will go when hit center. Good change of speed is one of the best qualities of a pitcher. Learn to throw your fast ball medium fast and slow ball or any change you like with the same movement of the body and same motion of the arm.

A ball held loosely between the fingers or far down in the palm of the hand will go much slower with the same force behind it than one gripped very tightly between the fingers; they will start about the same but the one held loosely will slow up before it gets to the batsman, while the one held tightly will go on at the same pace. If you can fool the batsman in the speed of the ball he will miss it, or, if he should hit it he has lost all the snap in the stroke and it will result in either a little pop up fly, or an infield top, and he will be an easy out.

CURVES.

THE in-curve is thrown by holding the ball tightly between the two fore fingers and the thumb, with a side arm throw; the more force put behind a ball thrown this way, usually the larger the curve. But there is another, and generally more effective ball thrown almost the same way, only it is called a slow-in. You hold the ball the same way, not quite so tight, and throw, keeping your arm close to you, and let the ball loose nearly in front of you, with a pushing force and a quick, peculiar snap of the wrist that can only be perfected by practice; this curve when perfected, results in a straight ball from the hand to just before it reaches the plate, when it turns in, with a quick break, and is very effective.

THE OUT-CURVE.

The out curve is thrown by holding the ball between the thumb and the two front fingers, with a side arm throw, letting the ball roll out over the front finger with the palm of the hand upward; the out-drop is thrown the same way, only with nearly an overhand throw, with the palm of the hand sideways, when the ball is let loose. The drop is held in the same way, with a

straight, overhand throw and the palm of the hand up when the ball is let loose.

THE IN-DROP.

The in-drop is held between the thumb and first two fingers. Throw an overhand throw and let the ball roll out over the bottom part of the second finger, give the wrist a quick snap, so as to make the ball spin. All curves are caused by one side of the ball turning faster than the other side; the side that turns fastest will make the ball curve that way. You can hold the ball the same way and let it loose different, with a different throw, and get most any kind of a curve you wish.

THE OUT-BREAK.

The out-break is held in the hand the same way, and thrown with a close arm-throw, with the palm of the hand down, until just as you let the ball loose, then turn the palm sideways with a kind of a snap, the result is a straight ball, until right at the plate, then with a quick out-break. And the quick slow drop can be thrown in the same way, only let the palm turn up just as you let the ball loose.

THE UP SHOOT.

The up-shoot or jump ball is held tightly between the two front fingers and the thumb,

with the tips of front fingers gripping the ball very tight, with a close arm-throw, and palm of hand sideways until just as you let the ball loose. Then turn palm downward before letting loose with a kind of snap and a pushing force. The result is a straight ball almost to the plate, then a quick up break or up-shoot that makes it about the most effective ball used.

THE SPIT BALL.

The spit ball is thrown by moistening the two front fingers so they will slip off the ball easily, and gripping the ball with the thumb with an overhand throw; the palm of the hand down this results in a drop, but is seldom controllable, and is not used with much effect by but few pitchers.

THE KNUCKLE BALL.

The knuckle ball is thrown by closing the two front fingers and letting the ball rest between nails of them and the thumb with a sort of pushing, close-arm, overhand throw and results in a good drop, but takes lots of practice to get under good control.

THE DOPE BALL.

The dope ball is held loosely in the palm of the hand and with the fingers on it and thrown with any motion of the arm desired. It is not a

curve but a slow ball, without any life, and fools the batsman more on the speed of it than anything else. Of course you can make it curve a little, most any way desired, if you can get one side to turn faster than the other.

The break-ball is far the most effective ball thrown, because with a little practice you can get almost perfect control; about as perfect as you can in the straight ball; still, change of speed is considered by some to be the best thing to use for a fast ball, then one a little slower, or two fast ones and a slow one, or just any change the pitcher desires, for, he can tell, by studying the batsman, more about what change to make than anyone trying to put down a rule to follow. Then, the break used with the change of speed is bound to produce results. I don't mean it is bound to make the batsman miss every ball, but will enable the pitcher to make him hit the ball to some player that he may choose. You must study the batsman, his manner of swinging his bat, coolness and nervousness, for a very nervous batsman can place or hit a slow ball with very much difficulty, if you keep him looking for a fast one all the time, by throwing him one once in awhile. Think about where his bat will be when the ball gets

there, and try and hit the bat so the ball will rebound to some fielder. If you are going to throw a little slow the batsman will likely swing his bat a little far around, and if he is a right hand batsman throw it close to him and he will knock it down toward third base. If you hit the top of his bat, or a little above the center, it will result in a fly. An up-shoot is good to make him knock a fly, and a drop for a ground ball; unless he is a batsman that swings with a vicious lick, then a straight ball, or up-break, is best, unless you can get a terrible drop. For generally that kind of a batsman has a kind of dip in the swing that sometimes puts the drop out of the park. Don't worry about losing the game while pitching. You will have worry enough when it is over, if you do. But be yourself. You are made out of the same kind of material most people are. Have confidence, without vain pride, and dignity without stiffness. Concentrate your thought on the ball you are about to pitch. Know, before it starts, just right where it is going, and always put your break on the ball just before it gets to the bat; if you don't, you had as well throw a straight ball. Annoy him, and keep him from hitting you at will. When a batting rally starts and

they get to knocking you to every corner of the lot, they will naturally have more confidence, and then is when you need all your wit, nerve and courage. Give them some of the best you have. Waste a few balls, throw them low, wide or close to them, walk some if necessary, keep them from hitting the ball where the fielders can't get them, as fast as they get up, anyway.

Just to pitch is not all a pitcher has to do. He must watch the base runners like a hawk. Keep them close to the base. You must learn to throw to catch a runner in a way that the runner will not perceive the move until you have thrown. You must also learn to field your position, and when to field your position. And when the first baseman is after a ball always cover first base, or, as the catcher misses or muffs the ball with a runner on third, or catch a foul fly, or leaves to get the ball, always cover home plate; and, if a runner is hemmed in between first and second base always take first and back up the first baseman. If a runner behind, between second and third, always take third and back up the third baseman; if between third and home plate, cover home and back up the catcher.



THE CATCHER

NEXT to the pitcher the catcher probably has the most thinking to do, and in some instances has more then the pitcher. He must watch carefully the batsman and study his manner of standing, swinging his bat and the ball that each individual batsman hits the best. And

warn the pitcher where to throw them to handle the batsman to the best advantage. The catcher can tell the kind of bat the batsman bats with whether it is heavy or light, he can pick them up carelessly to find out the weight of the bat if he is not sure, and a batsman that bats with a heavy bat is not likely to be able to handle a ball close to him, while that is the place that one with a light bat wants them. Keep the ball away from a man with a light bat and close to one with a heavy one, and also a batsman that bats with a long bat and holds his bat near the end can hardly do anything with a ball close to him, so you must be careful to have the pitcher keep them close to him, but if he bats with a short bat or chokes his bat keep them away from him. Then you must know the signals and be able to give them slyly to the one you are to give them to. The catcher is not always the one to give the signal the manager may give them from the outside, or any one of the players may give them, but the attention of the team is kept on home plate while there is a batsman at bat, and therefore the catcher is the best man to do the signaling. You must watch the base-runner and if he ventures too far or something attracts his attention be sure and give the baseman and pitcher the signal and take every ad-

vantage of every opportunity you have. Be persistent and work, for that is what it takes to win. You should encourage your pitcher occasionally with a few choice words to give him more confidence and keep him in good spirits. If he gets to delivering the ball too quick after he gets it be a little slow about signaling and when you get the ball walk around in the diamond toward the pitcher and throw him the ball—this will slow him up a little and quiet his nerves by giving him a little time while you get in position. As your hardest throw is to second base you should get in the habit of letting your arms give when you catch the ball so as to put you kindly in a swinging position, then with a quick snap of the arm from the elbow down you can get a nice peg to second base that will get the runner. Learn to get the ball away from you as quick as a flash, just as if it was a rattlesnake. Always when the bases are full, and they play the ball to you and you can't get the man coming to third, as you seldom can, get the one going to first. If third and first bases are occupied and the runner on first tries to steal second throw low and have the shortstop in front of the second baseman and the second baseman cover the base. If the runner on third tries to come home let the short stop take the

throw and return the ball to you and get him, but if he doesn't try to come home let the short-stop step aside and let the second baseman do the throw and get his man. You should always throw to second to catch a runner from first so the second baseman could catch the ball about his knees on his left side.



THE INFIELDER

THE FIRST BASEMAN.

A LEFTHANDED man makes a good first baseman as he can throw to any other place in the diamond without turning, in fact a left-handed man can hardly play any other position except first base, pitch and the outfield. You should also be able to recover yourself quickly and to field the ball fast as you get a very hot ball sometimes when a heavy batsman happens to hit one your way. You should get in the habit of leaving the base just as you catch the ball, as you are not required to touch the runner when he first comes to your base. Don't leave too quick, but just as you catch the ball. If it is a close decision the umpire can tell better whether your foot leaves the base before the runner's foot hits it than he can. When you catch the ball and stand on the base, always when a runner is on the base and you get a batted ball get the runner nearest home if possible, if it is impossible to get the one nearest home get the next nearest. Sometimes when a runner is on second and you get a batted ball it is impossible to get him at third, you must touch the base and get your man and if the runner going to third is reckless or in the habit of run-

ning on past third throw to third as soon as possible so as to get the ball there before he can recover. You must think for yourself the most you have to do and act on the spur of the movement.

THE SECOND BASEMAN.

THE second baseman should be able to run fast to the left and cover all the ground between first and second base that the first baseman cannot cover, and you usually have to cover a little over half of the distance. Come in on the balls batted on the ground and meet them. Always be ready to back up the pitcher when he gets a batted ball or the first baseman, and sometimes when the first baseman is fielding a ball and the pitcher fails to cover first, you can cover it and get the runner. You should also back up the shortstop and assist him in every way you can.

THE THIRD BASEMAN.

THE third baseman should always be right-handed and very quick and have a good arm so as to throw to first base quickly. You should learn to field the bunts and all slow balls knock-

ed down your way on the run, with the bare hand, as a good runner will beat out a hunt if you don't hurry.

You must also be able to take care of yourself, for you are apt to get some hard ones sometimes, and you are so close to the batsman that you must field them fast if you expect to do any good.

When there is no runner to take third, if you leave always back up and assist the short-stop.

THE SHORT STOP.

THE short stop should be right handed and able to run fast to the right. His position is to field all the territory from second base. About two-thirds of the way down toward third base always come in on the ground ball and get them a going.

Back up the third baseman and when there are runners on the base and the third baseman is off after the ball, cover third and also back the pitcher while he is fielding batted balls. Take the throw from the catcher to second base. If there is a runner on third and he tries to go

home on a double steal, back up the second baseman every time the ball is thrown to him, and while he is after a ball cover his base for him. When a left hand batter is at bat, cover second base.

THE RIGHT FIELDER.

THE right fielder plays back of and between first and second base; you should be a good runner and able to gauge a fly ball and to catch any place from the ground to as high over the head as you can reach. Run up on the short flies and on the long flies, that go beyond you, you must run back after them, not back up however, but turn and run with your eye on the ball and catch it while going the way it is. You must also back up the center fielder when a ball comes on his territory near yours, and back up first base, when a ground ball is batted his way, or when a ball is thrown to him, it might make a bad bound or go wild and you be able to get the runner at second.

THE CENTER FIELDER.

THE center fielder plays back of second base and between the right and left fielders. You must back up second base and back of the

other out-fielders, when a ball comes near your territory.

THE LEFT FIELDER.

THE left fielder plays back of and between second and third bases. You must back up the third baseman and shortstop and the center fielder when a ball comes near your territory or anywhere near enough that you can get back of him by the time the ball gets to him. When any fielder gets the ball and a runner is going home, if you can't throw to the catcher throw so as to make the ball go to the catcher on the first bound. If no runner is going home always return the ball to a baseman or the shortstop, never return the ball to the pitcher from the outfield.

THE BATSMAN.

GOOD batters are in demand by all Leagues. Some say a good batter wins more games than anyone else, and its a fact that they win their part, for a hit at the right time wins many a game. You can play any other position well and still be a good batsman if you will give batting some time, attention and practice. No matter how good you are already you can im-

prove. Have confidence in yourself. No matter who is pitching the worst he can do is to keep you from getting on first, and if you are perfectly fearless he will have some trouble keeping you off. Watch the pitcher closely all the time; try to find out the kind of ball he is going to throw, or watch the ball from the time it leaves his hand and make him put it over the plate above your knees and below your shoulders. By close observation you will be able to tell about where it is going. If you can tell the way it turns you can tell the way it will curve, but it takes practice to learn what the ball is going to be when you see it coming. Sometimes you can learn the signals of the pitcher and catcher by letting some other player catch them and give them to you from the bench or the coaching lines or wherever he may be. To some this may not seem fair, but the pitcher, catcher and the rest of the team have signals to try to get you out, why not you have some signals to keep them from it. You can't always catch their signals but if you can it is easy to hit when you know what is coming. When you can't get their signals you must learn to judge for yourself. Keep in mind the pitcher's movements, his manner of throwing, and always be calm, don't get nervous, let nothing disturb you or at-

tract your attention while batting. Sometimes when a base runner is on the base it is necessary for him to know what you are going to do and for you to know what he is going to do. You want to know whether he is going to steal, or when he is going to, and if you want to work the hit and run play, you must let him know when you are going to hit so he will know when to run. Don't try to get a home run every time if the bases are full. You might try one but you can learn to get a base hit more often than you can get a home run. A hit just over the infield and not to the outfielders, or a bunt or light tap in the infield just wherever you can place it so you can get the first base is sufficient. You can learn to place them with lots of attention and practice only, unless you are a natural batsman. Most batsmen have their own particular way of standing and holding their bats when they go to the bat, but you should learn to stand with your bat drawn back, or as some say "with your gun cocked ready to fire" when the ball comes over. A good way to stand if you are a righthanded batsman is to put your left foot in front with the right knee bent a little. This gives you a good position to hit with lots of force.

THE BASE RUNNER.

THE fastest runner is not always the best base runner. He could be if he would learn to start quick, to run at the right time and to slide. You should take advantage of the carelessness of the pitcher. If you want to steal a base on him get a start on his delivery and when an outfielder throws the ball to the pitcher or any other long throw take a base on him. If the catcher catches a foul and you can run a base take it, or if a fielder catches a foul or fair ball stand on the base or touch it after he catches the ball and run a base, but if you can't run a base after he catches the ball don't stand on the base but take a safe distance so you can get back to the base if he catches it, and if he fails to catch it take the next base. Get that feeling of gaiety that makes you take advantage of every opportunity without being reckless. You must listen to the coach and do as he instructs.

THE COACH.

WHEN a base runner gets on a base one coach takes his position on the coaching line near first base and another on the coaching line near third base. The coaches are usually

substitute players, but a player may coach until his turn at bat, then another player can take his place. It is the duty of the coach to instruct the base runner at all times. Watch the ball and tell the base runner who has it. Watch the baseman and keep the runner posted as to his movements and on a long hit stop the runner if you see he will not be able to make another base, or if he could go one base further than he thinks you should urge him on. You must do everything possible to make the runner safe and still make him able to get everything he can.

CONCLUSION.

YOU must keep the code of signals in mind that you are using and also the number of outs, the number of base runners on the bases, the number of balls and the number of strikes on the batsman; in fact you must keep the game in your head that you may know where to play the ball if you get it. Any criticism by the manager or by any one if it is the truth should be accepted by you as a great favor no matter in what way they give it. Profit by the experience and don't let the same thing happen again. If you are going to be a sport be one; don't kick or quarrel about every little thing or take any undue advantage over your adversary. Be as fair as you would like any one to be with you. Keep your mind and attention on the thing you are doing while you are doing it; get control of yourself and keep your forces in reserve and when occasion demands, use them. Force used only increases the one using it. It gives you more force and makes you able to do more next time. Don't be over anxious but always ready. Be as free as water while hunting its own level

and as sure as the artist while painting his masterpiece. Think out the plays before they happen. If you can't tell what will happen think out something to do whatever happens. Never be discouraged or give up. Keep eternally at it. One slow, lazy effort may lose the game. Come alive and stay awake till the game is over and play every play to win.

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