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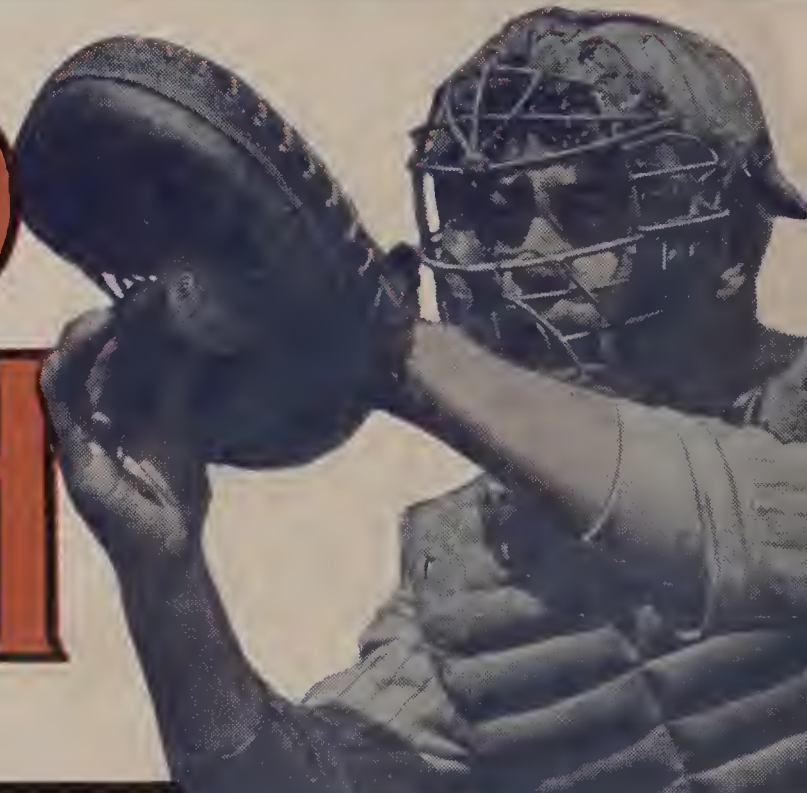
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# HOW TO CATCH



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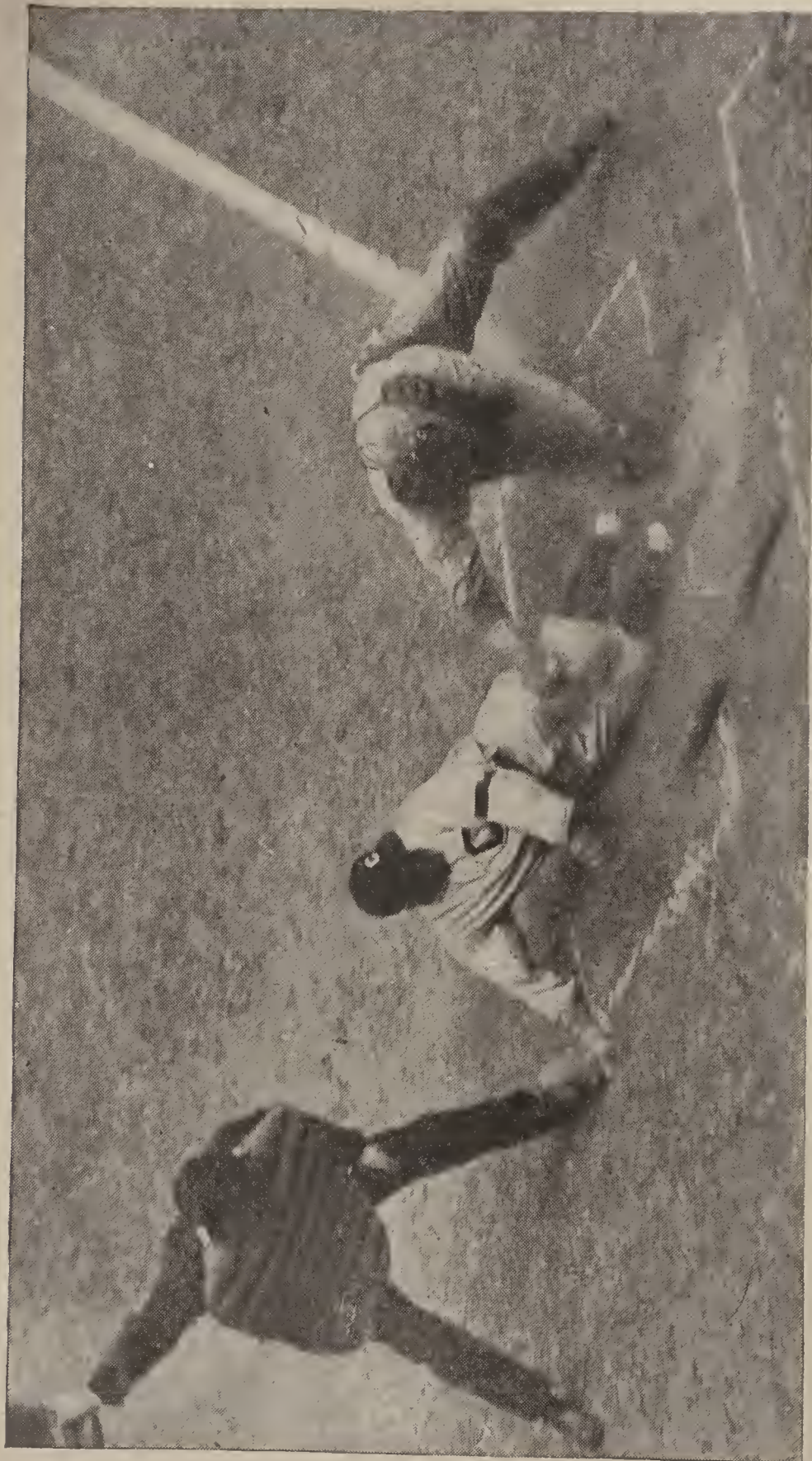
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A close decision, which the runner lost. The runner, in sliding for home, threw himself out of the baseline to avoid catcher, the latter touching him with the ball an instant before the runner's foot reached the home plate.

Photo N. Y. Daily News.



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# HOW TO CATCH AND HOW TO RUN BASES

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relation to each other

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modern methods in Base Running  
and Behind the Bat

Compiled by John B. Foster  
Editor Spalding's Official Base Ball Guide

PUBLISHED BY  
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## Publishers' Note

In the contents of this volume of instruction on Catching and Base-Running, the methods of these two opposing forces of attack and defense in base ball are included. Heretofore, in compiling books dealing with the various positions on a base ball nine, it has been the custom to devote a separate book to each position without regard to the possibilities of play that are without that particular position but dependent upon it. Mr. Foster, from his many years of experience in base ball, has noted this feature, and has combined the subjects of Catching and Base-Running in a manner which will enable any player to obtain in one volume information that cannot be found in any other publication.

Of the author's qualifications to write such a book, there is no doubt to be expressed. His name is known in all parts of the world as editor of "Spalding's Official Base Ball Guide" and "Spalding's Official Base Ball Record." There is no one who has had better opportunity than has had Mr. Foster to know all of the great ball players of the last thirty years. As a newspaper writer he has traveled thousands of miles annually, has witnessed the games of greatest importance, and has heard the intimate conversations of players explaining the finer points of their own team work and that of their opponents. Leaving the sporting editor's desk, he was for seven years the secretary of the New York National League Base Ball Club—the "Giants"—and traveled with



them from the beginning of the spring training trip until the end of the season.

During this time he was in daily contact with such great ball players as John J. McGraw, Christopher Mathewson, Mike Donlin, Larry Doyle, Arthur Devlin, Arthur Fletcher, Charlie Herzog and other such men as made the Giants always contenders for the pennant in the National League. Mr. Foster has accumulated a fund of information in regard to base ball and the proper manner to play it, which he presents to players through the medium of the books of Spalding's Athletic Library.

The publishers feel that they are especially fortunate in securing the services of Mr. Foster, and feel assured that every player who studies the information presented in this book will materially improve his play in the position of catcher, in which he may desire to excel.

AMERICAN SPORTS PUBLISHING COMPANY.

# HOW TO CATCH





Catching the ball inside and high. In this catch the mitt is placed as squarely back of the ball as possible, because an inside shoot is pitched with much swiftness.

Conlon, Photo.

## HOW TO CATCH

To be the catcher on a base ball team is about as fine a position as there is on the nine. To be a good catcher is one of the finest accomplishments of a base ball player. To be a star catcher is to become famous. There are three statements in the foregoing which every boy can think about. He can "mull them over," as the old saying goes. That means to think about them in every possible light at his own leisure.

While he is thinking them over he should also consider what they mean. When I have said that to be the catcher is about as fine a position as there is on the team, I can imagine that some boy will ask, "What about the pitcher?" A pretty important chap is the pitcher. We all know it. When he does something big there is a great deal of talk about his achievement, even if it is only the game of our own team in our own little town, but he might not have been as successful as he was had it not been for his catcher.

### **Catcher the balance wheel of diamond machine.**

It seems as if that makes the position of catcher rather desirable if there were nothing more to think about. That is not all. The position of catcher is a fine one, because the catcher, more than any player on the field, can see and know what is going on all of the time. A watch must have a mainspring and a balance wheel. If the pitcher is the mainspring of the base ball nine, the catcher is the balance wheel. There are times when he becomes



a very substantial balance wheel. Those are when the pitcher begins to show evidence that his nerves are a little shaky. It is usually the catcher who is able to bring the machinery back again to normal working order.

It is a fine thing to be a catcher, because in that position all the game is spread before you like a panorama. If there are runners on the bases, they are in front of you and under your observation. You can see your own fielders, both of the outfield and on the infield, and note whether they are playing in a proper position to retire the batter. You have each succeeding batter to study all the time. You take a good look as to how he stands at the plate, how he holds his bat, how he uses his feet, either to advance into the ball or retreat from it. If he retreats, you are fairly well assured that you can outwit him, and then begins a little planning on your part to see that you do outwit him. It isn't just catching the ball that is in your mind most of the time. That is largely a mechanical operation concerning which there will be more to be said further on. You are using your "thinking cap" as if you were maneuvering to hook a big fat bass lurking under the root of an old stump, and as wary, perhaps, as you are eager to land him.

To be a good catcher! That's talking. To be a good catcher is to be held in the greatest esteem and admiration by those who are fond of our national game. Never has it been known to fail, so far as my recollection is worth while, that a good catcher commands a standing in base ball that is superlative. One cannot think of a good catcher without associating him with those two expressive words, "Old Reliable." When there is a good catcher

behind the bat there is twice the confidence on the part of the members of the team. The pitcher knows that he is not going to have trouble or be flustered by the wrong sign for the batters, or shiver every time that he delivers a fast ball because he fears that the catcher will fight it and let it get away from him.

### **How a young catcher made good.**

I can recall one game where the pitcher was doing splendidly, so far as his part was concerned, against a rival team. The catcher was wobbly. That's the best possible word to describe it. He began to think that he was not at his best and that made him worse. All the team got upset. There was another catcher, a young fellow, on the nine, who had not been used much on the field, because the manager had a hobby of sticking to old players, even to the extent of keeping them in the fight at times, when, perhaps, it would have been better if they had been given a rest. Things got so bad that the manager was finally induced to put the younger catcher behind the bat in place of the older one. The young catcher had not kept his eyes shut while on the bench. He had watched catchers on other teams also. He was cool and level headed and when he got behind the bat—maybe his heart for a moment was going pit-a-pat—he kept the fact well concealed and started off as business-like as if he had been catching all of his life. The very first batter struck out, because the younger catcher did not call for curves all of the time. The team "braced up" in five minutes and eventually won the game.

I am not going to say that the young catcher was as good then as he proved to be years afterward, since he

came to be a star in his time, but he was good. He had made up his mind to succeed as a catcher and had not been influenced to try first one position and then another, to finish poorly in all of them. He had ideas that were needed in playing behind the bat and he turned his attention to the development of those ideas along the right lines.

**“Buck” Ewing’s reputation will live forever.**

To be a star catcher is to be just as famous in base ball as to be a star pitcher. Sometimes I am inclined to believe that to be a real star catcher is to be bigger than anybody else on a base ball field. Take the case of “Buck” Ewing, who several years ago was catcher for the Giants. Perhaps there is not another ball player whose fame has lived among base ball players and students of the game as long as his. Not even Mathewson among the pitchers, nor Anson of the first basemen, nor “Ty” Cobb, nor even “Babe” Ruth, has commanded more sincere admiration, or is likely to command it in the years to come, than Ewing. His catching was superb. Almost perfect in the physical performance of his work, he was quick to discern the movements of his rivals, sensed plays almost before they had happened, knew batters better than they knew themselves, and watched base-runners like a hawk. Very few bases were stolen on Ewing. I remember a player who was asked by the owner of a Western team why he didn’t try to steal second base more often against the New York club. “What’s the use,” was the reply, “with Ewing behind the bat? The second baseman runs up the line and meets me with the ball between



first and second. A fellow feels as if he should have half a chance when he tries to steal, and when Ewing's playing he doesn't have any chance." There have been other catchers, whose fame was world wide, and whose names will live in base ball just as long as the national game lives. Mike Kelly, for instance; Charley Bennett, George Gibson, John Kling and Roger Bresnahan among them. They are not forgotten, even when pitchers of contemporaneous fame have dropped out of the channels of recollection.



WILLIAM B. ("BUCK") EWING



Catching the ball outside and high. Note how the mitt is placed squarely back of the ball, forming a splendid cup in which it can lodge. The ball almost can be caught with one hand when the mitt is in this position.

Conlon, Photo.

## Physical Requisites

Very often I have heard a boy say: "I can't be a good catcher. I haven't got the right build for it."

Suppose we think a minute. Of what physical type have the best catchers been? There was Connie Mack, about as good in his day as any of them; tall, very tall, and slim to the thinness of the proverbial bean pole. There was Mike Kelly, tall and broad shouldered, and not over developed below the hips. There was "Buck" Ewing; well proportioned in every way, better rounded out physically, as some have said, than any of the great catchers. There was Clements of Philadelphia, thick almost to stoutness, a player who was broad rather than tall. There was Wilson, of years gone by in Pittsburgh, who might have been a star had base ball possessed an appeal to him other than a means to the end, who was short, heavy and nimble. There was Flint, angular, bony, and looking less like a catcher than his fellow pitchers of the old Chicagos. Kittredge, who was far from being six feet tall, for years was a sturdy backstop for Anson's Colts. Of the catchers of recent years there are a number who have found a place for themselves in the more important leagues who are neither tall nor heavy. Their physical type is a complete refutation of the old theory that a good catcher had to be a big man, or a big boy, towering noticeably above his fellows.

After observing the work of the catchers for the last quarter of a century, and more, I have about concluded that the most important advantage which is derived by the



tall catcher is a greater ability to stop a high, wild delivery than is possessed by the short catcher. The longer the reach of his arms, the more efficient he is bound to be in blocking incipient wild pitches. On the other hand, sometimes the tall man is not so quick on his feet as the shorter man, and the latter by his nimbleness "holds up" the pitcher—that is one of the professional terms for keeping him steady—as well as the pitcher who is steadied by the tall fellow. Pitchers are crotchety. It gets on their nerves to be aiming to put the ball to certain marks all of the time. Like a man who is shooting from traps and missing, or the fairly good billiard player who repeatedly fails on what he considers to be an easy shot, the pitcher who lacks on one day the control of the ball that he had on another is usually quick enough to hold everybody responsible except himself.

### **Size no bar to catching ability.**

One of the pitchers of a big league team, who had been doing badly for two or three innings until the manager was on the point of making a change, blurted out when he was criticised: "Get me a catcher. I can't pitch down hill to that runt."

"What do you mean?" asked the manager.

"I mean just what I say. How's a fellow of my size going to pitch decently when you can't see anything behind the bat but a sawed-off fence post?"

"Listen," replied the manager, drily. "That sawed-off fence post, as you choose to call him, is one of the best catchers in this league. If you only knew it, you are doing far better to pitch down hill, as you call it, than to

pitch on a level plane. You're fooling the batters by that downhill work, although you haven't been doing much fooling today, because you haven't any control of the ball yourself. Haven't you made a sufficient study of base ball to know that if there is anything which a batter doesn't like, it is to feel that the pitcher is standing above him and that he is being forced to strike at the ball on a slant? Of course he isn't, as a matter of fact, but as long as you can make him believe that he is you have that much the better of it."

### **Pitcher saw the light.**

The pitcher was a reasonable player and he began to think of what the manager had told him. He had no chance to finish that particular game, because he couldn't break his curves right, but the next time that he pitched he asked the manager if the short catcher was going behind the bat. "I thought you didn't like short catchers," said the manager, with a grin. "Well, maybe I don't," retorted the pitcher, "but I've been thinking it over, and I believe that I've got a winning scheme." The manager did not argue. He was too well satisfied to think of interfering with any notion that a pitcher might have in his head toward increasing his ability on the ball field. In time that pitcher and catcher became part of a championship team.

In many ways size has less to do with the probable winning development of a catcher than any position on the ball field except that of pitcher. In other words, these two positions call more for skill along certain lines, regardless of whether the player is of a certain

physical type. A winning pitcher, four feet high, is every bit as valuable to a base ball team as a six-foot winning pitcher, and the same thing is true of the catcher. It is the quality of special skill which exalts the pitcher and the catcher to any degree of superiority more than their special physical endowment. The most perfectly formed athlete may not necessarily make the best catcher, and for that reason no young ball player who thinks that he would like to be a catcher for his team need withhold from that purpose for a moment because he imagines that he lacks height, or breadth, or weight.

### **Speed and a good arm essential.**

There are two physical attributes, however, with which every catcher should be endowed. The first of them is a strong arm—a good “whip,” as the players call it—for without strength in the throwing arm the catcher will not be able to get many base-runners who are trying to steal bases, and if a catcher cannot throw low, and with accuracy, and with great speed, he is not to become a good catcher. His place is elsewhere on the diamond. It is also essential that a catcher have large hands. It is less essential than it was before the day of the catcher's big mitt, but it is still true, even with the small pillow as an accessory to the game, that a player with a big right hand, if all other things are equal, in the long run will make a better catcher than a player with a small right hand.

Can a left-hand ball player become a good catcher? Yes. There have been good left-hand catchers. The



most famous of these was Clements of the Philadelphia Nationals, a capital receiver, and a good thrower. The temptation of a left-hand ball player to play the out-field, or to pitch, is so great that few of them ever have attempted to perfect themselves as catchers, even with a natural inclination to play behind the bat.

### **Good catchers are always in demand.**

To sum it all up, every young ball player should bear in mind that if his inclination leads him toward catching he very likely has as good a chance to become a good catcher as the other fellow. In other words, he need not be discouraged before he has begun, because his physical proportions are not on the magnitude of "six feet by three feet." If he can become a success in his position he will always be in demand, whether he is professional or amateur, because the supply of catchers never has equaled the demand since the first days of base ball. This applies as much to amateur base ball as to professional base ball. Particularly is it true of colleges. Most excellent catchers have belonged to college teams, but college catchers of real skill have been isolated instances in college athletic history. Perhaps the best college catcher who ever lived was Walker of Oberlin, who caught for his college somewhere around 1880. He was a negro. He played professional base ball for a brief period; and there was no little regret from those who admired a good ball player when he withdrew from the game.



Throwing the ball to first base with a sidearm motion and without hesitating to take aim.

Conlon, Photo.

## Must Be a Good Thrower

It already has been said that the catcher should have a good arm. He also should be a good thrower. It does not follow invariably that because you have a good arm you are a good thrower. You may be a powerful thrower, but long-distance throwing is not unexceptionally good throwing.

A good throwing catcher is one who can get the ball to the bases in the quickest time, with the least effort, and at the lowest altitude from the ground. Distance has nothing to do with it. By that is meant long distance. From home base to first base, or to third base, it is 90 feet, and from home base to second base is over 127 feet. These are the standard throws for the catcher. He is compelled to make them over and over again. His accuracy in making them, and the celerity with which he can make the ball travel, constitute good throwing. Almost all good catchers are snap throwers. They do not use a high, round arm, overhand motion. If they did they would never be successful against the speedier runners of the big leagues; nor, for that matter, against the speedier runners of school, or college, or town teams. The catcher who is compelled to get his arm over his shoulder in order that he may put continuous flight and direction into the passage of the ball will not make much headway as a guardian of the bases. It is the player who can snap the ball from the elbow, with a secondary snap of the wrist, who is the mighty thrower behind the bat. The ball seldom or never arches in the air. It goes on a direct line to the



objective—at its highest point usually not nine feet above the surface of the ground—and woe unto the runner who tries to steal when such a catcher is throwing in co-operation with a topnotch pitcher.

### Learn to “snap” the ball to the base.

By describing the throw as a snap from the elbow it is not to be inferred that the young player should think that the shoulder does not come into the play as well as the forearm. It does come into the play, but the greater impetus is given to the ball by the forearm. Not every ball player has such a forearm as had Jimmy Archer, the former Chicago National League catcher. He could throw as well, or better, from a squatting position than some ball players can throw from a standing position. The forerunner of all snap throwers was “Buck” Ewing of the 1888-89 Giants. Bennett of Detroit and Boston, who was his nearest rival, had more of an overhand throw than Ewing. In reality that point of snap throwing was the marked difference between them. Each could handle the ball perfectly, each was a past master in watching the base-runners and studying the batters, and each had about the same natural grace. Ewing, however, could get the ball quicker to the bases than Bennett by the fraction of a minute, because Bennett had to get his arm up and arch the ball, while Ewing seemed to throw with motion half overhand, half underhand. In reality it was a snap, pure and simple.

It would be absurd to say that all can be snap throwers like Ewing or Archer. We are not muscled alike. It is rare in base ball when a thrower of that character is

discovered. It has been about a quarter of a century since Ewing's time, and there has been but one thrower like him, and he was not so good. On the other hand, there is nothing to prevent every young ball player from trying to acquire something of this ability to get the ball to the bases without that long, distracting motion overhand, which is equivalent to giving at least two steps to the runner, and often more, and half of the decisions which are given at the bases are a matter of only one step.

### **The habit of taking a step when throwing.**

A snap thrower can throw flatfooted better than a round arm thrower. Now the question arises as to whether it is best always to throw flatfooted or to take a step. Almost all catchers take a step in order to clear themselves of the batter, and, I presume, unconsciously thinking they are closing in on the runner, for I do not believe that most of the time the catcher knows that he takes this step when he throws to one of the bases. Probably he would dispute it if he were told that he did.

If a catcher's arm is none too good he likes to take the step. We aren't considering plays for "dead arms." Our young ball players are supposed to have good arms. All things considered, it is best, I imagine, for the younger ball players to take a step toward the base. Most of them have not quite developed the strength they need in order to throw well flatfooted and while they are taking the one step their vision is also obtaining a better scope of the play that is before them. I presume the accuracy of their throws is increased. Accuracy is one of the principal requisites and in the case of younger players,

where the start may have been poor, a good throw, if delayed by the step, may be as dangerous to the baserunners as any other throw. Certainly a wild throw would avail nothing.

Remember, if you are a right-hand thrower, that the right foot is the pivot foot. You can't throw if your right foot is in advance when you wish to let go of the ball. Try it some time and you will find yourself stumbling over your own toes. In connection with the fact that the right foot is the pivot foot, it is also well to remember that the right foot is behind when you throw and that your throw really counts from where your right foot is located and not from where your left foot may have sprawled. These little things may seem to you like discriminations of inches that do not amount to much. They are discriminations of inches, but never think they do not amount to much. All the game of baseball is one of time and inches. Base decisions, in particular, hinge as a rule on whether the ball gets to the base in advance of the runner. The flight of the ball is time, the flight of the runner is distance. So you see minutes are steadily battling with inches.

In connection with the matter of throwing it is opportune to call the reader's attention to the fact that the catcher is not merely the receiver of the ball to throw it back to the pitcher. He is the eyes of the team the moment that a runner gets on the bases. The pilot on the bridge of a big liner is not interested on what is going on down on the main deck. His eyes are straight ahead, intent on seeing whether there is anything in the way like small craft or drift lying in the channel which his big



ship is following on its way to the open ocean, the sparkling blue ocean where the intricacies of close-to-shore navigation are not oppressive. The runner on first base, if he is smart and a winner, keeps his eyes on the pitcher the moment that he gets to the base. If he lets them wander away it is only to follow the ball in order that he may not be trapped by some trick. He watches the pitcher to ascertain when there is a chance to get away from first base for second.

### **Catcher should keep watch all the time.**

That is one pair of eyes busily at work. There should be a second pair just as busily engaged. The latter are the eyes of the catcher. It is his play to watch the runner with as much carefulness as the runner watches the pitcher. If he believes that the runner is about to leave first to try to steal the next base he can signal the pitcher to throw the ball well out, and knowing that the batter cannot reach it to hit it, has a fair chance to trap the runner. Suppose the pitcher has been hurried when he receives the sign for such a ball. He may have meant to pitch something else and, knowing that the runner is going to the next base, in his haste to assist the catcher, he gets the ball too high in the air or pitches it at some impossible angle where the catcher is lucky to hold it.

Here is where the practise of snap throwing should have done the catcher some good. If he learned anything in that kind of practise we may imagine that he learned to get the ball away quickly, no matter what position his feet may have been in or where his arms may have been stretched so that he might get hold of the ball. The

point is that the only way to get the runner is to throw, and the catcher who can throw without being compelled to "set himself" is the catcher who will make his mark.

### **Do not throw unnecessarily.**

Getting back to the point where the catcher is presumed to be in good position to throw, the young player must have his attention called to the fact that it is bad policy to be throwing the ball all of the time. The worst fault in amateur base ball is that the players cannot be prevented from throwing needlessly. When professionals play amateurs, who may be giving them a good battle, all they say is: "Wait until they get to throwing the ball. It will be easy to defeat them then." That has proved to be the case so often that it is a truism of base ball. Amateurs will throw when runners are in action, whether there is the slightest chance to put them out or not. The amateur player does not seem to be able to gauge the distance at which he cannot put a runner out. To try for an impossible play is foolish. Why take risk when there is no chance?

That it is most advisable to practise throwing from any position is easy to perceive, when you stop to think how your skill is being analyzed by the other fellows. For instance, if the catcher can throw from only one throwing position; that is, throw with any skill, it will not take long for the players of other teams to find that out. In the very first game it may become apparent. Runners watch those little deficiencies. They take advantage of them. The first time that some runner makes up his mind that the ball is going badly to the catcher, and

that the latter has not perfected himself in throwing a ball badly served to him, off he will start for the next base, and it is reasonably certain that he will make it.

### How to throw to the baseman.

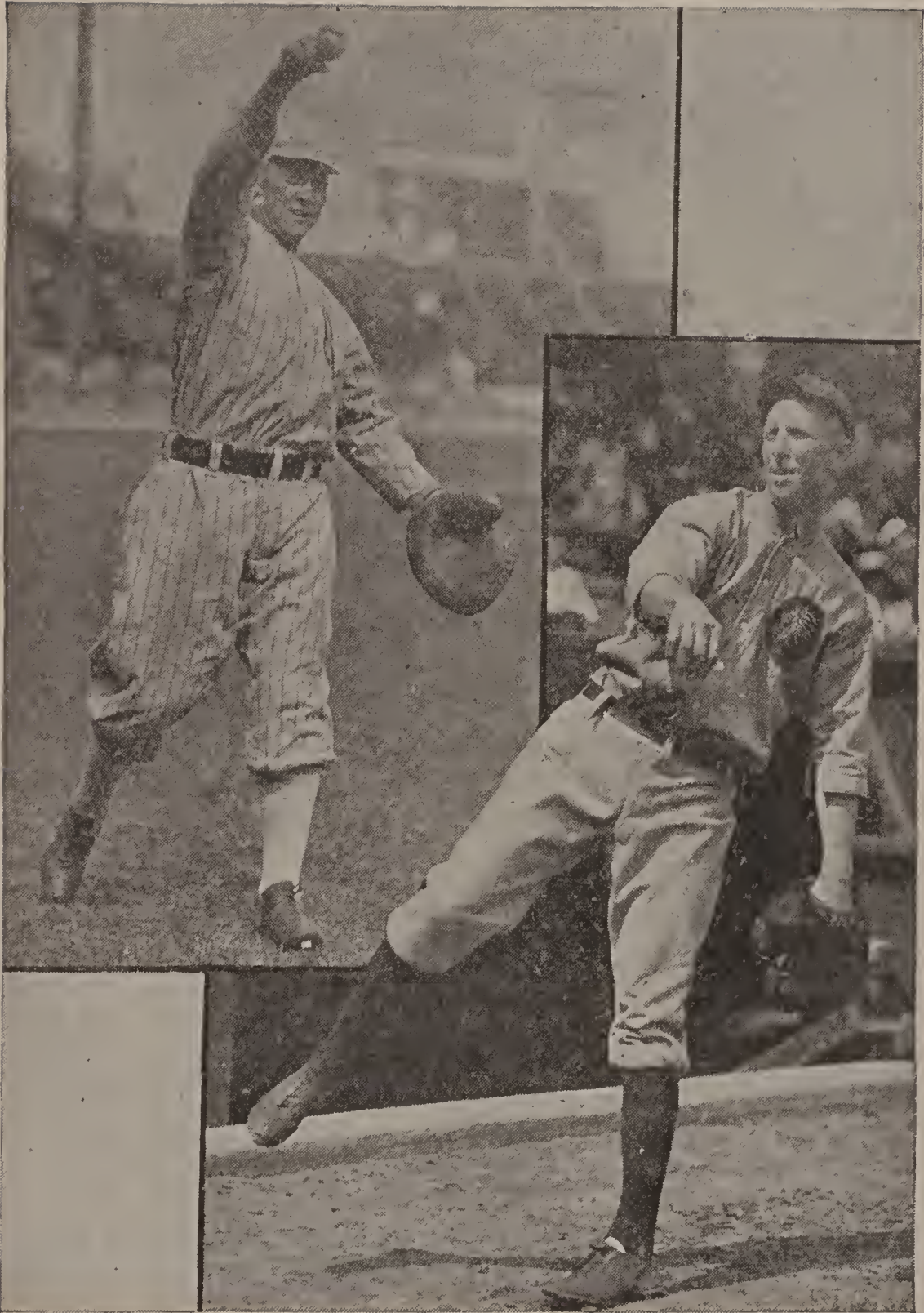
There is another thing in connection with the throw. The catcher should always try to throw, so far as it lies within his power, in such a manner that the player who receives the ball will get it on that side of him which is toward the runner, advancing toward the base—except first base. Many catchers throw with a curve in spite of all their effort not to twist the flight of the ball. The only hope that they have to be successful is to keep it under control, as a curve is kept under control by the pitcher. They must learn to time the “break” in the ball with the probable position of the infielder. It is easy enough to see why it is not feasible to throw on the runner’s side when throwing to first base. That would bring the ball in line with the runner, with the chance of collision between runner and baseman, something to be avoided always.

It is not good policy for the catcher to “lob”—that is, throw it in an arching manner—the ball when throwing it. The game may be such that a quick return is needed most of all, and when the catcher arches the ball to a baseman under such conditions it is bad play. Speed the ball up whenever possible. It might almost be said that no catcher can throw hard enough to a baseman to cause the latter to muff direct. He may muff, but it will be more likely due to interference or to bad gauging of the throw on his own part. Speed lodges a ball well in a



fielder's hands. In addition to that, speed gives the baseman a chance. When the catcher gets the ball on the wrong side of the base-runner, as he will sometimes, the baseman must shift the ball from one hand to the other, and still touch the runner out before the latter can dig his feet into the base. If the ball has been thrown without energy the runner is likely to beat it out.

There is another point to be considered. A ball thrown with speed frequently will bound as straight as a rifle shot into the hands of the baseman, providing the ball, even though short in distance, is accurate in flight and hustling with power. Many a base-runner has been thrown out because the thrown ball bounded well to the baseman, but there would not have been a chance to make a play if there had not been strength in the catcher's arm to put speed on the ball.

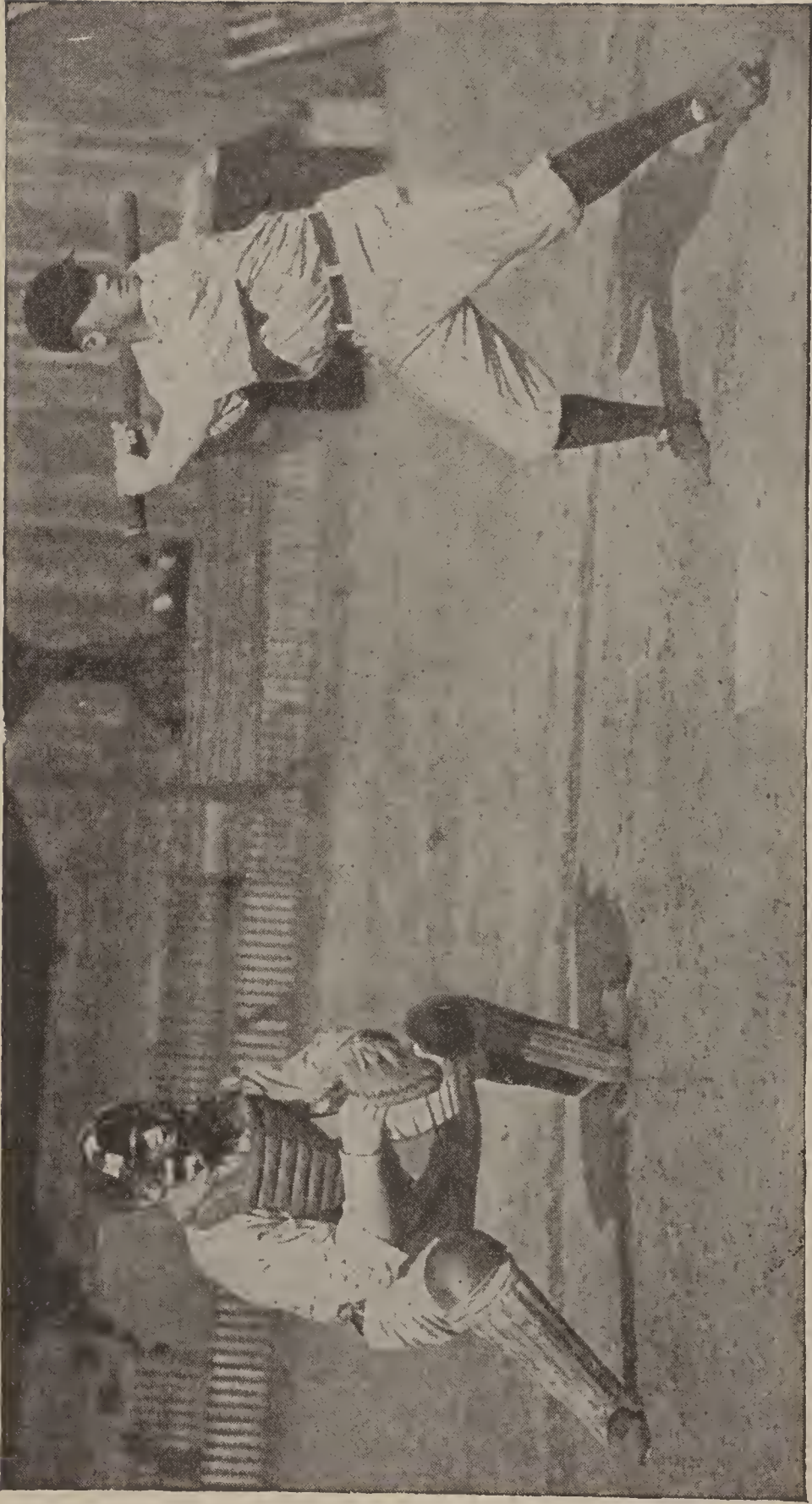


A high, arching, round-arm motion in throwing the ball to the bases. (Posed by Walter Schang.)

Typical balance on one foot after throwing the ball. Used to gain force. (Posed by Hank Gowdy.)

Conlon, Photos.





Catcher, wearing mask, chest protector, mitt and shin guards in proper position behind the batter. Note that the batter is what is known as a "front hitter." He stands in, with one foot in advance of the home plate. The ball has just been pitched and the catcher is set to receive it. Owing to an optical illusion, due to the angle at which the photograph is taken, the catcher appears to be some distance away from home plate. In reality, he is almost upon it.



## Behind the Bat

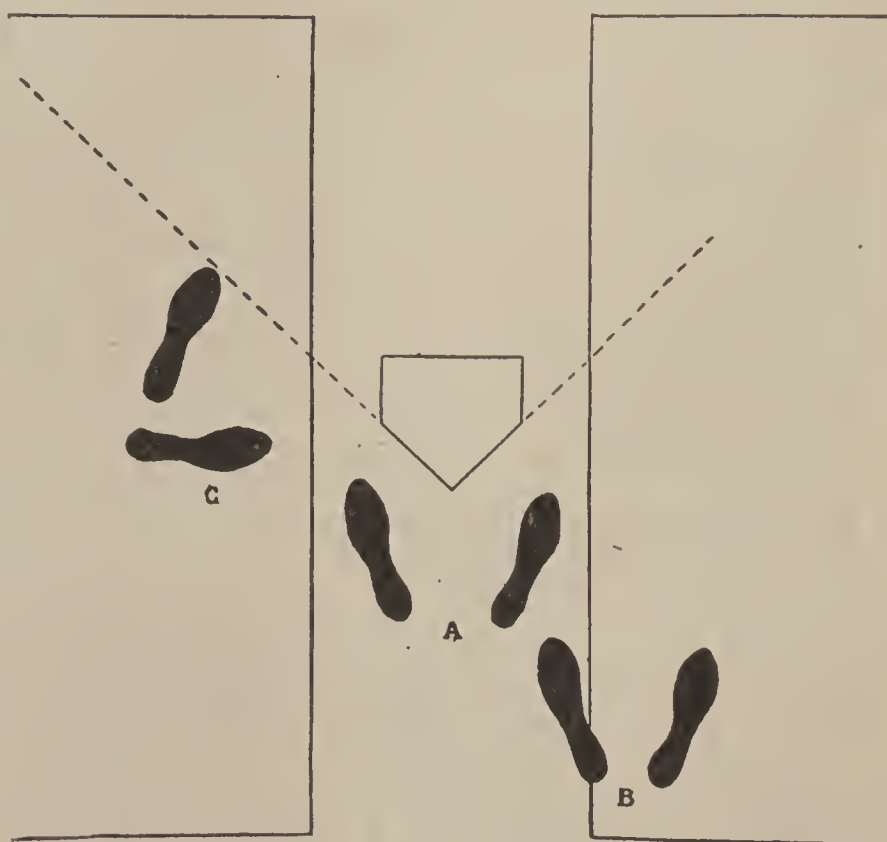
The boys who are just beginning and some catchers who have had a little experience too often make the mistake of standing too far back of the batter. By that one little fault it is almost always possible to recognize the novice. The longer that a catcher remains with the more expert players the greater his desire to get as close to the batter as he dare in trying to catch the ball. Not infrequently I have seen a catcher cautioned by the umpire to step back. He may have thought that the catcher intended to interfere with the batter, because there have been catchers who were tricky enough to do that sort of thing, although it is not sportsmanlike, nor is it honest play.

The idea of getting as closely to the batter as possible is a good one and based on sound principles. The quicker that the catcher can handle a curve ball after it has begun to "break," the better his chance to handle it with accuracy. As the ball curves further it twists more awkwardly and gets out of reach. A pitcher who is inclined to be wild will have poor control if his catcher plays too far back of the batter. Foul tips are caught more luckily if the catcher is close up than if he is away from the plate. The foul tip takes a jump, or a slant, when the ball hits the bat, and the deviation of the ball from a straight flight will be less if it is caught close up to the home plate.

The catcher does not stand erect all of the time. He could, if he wished to do so, but the modern method is to squat behind the plate. From this position the catchers

of the present day believe they can give their signals with more secrecy than from a standing position. That is very likely true. It would be an easy task to stand erect, and with fingers and hands attempt to tell the pitcher what the catcher would like to have pitched. It could be done, but by the time the catcher had finished everybody would know what had been going on if the signs could be translated.

In the diagram the position of the feet, as designated by A, shows the proper place for the catcher to stand



behind the batter. The point, C, is the station of the batter in the batter's box. This diagram is specially intended as a hint to beginners and to catchers on boys' teams. Both beginners and boys have a tendency to

stand too far back and too far to one side, as is illustrated by B. The objections to standing at the point, B, or approximately near it, are that foul tips are less easily caught, the pitcher loses the value of the catcher's body as a target at which to throw, and the turn of the ball in curve pitching is caught at a bad angle, with the added fact that the ball is on the down break and more difficult to handle, the catcher's hands being employed too much around his knees when they should be as high from the ground as possible.

### **Position from which signs should be given.**

Squat down and crouch forward, keep the feet well together, and hold the mitt in the angle which is formed by the body and the thighs. Now you are in the right attitude to give signs to the pitcher. With practise you can acquire cleverness enough to signal the pitcher and the outfielders with such dexterity that the other side will be unable to ascertain what is going on—all but a runner of the other side, if there happens to be one on second base. Watch out for him, because he is watching you. The moment that he gets to second base, if he is sharp-eyed, he is studying every movement of the catcher to see what signs he uses. If he can ascertain them it will not be long before the other team will be rapping the ball or stealing bases when not expected to do so. They will have found the secret of the defense. If the pitcher and catcher work by the plan of the catcher giving the signals, it is impossible to avoid giving away what sort of a ball the catcher wishes to have pitched. Always try to give information to the fielders at the same



time. If they know what the pitcher will deliver to the batter they will govern their shift in the field accordingly.

After the sign has been given the catcher can assume an erect position or a position half erect. Stand up, with the gloved hand and the ungloved hand stretched toward home plate. If the pitcher is wild shake both hands on a line with the center of the plate to attract his eye, and then hold them steadily at a right angle to your hips. It will give him a target at which to aim. Many pitchers have bad control more because they cannot see the plate as a target than because they are erratic throwers. When the home plate is covered by dirt it is a very unsatisfactory object as a target point.

### **Be careful that batter does not discover signals.**

Do not give any intimation to the batter by the manner in which the feet are shifted as to the kind of curve that is likely to come. If an attempt is made to fool him he will soon become aware of the trick and watch for it, and he will be about as quick to learn when such a shift is made half unconsciously, because the catcher is not careful. Be ready to move rapidly. If the best pitcher in the world happened to be pitching to you he might make a half wild pitch on the first ball that he threw. If you are "anchored," as the ball players say, you can not change your position quickly enough to make a perfect stop of the ball.

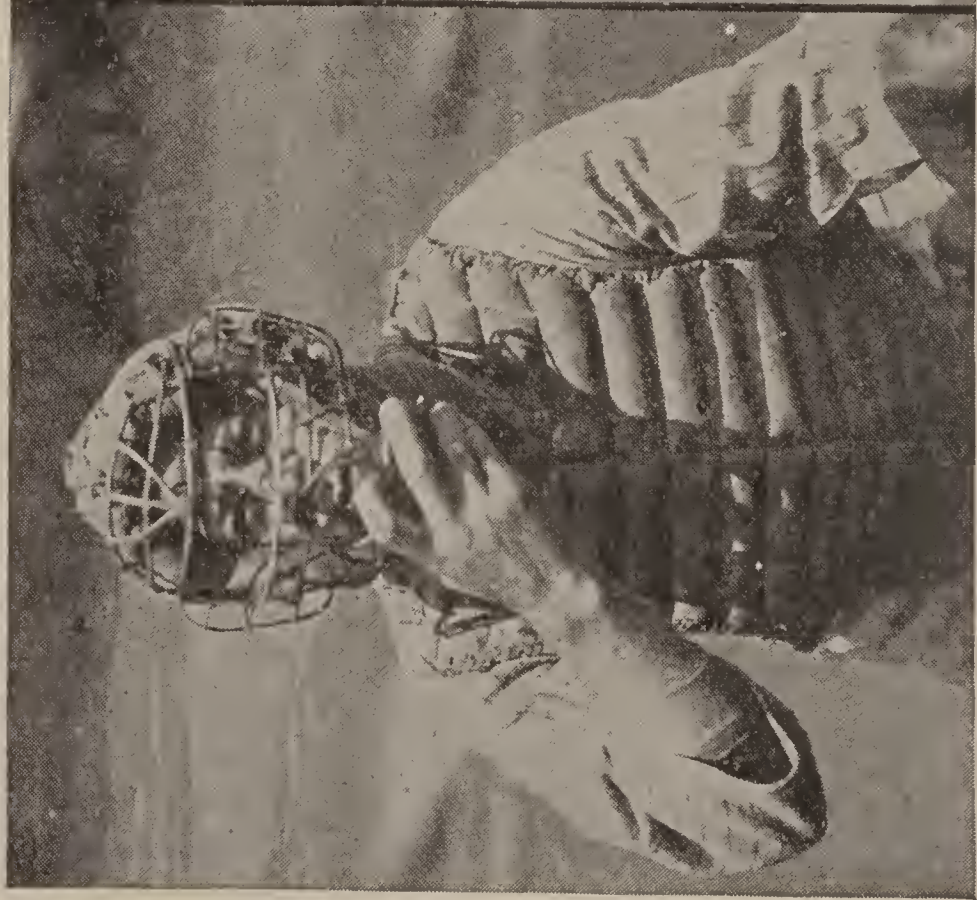
The catcher must bear in mind that he must be ready to stop possible wild pitches on both sides of the plate. Frequently the ball gets away altogether from the pitcher, and if the catchers were not so expert there would be a

great many more wild pitches recorded at the end of the seasons which are played by the major and minor leagues. Keep on your toes, because there are high foul flies to be caught, and even the catches of the outfielders are not more difficult than some of those high, twisting fouls which mount into the sun, and between sun and the shade of the stand or foliage are almost indistinguishable.

The throw to second base is another thing that demands alacrity on your part. You must shift to where you are clear of the batter to throw in one of three ways, to first, to second, or to third base. The throw to third does not seem to be difficult, yet catchers undertake it but seldom owing to the fact that most catchers, being right-handed, and also most of the batters, the catcher's arm must cross the batter unless the catcher is apt enough to throw behind the batter.

Always try to get the ball from the pitcher when there is a runner on the bases in such a manner that you can get a quick grip on it with the throwing hand. Of course, if the ball has come squarely into the mitt it will have to be lifted out of the mitt. That's all there is to it. If you have caught it in such a manner that you can cover it quickly with the fingers of your right hand, getting a grip on it at the same time, the chances are infinitely better that you will make a speedy and accurate throw. If you have to fuss with the ball the runner will be edging away from you all of the time. Every step that he gains makes your work harder. Don't throw or think of throwing if you have dropped the ball and the runner is within a few feet of the base. If you throw hurriedly it probably means a wild throw, with the runner going to third





First motion to be used in taking off the mask when running for a foul fly.



Second motion to be used when taking off the mask to run after a foul fly.



instead of being on second, and in addition to dropping the ball you have given the runner a base which he might never have made but for your rashness in attempting the impossible.

### **Take off mask when running after high fouls.**

Adjust your mask in such a way that a quick pull will release it. The quicker that you can get it off the better the chance to get the high fouls. There was a time, in the early days of the mask, when the catcher did not try to throw it off. He attempted to catch fouls while wearing the mask, but that long ago was given up. The masks are far better made and the catchers know much better how to use them. When you throw the mask off throw it out of the direction in which you are running. Practise will quickly teach you how to do that. It isn't pleasant to stumble over one's mask and come a cropper in a tangle of wire and straps, not to mention the loss of the catch.



Catching the ball outside and low. Note how the mitt is under the ball, acting in a way as a cup. Also note the manner in which the ungloved hand is held to make the catch sure. Conlon, Photo.

## Using the Mitt Correctly

I can almost hear the beginner laugh when he receives a hint that he must learn to use the catcher's mitt properly. I know a small nephew who had a good laugh about it until he found out that so simple a matter as handling a catcher's mitt had its right way and its wrong way.

There has been objection to playing the position of catcher because of possible raps on the finger joints. The physical pain is unpleasant and the occasional annoyance is enlargement of the bones, which does not add to the beauty of the hands—although most boys are not particular about that—and some parent may believe that it will prevent the young athlete from becoming an expert player on the piano or other musical instrument.

“All that you have to do with a mitt is to put it on and catch the ball,” said the small nephew. So far as the statement went, it was right. The mitt, however, has been devised to put an end, as much as possible, to the hurts which marred the playing of the boy, the beginner, and the grown man. Nowadays the catcher, if he handles the mitt right, is in no more fear of injury than the first baseman or any other infielder, except that his possibilities are much more numerous, because of the greater number of times that he is compelled to handle the ball.

The thing to do is to learn to receive the ball in the mitt. Let the latter bear all of the hard work. It is



not impossible, although some may think it is. To learn to use the mitt right is to remove the impossible. No matter how great the speed of the pitcher may be, the mitt is such a well padded cushion that the shock of collision, when the ball comes "head on," as we may say, is felt but little on the surface of the palm of the hand. It is quite out of the question to sting the fingers of the protected hand or to bruise them, as was the case in other days before the splendid mitt now in use was invented. The catcher learns to "give" with the ball. That is part of the idea of using the mitt properly. The uncovered hand is never to be used as a buffer. It is the trap which closes over the ball after the mitt has stopped it.

### **Using the backhand motion to stop the ball.**

Now and then, when the bat touches the ball, it will deflect its flight, so that the ball shoots to one side. For a while the catcher took a shoot like that on the bare hand, not infrequently with much disadvantage to himself. Catchers now have a backhand motion by which they reach across and stop the flight of the ball with the mitt. There are foul tips which come at lightning speed that cannot be stopped by the protected hand, because neither hand can get out of the way of them. That hazard of the game cannot be avoided. Fielders in excitement have been known to throw full speed at short distance during a game, and the fielder to whom the ball was thrown could not dodge. Time forbade. Gnarled finger joints, twisted fingers, and distorted knuckles quickly went when the

catcher's mitt was invented. The catcher of today is far better off than his predecessor.

As the mitt has done so much for the catcher, it is not out of place to say that it has changed in many details the work of the backstop. The old idea of catching was to fight the ball, to reach out for it, and grab it, almost before the batter had time to strike at it. Now that the catcher and pitcher work in such perfect harmony, owing to the prevalence of good signal systems, the catcher can place the hand on which he wears a mitt almost at the identical spot where the ball will come. With his uncovered hand he is ready in a moment to grip the ball with firmness and throw it to bases, if necessary, to head off some ambitious runner.

### **One hand does most of the work.**

It is not compulsory to place both hands in a certain position to receive the ball. Use the catcher's mitt, as it is made now, and the beginner will quickly learn that one hand does almost all of the work that two did in the old days, while the second, or free hand, is ready for any play which may arise. Thus it is that all catchers are by necessity and convenience more one-hand catchers than they were before in the history of base ball.

It will be found that in catching foul flies—one of the most deceptive hits that come to the man behind the bat—the mitt is an important adjunct to assistance. It is necessary first, of course, to judge a foul fly successfully. After the catcher is once under the ball,

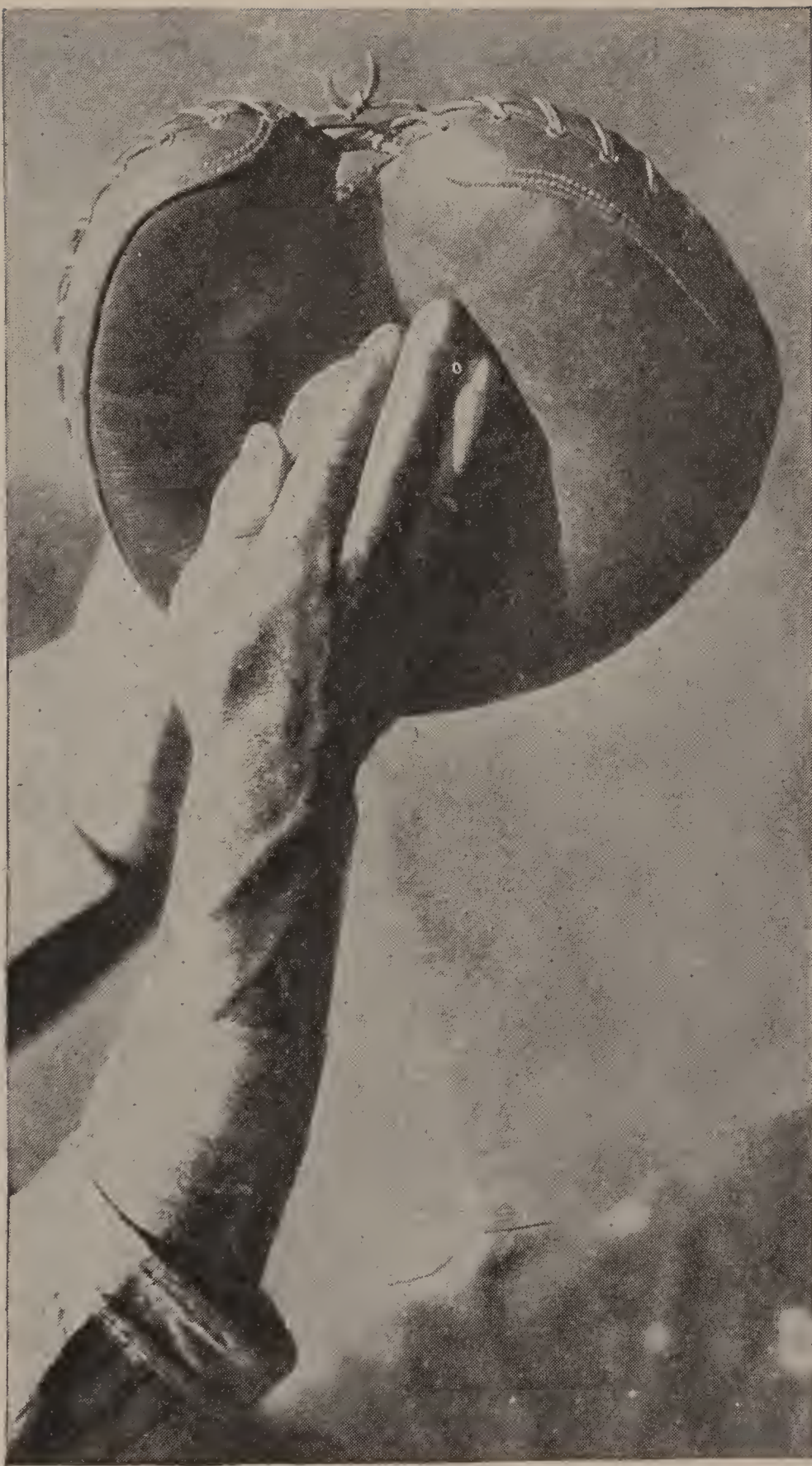
if he will let it drop in his mitt and trap it with his bare hand, he will find it much easier to hold than if he makes an effort to make a fair two-handed catch. This is particularly true when the ball happens to be twisting. In years gone by, when the catchers used light gloves, or none at all, the "twisters" that arose behind the bat were a constant irritation. Perhaps one-third of the time the ball would wriggle out of the catcher's hands, no matter how bravely he tried to hold it, and the result would be another life for the batsman.

Using the mitt properly, as it is manufactured nowadays, the catcher has but to let it get fairly under the ball, which will lodge securely enough to be easily held by the free hand. The concave surface of the mitt seems to act as a deadener to the twist of the high foul fly, and unless the ball is spinning around at an unusually rapid rate, it is not apt to get away.

The mitt does not interfere in the least in throwing to bases. On the contrary, its surface is so ample that it gives the catcher a chance to get a good, firm grip on the ball, and he is in position to throw at the very moment in which he draws back his arm and hand.

When one looks at advertisements in an old Spalding Guide of the '80s, and sees the glove—there were no mitts—with fingers cut off half way, he can appreciate the improvement that has been made in equipment.





Always try to catch the ball on the mitt and not on the bare hand. As shown in the illustration, the bare hand is used to hold the ball against the mitt after the ball has been stopped. Conlon, Photo.





An excellent body and shoulder motion in throwing to second base when the catcher is wearing mask, protector and mitt.

Conlon, Photo.

## The Thinking Part of Catching

It is not to be expected that the youngsters in the growing age of knickerbockers will have the steadiness to give the thought which calls for the "reason" for every play. This book on catching has been prepared, however, for the youth and the young adult as well as the boys, and it is its purpose to make the hints on playing so plain and simple that the small boys will pick them up as well as the larger boys. They are not expected to grasp all at once or to grasp all the possibilities of the catcher's position at once. There are major league catchers who do not know, after some years of experience, all of the finer points of the game. Some of them are too indifferent. That's it—actually indifferent. They go through their work mechanically enough, but they never are members of the championship teams. The players who think and who are as happy in doing the little things right as they are in making spectacular plays at some time or another, generally are seen with the champions, because it is attention to the details and small points of the game, as much as heavy hitting, that rounds out a quick thinking championship team.

When the catcher has donned his big mitt and taken his place behind the batter, his active part in the game has begun. It has been told how he should stand and effort has been made to help him in the mechanical part of his playing, but that is not all that he is supposed to do. In the first place, he is supposed to have



a good understanding with his pitcher. Between them their signs should be so well known that it is not necessary for the catcher to stop the game to walk out to the pitcher and tell him that he hasn't caught the sign correctly. Whenever that happens the other side knows that the pitcher and catcher are not very well acquainted in a base ball way, and they govern their acts accordingly. They are then likely to be a bit more daring in leading off the bases and will almost certainly test the catcher by trying to steal, in order to learn whether the pitcher is helping him by getting the ball quickly to the plate.

**Have your signs fully understood before play starts.**

Consult about the signs before the game begins, and not when the inning begins.

In a first game between strange teams, no one expects the catcher to know exactly what kind of a ball each batter most favors, or most dislikes. The smaller boys always have to take chances on that part of the game. What the catcher should do is to try the batter out, and try to remember when he is trying him out whether he swung poorly at a curve, at a fast ball, or at a slow one, and whether he dodged away from a curve or stepped into a fast one awkwardly, showing no relish for speed. If the catcher can get a little information on each batter the first time that he comes to the box to bat, it will be worth a lot when he comes up the second time to bat. Of course, in the big leagues, and in the more important minor leagues, they are supposed to study those things all of the time.

Not all of them do. There are major league catchers who cannot tell the weaknesses of more than twenty-five per cent. of the batters who play against them. They try their best to watch the known sluggers and frequently overlook the other batters.

### **Study the batters.**

Everyone knows that a straight ball is the easiest of all to gauge unless it is pitched with extreme speed. There are batters who like to swing at speed. It is always dangerous to give them a straight ball with much force, because if they meet it squarely they will very likely bat it over the fence. If they do not make a long hit they are apt to cut it through the infield a "mile a minute." If a strange batter behind whom one is playing for the first time unhesitatingly swings with a parallel motion for the first straight ball that is pitched, caution had better be exercised about pitching any more of that kind to him. He has told very apparently what he likes. Try curves for him, or a slow teaser, or if speed is to be used, keep it very high and close into him, so that he will hit with the handle of the bat if he does meet the ball.

In the foregoing you will see that a valuable point has been covered thus early. It is pretty certain that any catcher, young or old, will not overlook anything so plain. There are some batters who make a practice of taking one strike at least before they will try to bat the ball. Most catchers try to get their pitchers to pitch a strike on the first ball to such batters. Be a little careful how the strike is pitched. If the batter

finds that a first straight ball is coming to him all the time from certain pitchers, it is not unlikely that in some important game, instead of taking the one strike, the batter will swing and "hit the ball a mile" with runners on bases. A good pitcher will respond to a signal for a curve on the corner. A ball is a strike if over the corner exactly as if it is over the center of the plate, and there will be less temptation to take a swing at a corner curve. A very interesting chapter on this theory of keeping the batter guessing—on the part of the pitcher—is printed in the Spalding Athletic Library book, "Base Ball for Beginners," by John B. Sheridan, the originator of the boys' size diamond, price 10 cents.

If the catcher knows that a batter has a liking for a high ball he should never give him one—that is, if he hits the high ball safely most of the time. What is the use of tempting fate and the loss of the game? If the catcher knows positively that the batter is a low ball hitter he will be very foolish to call for a low ball from the pitcher over the plate. A good pitcher can keep the ball high and he can pitch strikes with some disregard of extreme caution if his catcher continues to signal him for high ones to the batter who favors low pitching to any other kind.

At first it may seem as if the catcher has much to think about—trying to recall what Jack hits, what Tom doesn't hit, and so on. You will be surprised, however, after the practise of observation has gone on for a while, to see how easy it becomes to remember. It is a sort of subconscious act. Fred comes to the



bat for the first time and you sign the pitcher for a drop ball on the outside. Fred swings blindly at the ball. A little entry jots itself down in your mind—"weak on a drop." Perhaps the next ball will be a high one, to which he pays no attention, so back goes the sign for another drop, and again Fred attempts to hit the ball. You may call for the drop on the very next pitch, but the batter, a little wary this time, refuses to swing at the ball, which goes wide. Come right back with another drop, which looks as if it were going over home plate, and he is so sure that it is going over the plate that he swings and misses, or hits a feeble blow to the infield. The catcher had as much to do with that as the pitcher, in a way, because he was telling the pitcher broadly all the time how to pitch to this man, for he could see how he handled his bat at the plate.

### Catching the batter napping.

That's the way the game goes with batter after batter. Sometimes the catcher has a sign for a quick return. Some batters are slow and dilatory at the plate. They should not be. That is not why they are there, but they are incautious, nevertheless. With the same motion that the catcher threw the ball back to the pitcher he can ask the latter to pitch again at once. The batter, caught off guard, is sure to growl and is almost sure to be penalized by a strike if the pitcher has good control of the ball.

It is always a good rule for the catcher to reverse what the batter seems to like. Now and then it will

not work, because there are so many chances in base ball. If a batter likes low ones, however, give him high ones, and if he likes speed, give him a slow ball, and keep reversing these as long as you are a catcher. It is also to be noted whether the batter likes to swing at the ball when it is close in or when it is out.

### **Studying the batter's style.**

Most batters are fooled by reaching wide for curves that break off the further corner of home plate. There are some batters, however, who take a step toward the ball, if it is pitched wide, and meet it just as the curve is about to break. Better not pitch many wide ones to them. The easier way to fool them is to pitch inside and drive them back. A pitched ball that is close in is about as hard to hit as anything, but now and then a batter can be found who likes that kind to hit best of all, and a batter who can hit on the inside usually can hit hard and wickedly. As a rule, in games which are played by boys, high balls are the hardest for the youngsters to handle. However, Nature has compensated for that, because it is also a rule that the younger pitchers have any amount of difficulty to control the high ball. They don't pitch around the shoulder as well as around the waist.

Probably the catcher will think that he has something of a task when he is told that in addition to looking after these batters all of the time he also must look after the base-runners. That, too, is an important part of his play, and when there are plenty of runners on the other team who are known to be fast, and who can get a good lead

away from a slow pitcher, the catcher is about the busiest man on the field.

As much as possible the batter and base-runner, if there be a runner, will try to work together. The catcher cannot prevent them from trying to baffle him, but he can do a little trying himself, and make an effort to keep them from succeeding in making a run at his expense. If certain players get on first base it is equally certain that they are going to try to get to second, and that if they can work with the batter as they hope to work, they will possibly get to third and the batter will get a base hit. That is the hit-and-run theory. With a runner on any base it means the same thing. The moment, therefore, that a runner has arrived at first the catcher is confronted with a dual task. He must still attempt to enable the pitcher to outwit the batter, and he must keep an eye on that man at first who is dancing around as if there were hot coals under his feet.

### The "old army game."

Perhaps you have heard the expression in base ball about the "old army game." The "old army game" means that the batter will try to bunt if there is a runner on first base and no one out. There are some managers who make this play as devoutly as if it were worship. That is why it is called the "old army game." It is a one-run play, pure and simple. Sometimes more runs are made in an inning when it is attempted, but the impulse and the plan is to get the one run sure.

Boys do not do much bunting, but they try it now and then. If the catcher is certain that the batter is



desirous to bunt he should have the ball pitched inside, or very fast and low. The batter will have hard work to make a successful bunt on that kind of pitching. Of course, the ball must be over the plate, because if the batter received a base on balls, it would be just as good as a sacrifice or a base hit. In fact better than a sacrifice, as there would be no one out instead of one out. Keep an eye on the runner, and if he appears likely to start on the next pitched ball, ask the pitcher to give you a "wide one," but don't call for too many "pitch outs." Like some other plays in base ball, it is overworked and it shows a little weakness on the part of the catcher. Of course, if you are confident at any time that the runner has given notice that he will try for second on the next ball pitched, you will be very foolish not to try to make the play a sure out for your team if possible. With two out and a team anxious to make a last effort to tie the score it is fairly good odds that the runner will try to steal second on one of the pitched balls and the catcher should be ready to go after him on a moment's notice.

## With Runners On Bases

Information has been given as to the best way to get the ball to the base if the runner does start. The necessity for accuracy and quickness have been told. Your throws to second should be low and well on the side of the bag toward which the runner is coming. That saves time. Repeatedly a runner steals second base in the face of a perfect throw. That is to say, the throw was straight, and it was fast, but the ball landed on the shortstop's side of the bag and before the baseman could get it over to the other side of the bag to touch the runner he had slid safely to the mark.

The covering of second base is not up to the catcher. Of course, he should know whether the shortstop or the second baseman is going to cover, as a matter of information, but that is all that he need know. His business is to get the ball to the base at the quickest possible moment and in the best possible way for the runner to be put out.

It is taken for granted that the first baseman is generally alert, but more than often his mind is taken up with something else than a throw to catch a runner napping at first, if the throw comes from the catcher. In case the latter notices a disposition on the part of the runner to stroll away too far from first base he would better be sure that the first baseman has been given a signal that he is going to throw on the next pitched ball, and that the first baseman has caught the signal. Otherwise the ball may be thrown into right field, because the first baseman was caught off his guard.

Third base is not stolen as much as it should be tried. When a runner arrives at second he plays safe. He is fearful that if he tries to steal third and is thrown out, especially if the game is close, that he will lose standing with the crowd. Yet be sure that a weather eye is on the runner, if there is one on second. He may surprise everybody by suddenly bolting from second to third, and if he makes the base he has a chance to score on a long fly if there is but one hand out. A passed ball and a wild pitch, or an error, will also help him. When there are players on first and second bases and a double steal is attempted, throw the ball to third base the moment that you get your hands on it. After that remember that you are to guard home plate in case of an error and do not run away and leave it undefended, so that the third baseman has no one to whom to throw the ball, if the runner is between third base and home.

### **When catcher has men to watch on first and third bases.**

The most difficult moment for the catcher, so far as base-running is concerned, is when there is a player on first and another on third. All kinds of systems are tried by managers to prevent stealing. About the best thing to do is to give thought to the batter who is at the plate. If he is not much of a batter, make a bluff for the runner who is going to second and then wheel around and try for the runner on third, if he has been coaxed off the base. If the batter is a good batter, play for a quick return to the plate. That means a short throw, either to the pitcher or to the infield. Whatever may be done, be



sure not to make an error. That is one time when errors are very disastrous, especially if there is a chance to tie the score or win. Get one runner, if possible.

Almost all runners slide feet first when they come in to the plate on close decisions or when they expect they may be thrown out. The old headforemost sliding is quite done away with in good base ball. Sliding feet foremost means that the spikes are in advance of the runner. It is possible to touch a runner without blocking him, and, on the whole, it is better to touch him without blocking him, because there is danger to the catcher in blocking a base-runner, and if a good catcher is injured and unable to play for a period his team suffers by the loss of his services. The catcher is also called upon to take care of many throws from the outfield. Most of them will come on the bound. All of them should come on the bound, but occasionally an outfielder gets excited and tries a line throw to the plate. The catcher must be able to shift around quickly to get these throws and should take plenty of practise that he may stop anything which comes to him on the bound.



The catcher is using his mitt as a shield to prevent the coaches stationed at the bases from observing his signals.



Sometimes the catcher gives his signs underneath the mitt instead of holding it at right angles from him.

## Battery Signs

There is something about the word signs that interests the prospective catcher whether he is young or old. It conveys the idea of intelligent direction of a ball game and in a manner that is perfectly legitimate, because it is open to discovery if the other side is smart enough to understand the method of expression which is being used by the team in the field, and it places a premium on ability.

If signs meant something, which included also an unfair advantage, they would not be symbolical of fair sport. They do not mean anything of the kind. Their purpose is that of direct communication between the catcher and the pitcher and between other members of a team—if the code of signs extends that far—by a system of signals understood by those who employ it, and which is expressed in such a manner that only those who are acquainted with the signs grasp their significance.

Signs are attractive to the seasoned player, with all of his experience, as to his younger brother. The catcher not only delights in playing well, but he takes pride in being able to converse intimately with his pitcher in a language not to be understood by opposing players, even though it may be partly perceptible all of the time. Communication is carried on so cleverly that one team is presumed to be unable to decipher the medium of expression which is used by the other.

The simpler the signs which are used in base ball the more practical they will be found. For the younger



players it does not do at all to try to learn an involved code of finger signs, signs by word, or signs by movements of the arms or legs. In the excitement of a game the signs are too likely to be mixed, with unfortunate results, and, worse yet, are too likely to be forgotten or to be used at the wrong time unconsciously.

In one of the school teams which I saw play one afternoon the catcher shifted his foot a certain way for a straight ball. He got along splendidly for a while. His team was ahead and his pitcher was keeping the batting down to a minimum. An error or two happened and the situation changed quite completely.

#### **Catcher unconsciously gave wrong sign.**

It only takes a mistake or two to make a material difference in a ball game. The catcher began to get nervous. With men on the bases naturally he wanted his pitcher to do his very best. In his laudable desire to do the right thing he did the wrong. Unconsciously he gave a signal to the pitcher for a straight ball. The latter seemed to be a little surprised, and, as the writer happened to know the signs of the team, he, too, was surprised. The pitcher might have hesitated and shaken his head in the negative, but, as he said afterward, he was afraid if he did that one of the other side might get "on to the sign" because a change would have to be made. He pitched the straight ball and the score was tied on the strength of the hit which followed. Eventually his team won the game.

After the contest was over the catcher was asked how he came to give a sign for a straight ball under the circumstances. "I didn't," was the reply. "Oh, yes,"

said the pitcher, "you asked for a straight ball." The pitcher had evidence on his side to confirm his assertion that the straight ball had been thrown on the strength of the signal.

### **Do not use signs that may be misunderstood.**

We found out that the catcher really thought he had signed for a curved ball. The trouble with his sign for a straight ball was that it was similar to a movement which he was accustomed to make with his foot in moments of excitement, and he had unconsciously called for a straight ball when he had another purpose in his mind. It is not good policy to have any sign in a code identical with anything which is common on the part of a player who is to give the sign, as, in a moment of abstraction or nervousness, he may do what this catcher did—give the wrong sign, and not be aware of the fact himself.

After the invention of the big mitt for the catcher it became more common to give signs by the fingers. The mitt made a splendid screen in front of which the catcher could hide his ungloved hand and signal with his fingers to the pitcher. Prior to the time of the mitt it was not so easy to conceal finger signs. As the mitt never will go out of base ball unless there is a radical change in the game, which none of us can foresee now, the catcher may be advised without hesitancy to devise any signs that he wishes to use in which the mitt will shield his "deaf and dumb talk."

Signs can be made with any finger, any number of fingers, the thumb, and the thumb and finger. The combinations are so many, and so obvious, that any boy or

young player can easily put a system together. The fist, doubled up, can be used. The hand open, with palm extended either one way or the other, can be the basis of a system. A great pretense can be made of giving the signs on the glove while, in reality, another method quite different is being employed.

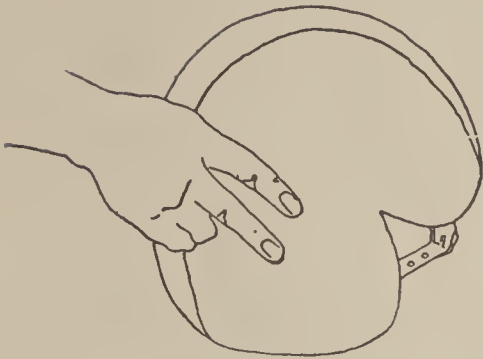
There is one big league catcher who fooled everybody for all of his catching years by pretending to be giving signs with his fingers across the inside of his catching mitt, when the fact was that all of his signs were given by voice. Season after season he squatted down behind the plate and went through all of the mystery of hiding his hands, and apparently signaling the pitcher by that



One of the many methods of signaling. The ungloved hand is kept behind the screen provided by the catcher's mitt and the sign is given close to the leg of the catcher.



method. Season after season he kept up a constant chatter of seemingly nonsensical conversation, using stock phrases over and over, until even the critics began to chide him about his "parrot talk." The interesting part of this was that the "parrot talk" really conveyed the sign to the pitcher. The manner in which he rattled on was so alike day after day, and so seemingly only the mechanical utterance of a player who didn't know of much anything else to say, that he threw all of his opponents off the scent. Coachers and captains hung around the base lines in the coachers' boxes, and runners at second base studied in vain to get his signs. He manipulated his fingers cleverly, and with such apparent effort of intention, that the impression went around his circuit that he had the best system of signaling of any major league catcher, because no one could decipher it. He did have the best system, although many a time he got "joshed" by opposing players because of his monotonous jabbering when he was behind the bat.



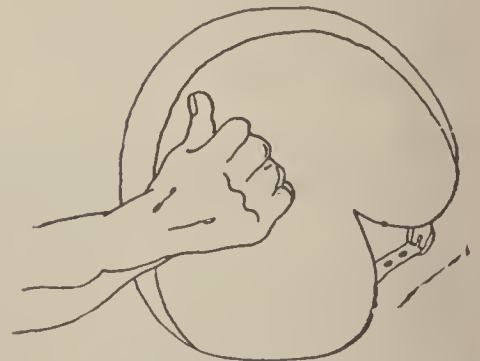
Using first and second fingers.



Using index finger.



Using the flat of the hand.



Using the thumb.



Grasping mitt at lower end.



Using thumb and index finger.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR SIGNALS

## A Simple Finger Code

If the catcher were good at concealing his fingers he could make up a code as simple as the following, which is given only as a possible sample.

Close the fingers of the ungloved hand and hold the thumb erect for a drop ball.

Close the fingers of the ungloved hand, making of it a tightly shut fist, for a curve ball.

In both of these instances sink the ungloved hand in the palm of the mitt.

Close the fingers of the ungloved hand and hit the mitt twice for a fast ball. It doesn't matter much about height when a fast ball is pitched, for the catcher is supposed to be able to get a fast ball anywhere.

Keep the fingers open for an inshoot, merely holding the hand in position to catch.

There is nothing that is intricate about the foregoing. That is the reason why such a simple code is given as an example of what may be done.

### Giving signs on the mitt.

For the benefit of young players and beginners, in the outline drawings used in this chapter an indication is given of the manner in which the gloved hand is employed to give signs to the pitcher with the mitt as a screen. These diagrams are purely examples and but a few of the many ways in which signs may be given by



the catcher to the pitcher. Each diagram may call for a special pitch.

The signs can be made as complex as the catcher and pitcher wish to make them, but it is best not to attempt too much. Of course in a major league, where every effort is made all of the time to discover every possible intent of the side in the field, there is a tendency to develop signs which are of the most secretive character, but it is not good policy for the beginners to venture too deeply into that sort of thing, as has been hinted before. Don't get the signs so deceptive that they are forgotten and do not make up too many of them. It is not a bad idea to have two codes of signs, because one may be discovered by the other team. If you have perfected yourself in two codes be sure that they are not mixed in the heat of the game, or you will have the pitcher so wrought up that he will lose his effectiveness as a pitcher as well as losing track of the signs.

### Using the feet for signals.

The feet can be used for signs, but it takes cleverness to devise a code in which the feet play the most important part. The feet, so to speak, are rather obvious. Coaches, batters and runners can get a good look at them. Nevertheless, for a long time one of the catchers in the National League gave the sign for a curve ball with his right foot. When he squatted down behind the batter if his right foot was in front of the left foot the pitcher was to use a curve. It is a great deal more natural for a catcher to squat down with his right foot back of the left, yet with all their keenness the players of other teams

went a whole season without knowing how a sign for a curve was given by this catcher. Another catcher, when he wanted the ball high and fast and on the inside invariably, after seeming to give his sign, would stand erect, step toward the pitcher, shake both hands as if he were making a target to steady the pitcher, and thus give the sign for the kind of ball he wished to have pitched.

One catcher gave signs by pounding his mitt. If he pounded twice it was for a curve. If he pounded three times, for a straight ball. If he did not pound, the pitcher was to use an inshoot. It was a good code, but for only a little while. In the early part of the season the catcher observed it faithfully, but as the games became harder fought he began to get more excitable, and pounded his glove so repeatedly that the pitcher often was unable to solve what his pounding meant. That code was abandoned. It had another fault. That was its openness. A good coacher was likely to be able to grasp its meaning after watching the pounding for a time. On the other hand, the catcher did get his pitcher so that he could shift the sign. One day one pound meant one thing, and the next time the catcher and pitcher worked together it meant just the opposite. Naturally that was enough to fool any team. Still it was a method that was too open to discovery and the pounding code was abandoned.

### Signaling with index finger.

Another catcher signaled only with the index finger. If it was extended straight across the glove he called for a curve. If the finger was doubled he called for a low

ball. If it was held under the end of the mitt he called for a high ball. Those were all the signs that this catcher gave. He contracted to take care of anything that would be pitched which came within the scope of those three "telegrams." He was a smart catcher, as good a catcher, take him all around, as almost any who ever found his way into professional base ball. He studied his pitcher so that he knew by the first motion which the latter made what was coming to the plate and except for the intent to baffle the batter that catcher could have gone through almost any game of base ball without signs.

While on this subject the catcher should not overlook the fact that he should have a sign to inform the first baseman that he is going to throw to him on the next pitched ball, to catch a runner napping. When the first baseman is on the bag, guarding it because a runner is there, he is supposed to be ready to take anything which may come from the catcher. Sometimes he is playing back and the catcher wishes to snap the ball to him. Then a sign is given. It is as often some spoken phrase as a sign of hand or arm. Many and many a spectator has heard one of the major league catchers shout, "heads up, heads up," and not been a bit wiser, taking it for granted that the catcher was only encouraging the players of his team. In reality the catcher told the first baseman to get on the bag quick, if the ball was not batted on the next pitch, as it was coming down his way in a hurry.

### **Pitchers sometimes give the signs.**

There are times when the pitcher gives the signs. Some bench managers can reach the eye of the pitcher



quicker than they can reach that of the catcher. The back of the catcher is turned toward the bench. The manager may have it in his head that he knows best what kind of a ball to pitch next and he has a way of communicating with the pitcher in a hurry. The latter, in that case, is supposed to tell the catcher what he is going to throw.

This does not happen much in the base ball of the younger players. There is too much red tape to a game of that kind. So far as that goes, possibly it is better if boys play their game their own way rather than have their purpose changed by coach or manager. The advice of both coach and manager is good, but when players actually get on the field they should learn to act for themselves. If they are brought up to "play ball with a crutch" they will be looking for the crutch all through their athletics. When emergency arises they will not be ready to meet it. Athletes who cannot face emergency are not going to get very far toward continued success.

It is best for the pitcher not to give signs, because if he undertakes to handle the game there is pretty sure to be disagreement between him and the catcher, which will not win for the team. Of course, if the pitcher believes that it would be better not to deliver the ball in a certain way that has been called for, he may decline to do so by shaking his head or by giving indication in some other way of his unwillingness, but that can be easily expressed without a complicating system.

In this connection it may be stated that pitching signs and pitching have been "boiled down" in big league base ball to such a consistency that some catchers have signs only for speed, a slow ball and a curve.

As something unusual is likely to happen at any time in a game it is well to be prepared to take care of the situation. Once in a world series contest it was the opinion of the players of one of the teams that the opposing players had got the battery signs. "I've been watching them at bat," said the catcher, "and they're stepping into the good ones with too much confidence to suit me. They know when a curve is coming and they are laying for it."

"I'll give the signs," said the pitcher, "and see if that fools them." So while the catcher was making a great show of giving signs to the pitcher during the remainder of the game, the pitcher was paying no attention to them but was telling the catcher what to expect. The best joke of all was that the signs of the pitcher were as wide open as could be, and if the other side had only the faintest idea of what was going on they might have "spotted" every ball that went up to the plate. I asked Christy Mathewson if the opposing team ever knew that he gave signs to his catcher for part of the game that day. "I don't think they caught on," said he. "To tell the truth, I had almost forgotten the incident myself." With a pitcher of experience like Mathewson, a manager would not worry greatly if the pitcher gave the signs instead of the catcher. If a pitcher lost a game under those conditions he could not hold anyone responsible for bad coaching.

Getting back again to the use of the mitt in screening signs the beginner cannot help but note that the pitcher, if he were as expert in reading batters as the manager and catcher combined, would still be placed at a disad-

vantage in giving signs, because he stands alone in almost the center of the diamond, where it is possible for the opposing players to note every motion or movement that he makes. On some of the professional teams the players are as keen and sharp as if they had been specially trained all of their lives to discern the little happenings in base ball. Ninety-nine men will observe that a player moves his arm a certain way and give it no further thought. The one hundredth man does give it thought, and after he has observed the player for a time, in order that he may satisfy himself whether he is right, he will go to his fellow players and tell them that whenever they can detect the catcher doing this, or that, to watch for a certain kind of pitched ball. In a professional game no doubt some have noted that the batter occasionally turns around very quickly and takes a peep at the catcher. He is trying to read the catcher's sign if he can. He may take forty peeps, and not catch it, but on the very next time he may be more fortunate and possibly decipher the information that will help him to win a game.

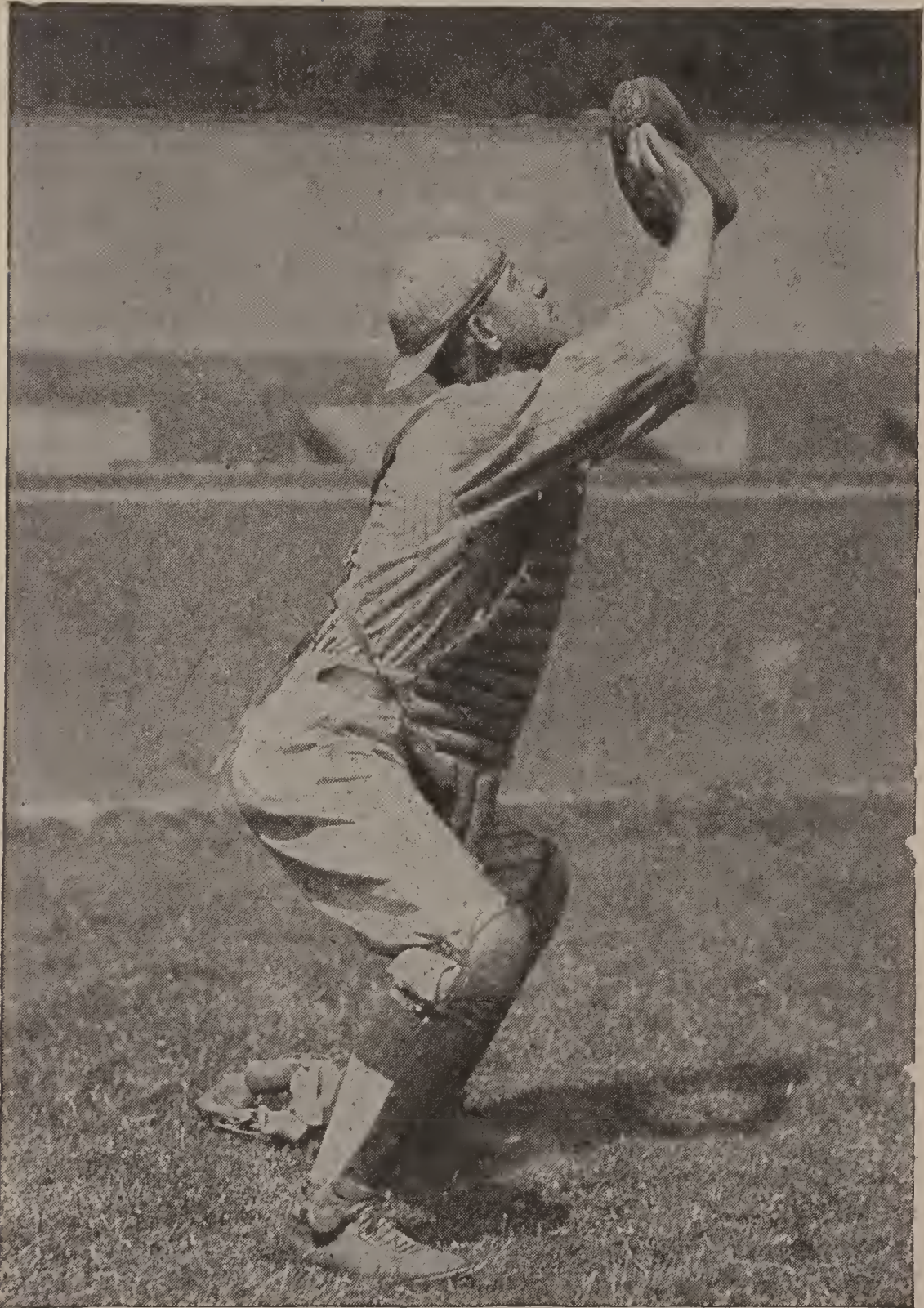
### Signs from the infield.

In the rarest of emergencies the second baseman and the third baseman have given signs to the pitcher, but that is something which the beginner need not take into consideration. When it has been done there was a reason for it. For instance, in the case of the second baseman acting as the signal maker, it was merely a matter of the manager directing the second baseman how to direct the pitcher. That is too roundabout. The



reason for its employment was that the manager conceived the idea that, in signaling the second baseman he was also signaling to all of his fielders, and that the second baseman by giving the signs to the pitcher fooled the players of the other team, who were looking for the signs to be given by the catcher.

Sometimes the second baseman was not looking. He had too much to do to be able to watch the manager every minute. Sometimes he did not get the sign right from the manager. It made the game too mechanical. The manager was trying to do the thinking for all of the players of his team. Before he got through he had all of them dependent upon him. They not only did not think for themselves, but for lack of cultivated initiative would not think for themselves.



How the catcher should set himself to get a high foul when he is sure that he is under the ball.





Catching the ball on the inside and low. The flat of the ungloved hand is used to cover the ball as it lodges in the mitt. Conlon, Photo.



## Other Methods of Giving Signs

There are other ways of giving signs than by the hands and feet. Catchers have been known to touch their chest protectors in a certain part. Some rub their hands on one side of the chest protector for one kind of a pitch, and on the other side of the protector for another kind of pitch. Some use their caps as the medium for indicating their wishes to the pitcher. Some fuss with their belts. Some hold their hands on their knees, or on their hips, and some have gone so far as to employ the use of the mask in some way by holding it in the right hand or in the left hand, to give information to the pitcher.

All kinds of possibilities are within effort if not all of them are within reason. The writer is not making any attempt to make public a set code, because it is manifest that if all teams used codes which were very similar the signs would not amount to anything. The beginner will be much better off if he thinks out his own signs, and then gives plenty of practise before he starts in the more important games of the year. Talk them over with the pitcher and try them with him until he knows them. Don't continue to use a code of signs if you are fairly convinced that the opposing team has an inkling of what they mean. Better have no signs than to have signs that can be read on both sides of the fence.

I have already told beginners that the catcher gives the sign to the first baseman when he wishes the latter to run to the base to catch a runner napping, as there are

times when the first baseman plays back. On the other hand, if the second baseman or the shortstop intends to run to second base to catch a runner napping, it is the business of the man who will make this play to signal to the catcher that he intends to cover the bag. That is a sign which the catcher doesn't give but which he is expected to read.

Thus you will see that the catcher not only makes signs but must be able to read them as well. Even if an infielder does give a sign that he is going to cover a base after the next pitched ball, providing the ball is not batted, the catcher need not make the throw if he is satisfied that it would be foolish to take a chance. That play comes under the head of aimless throwing. The infielder has done his part in covering the base, but why throw the ball if the runner is so close to the base that no throw could hope to get him? A poor throw would surely put him on the next base and perhaps give him two bases and a run.

### **The hit-and-run play.**

The catcher must do his share to try to catch the hit-and-run sign. If he can tell when the runner, or the batter, has given it, he will be in position to blight the hopes of the other team in a hurry. The hit-and-run sign is declared both ways. Sometimes the runner at first base, or even the runner at second base, gives it. Sometimes it is the batter who gives it. If the catcher can ascertain when it has been signaled he can fool both batter and runner by calling for a pitch-out. If a good thrower it will be an easy matter to get the runner at

the next base, while the batter is forced to stand impotent at the plate because the ball is pitched so far outside that he cannot reach it.

### **When catcher can break up the "squeeze" play.**

The squeeze play at home plate is only a hit-and-run play in which the team at bat is willing to sacrifice a batter for the sake of a run. If the catcher can get the squeeze sign he can make the runner from third appear comical. There isn't a chance to score if this play is foreseen by the catcher, by the pitcher, or any player, for that matter. If the ball is thrown by the pitcher to the catcher so far outside home plate that the batter cannot reach it the runner is doomed. It has frequently been said, and with truth, that there is more credit to the players in producing a run on this play than there is to the manager in ordering it.

### **The double steal.**

There is still another sign for the catcher to read. That is the sign which is given when there is to be a double steal. Almost without exception this sign is started from the coaching box. Usually the base-runner who is in advance flashes back to the person who has given the sign for a double steal that he understands and will be ready to start on the next pitched ball. The catcher may not get the sign to try a double steal, but he is sometimes able to pick up the answering sign from the base-runner, or perhaps get a clue from both base-runners that they have been ordered to try a double steal. Never mind the back runner on a double steal. If any runner



is dangerous it is the runner who is in advance, and he is the one who is to be put out, if possible.

### Occasions when coaches give the signs.

The coacher at first base and occasionally at third base, may give the hit-and-run sign. In a coaching phrase there may be a "message" to runner and batter. To the runner it says that the batter will try to hit the next pitched ball, and to the batter it says "the manager wants you to hit the next pitched ball, because Smith, who is on first base, is going to try for second." There is no alternative after the sign is given but to try the play. If the catcher has caught the sign, because of his quick discernment, and has ordered the ball pitched in such a manner that the batter cannot meet it, he has made it easy to throw to second base or to third base to get the runner.

If you pretend to give signs with your hands, and at the same time give all of the signs in some other way, either by talking, or by shifting your position, or by the touching of certain parts of your body, remember that it is legitimate to do so, and that the better you conceal the steady conversation which you are carrying on with the pitcher in unknown terms the better it is for your own team.

Limit the signs. One for a fast ball. One for a slow ball. One for a curve ball.

You will be surprised to find how much execution you can do with no other signs than only those three.



Straight-from-the-shoulder motion. Used by only a few catchers.

(Posed by William Killefer.)

Forward body motion used in throwing to bases.

(Posed by Robert W. Schalk.)

Conlon, Photos.





Catcher, playing on correct side of the batter's box, touches out base-runner from third. By playing in this position he has compelled runner to slide in front of him. After making play, catcher is watching and holding another runner on base.

Photo N. Y. Daily News.



## Blocking Base-Runners

To block a base-runner is a play which is fraught with a large element of risk to leg, arm and body. The author would suggest to young players that they omit from their work anything which has to do with blocking base-runners. It is dangerous. It is likely to result in injury to both catcher and runner, or to one. There is no necessity for it and a large part of the blocking of base-runners is not legal.

It is stated explicitly in the base ball rules that no fielder shall block a base-runner without the ball in his possession and the greater part of all blocking is done without the ball being in possession of the fielder. In a recent world series the catcher for one of the teams blocked a base-runner long before he had the ball in his possession. The manager of the opposing club called the attention of the umpire to the fact. The umpire did not rule against the catcher, although he would have been justified in doing so. It is presumed that as the play had been permitted to go pretty much unchecked throughout the year, and throughout other years, the umpire did not feel that he should take what appeared to him to be arbitrary measures at that time.

It is quite true that a catcher should be fearless, but it is not essential that a catcher should play in such a manner that he jeopardizes the limbs of another player. The theory that it is right to cut off runs at the plate, or at bases, by deliberately blocking is a bad theory. There is just as good a way in which to retire a runner

as there is to step in front of the base and shield it in such a manner that the runner cannot get to it. More than that, the baseman or the catcher has not the right to do that sort of thing unless he has the ball in hand.

### **Runner should have a fair chance.**

The theory of base ball is that the base line belongs to the runner. It is not to be obstructed by a fielder who is not waiting for the ball, and if a fielder is waiting for a throw he must not interfere. If a fielder were to obstruct with deliberation a runner going from first base to second base, and the fielder did not have the ball in his hand, the umpire would give the runner second base. If he did not he would not be competent to umpire. The play is identical at home plate. No catcher has right on his side to set himself across the plate without the ball in his hand and wait for it to come to him with the runner knocking at the door to get in.

A base-runner is likely to be sent to the hospital with a serious injury when that happens. The catcher has all the better of it with his pad-protected legs, so far as armor is concerned. It is mock heroics to talk about the catcher sacrificing anything. If the runner jumps at him maliciously, with evident intent to injure him, that is a matter to be taken in another light. The umpire has authority to take care of the runner for interference. It is as much an interference against the runner to prevent him from sliding into home plate or second base if he can do so legitimately.

What the catcher should do when he is guarding home plate is first to take a position away from home plate

toward third base and not on the base line. He has no business directly over or upon the plate. The big, bulky catcher who stands astride of the plate violates the rules and often is outwitted because he is so clumsy of movement that a runner will slide around him. If the catcher is on the third base side of home plate he is on the side nearest to the base from which the runner is coming. If the catcher is back of the base line he knows that the runner will come in front of him, because to go behind him would add extra distance for the runner to cover and he would be touched out easier. Always try to play for the runner in front of you and not on the side only as is inevitable when the catcher must touch the runner on the catcher's left.

It is not certain that the throw home will be good. If the catcher is a little away from home plate and the base line, he is in better position to handle well a badly thrown ball than if he is standing or crouching over home plate.

If the runner is of the type who comes in feet foremost, the catcher who is not over home plate is better able by far to deal with him than the catcher who stands on home plate. The catcher can slide with the runner if necessary. The runner's objective is home plate and the catcher's objective is the runner. The catcher has the larger target of the two, a point never to be overlooked in a situation of this nature.

### **How to catch the runner using the "hook" slide.**

If a base-runner is one of those agile men who can slide with a "hook," as it is called—a twisting of the leg either inside or outside of the plate—the catcher who can



play for him a little to the left of home plate will find that he always has a little advantage over the runner.

Do not get the idea that base-runners must be willfully and deliberately blocked. Play for them on the side and do not be over-eager to risk a smashing collision with the runner's feet "head on." There is nothing in the spirit of base ball that calls in any way for a premeditated personal contact play with the willingness to let it end in injury—if original malice did not exist.

### Avoid blocking home plate deliberately.

It is not good practise to block any base. It is against the rules of base ball to block a base without possession of the ball. The beginners should avoid standing astride of the plate, as in A, without the ball in hand. They should not set themselves in such a position and stand, waiting for the ball, while the runner is vainly trying to score. The position is dangerous, both to runner and to catcher. By far the best position to hold when base-runners are trying to score at home plate is to move toward the third base side of home plate, as illustrated in B, to touch the runner as he comes in.



A—Incorrect position of catcher waiting for runner coming from third base.

B—Correct position for catcher to touch a base-runner coming from third.

## Range of the Catcher's Work

Base ball is a team game. One position relies greatly upon another. That is why it is not always fair to "crack up" one position as better than another. Some players are better than others, but there is nothing unusual about that. One boy or man usually can do something a little better than another. Nature equipped him to do so. It would be a more open and surely less interesting game if there was one less outfielder.

There is one fact which makes the catcher's position stand out conspicuously. He has no assistance. He is the guardian of home plate, the sole fielder in his territory, the receiver of the pitcher's severe delivery, and, as he faces the field, the watchman for all of his team. He can see the incidents of the game to better advantage than the basemen and the outfielders.

Attempt has been made to outline much of the mechanical work which is the share of the catcher, and now it is time to tell him that he must also be a good thinker. It is not to be expected that he shall know everything immediately about every batter who walks up to home plate. The professionals are not clever enough for that, and surely it is expecting too much of the catchers in ordinary games to know every detail about the batters who play against them. Such players do not always have leagues and they may play in twenty games during the season—more, no doubt—and never meet the same team twice.

After a batter has been once at bat and the catcher for the first time has had an opportunity to look him over, it is within reason to believe that the catcher knows a little more about the batter than he did before the game began. For instance, if the batter hits a straight, fast ball with force, or for a long distance, it would not be the policy of common sense to pitch him another straight, fast ball next time that he came to the batter's box. For that reason it never will hurt any young catcher, no matter whether he is in a league or out of one, to try to get an inkling of what the batter can do with the variety of pitches that are thrown to him.

The more that a catcher can prevent a batter from hitting successfully, by matching his wits against those of the batsman, the more valuable a catcher is to his team. There is another fact to be considered. The more successfully the catcher keeps runners off the base lines the less work he has to do. Every time that a batter reaches first base work accumulates for the catcher.

### Analyzing the style of the batter.

The catcher should observe these points about a batter :

1—Does he step “into”—that is, does he step forward to bat—the ball?

2—Does he pull away—that is, does he step back—when he is about to strike at the ball?

3—Does he swing flatfooted for a curved ball?

4—Does he bat with a short reach, a forearm reach, or does he swing blindly with a long reach?

These points are quite enough for any young catcher to bother about. Now for the “medicine”:



1—If the batter steps into the ball he is dangerous. Keep the ball close to him.

2—If the batter pulls away from the ball, pitch the ball out. Use curve balls.

3—If the batter does not get up on his toes, bats flat-footed, keep the ball out.

4—If the batter is a forearm batter, have the pitcher pitch to him with all the skill that he has, and keep the ball close to him. If he is a long swinger give him curves, but always toward the handle of the bat, or "away out" on its tip end.

It will be noticed that nothing has been said about noting whether the batter is a low ball hitter or a high ball hitter, and the reason for not saying anything about it is that most catchers are not dull in perceiving whether a batter likes a high ball or a low ball. Young catchers, as a rule, pick up that part of their base ball without any hint from any source. If they have the catching idea in their heads they are quick to discover what the batter likes, so far as elevation of the ball from the ground is concerned.

### **When batters can place a ball.**

Even in the games of the youngsters there are batters who can place the ball. It is a gift to some boys. Right-handed batters, who were not more than fourteen years of age, have been seen to stand at the plate and place the ball in right field with as much precision as a professional. They merely turned a little in the batter's box, used their forearms skillfully, and pushed the ball toward right field, and that is all that there is in placing a right

field hit by a right-hand batter. It is quite an accomplishment, which is so much more to the credit of the boy.

If the catcher believes that the batter intends to try to place the ball he must coach the pitcher in the best way that he can to prevent it. Keep the ball inside, if a right-hand batter is trying to place it in right field, and keep it on the extreme corners when a left-handed batter is trying to place it, unless the batter be one of those highly gifted individuals who can shift like a flash. In that case keep the ball at the most awkward angle for him that you can pitch it.

### **Every batter has some weakness.**

If a catcher is to be the regular catcher for his college team, or if he intends to go into base ball for a short time as a professional or as a semi-professional—although one is much the same as the other—let him study his batters, especially if he is likely to meet them from day to day or from week to week. There are very few batters without one weakness. It may not disclose itself at first, but keep trying to ascertain it. Some day it will make itself manifest, and then the catcher is better off than the batter, because he is armed with a weapon which may be of assistance to him in a tight pinch.

A good catcher will learn to start plays and to engineer plays for others on the ball field. A mechanical catcher, of which unfortunately there are far too many, never will do much, except to receive the ball and try to throw runners out, incidentally signaling his pitcher day after day with a monotonous continuance of curve first, fast ball next, curve again, fast ball next, until the pitcher

almost knows without receiving a sign from behind the bat what he is expected to pitch.

The catcher must keep the pitcher encouraged. There are no two positions on a ball team where there is more relation of personal interest. If the pitcher gets a little wild and the catcher shows by his impatience that he sees the pitcher losing his effectiveness, it would have been fully as well if the catcher had told everybody publicly that a change was needed. The pitcher can feel instinctively when the catcher is going with him and when he is not.

### **Catcher should always encourage the pitcher.**

One of the best traits about the late "Buck" Ewing, of the original "Giants," whose catching days were days that never will be forgotten in base ball, was his always apparent good fellowship for the pitcher and his constant words of encouragement. He gave his pitcher the impression that the latter could not lose, and the further the pitcher went along with this impression the harder he was to bat. Tim Keefe and Smiling Mickey Welch, who were the mainstays in the box of the team, used to say that it was impossible to get upset when Ewing was behind the bat, because Ewing never let them think that they were in danger. No matter how ticklish the situation might be, some jovial word from Ewing relieved the tension under which they were working.

On a professional team the catcher is under orders from the manager, but there are a great many plays that will come up in which the catcher must take the initiative without consulting the manager, and while the catcher



may be neither manager nor captain of his team, if he has thought plays out and has perfected himself in grasping a situation instantaneously, he will be surprised to know how much of a manager and captain he really is. A sensible manager will permit him to act independently when results are being produced.

As an instance of a catcher initiating a play, presume that it is he who sees the sign passed for a stolen base or for the attempt to "squeeze" a run home, as it is called, or gets the signal for the hit and run play. It is he who should take the game in hand at once and notify the pitcher what to do, and try to notify him in such a manner that no one will understand that the sign has been caught. If he should stop the game and go to the manager with the information that he had procured, or even give the impression by the manner in which he acted that he knew what was contemplated by the side at bat, the play would undoubtedly be stopped by the batter and runner and a valuable bit of information would go for nothing. The best of opportunities to prevent a run scoring, or a base from being made, would be missed because of the lack of permission to use individual effort.

## Physical Condition

The catcher must take care of his hands, his arm and his feet.

Sore hands never will do. No pitcher can be successfully caught when it is painful to the catcher almost every time that the ball comes into his hands, especially the bare hand. Do not catch with bruises or open cuts that entail wincing when the ball is received.

The best asset that any catcher who is a good thrower has got is his arm. Do not throw for fun, or for speed, or for exhibition purposes. It is worth while to throw a little for practice. It is not worth while to show off. There are only about so many "throws" in each human being's arm. Some day the muscles will not respond as they did once. They will contract for good and all and the catcher will be through. Whenever the arm is strained in boyhood it means that much power has been taken out of it.

The feet are an essential part, because a catcher stands, crouches and hustles all through a ball game. The outfielders move around a little. Now and then they have a very busy afternoon. More often they do not. The catcher is always busy. If his feet are in a condition which pain him the chances are that he will not be a very active man behind the bat. Mind the feet, therefore, as much as you do your arm and your hands.

Eat reasonably. Do not gorge before a ball game. It is poor policy, so far as the stomach is concerned, and will leave one lethargic all the afternoon. Something

light is just as good as heavy food. If traveling or living in a hotel beware of the "course" luncheon. A few of those, with a few ball games after them in hot weather, and your catching will fall off so that you will wonder what ails you, while your friends will begin to think that you are deteriorating.

### **Eat sparingly before a game.**

The foregoing instructions apply to boys as much as to professionals. A square meal some little while after a ball game is fifty per cent better than a lot of eatables just before a ball game. Another thing, don't forget that the square meal should be eaten a *little while after a ball game*. Never eat almost the moment that you have finished playing, and particularly observe this injunction in hot weather. A heavy meal, within twenty minutes after the conclusion of a ball game, on a July day, is like giving ice water to an overheated horse and then permitting him to stand still.

Take plenty of rest. The better the hours the better the catcher. Do not remain up until midnight in order to be sure that something shall not escape you. The world is going on just the same. Thousands of things are happening all over it and what difference does it make to you what is happening that does not concern you personally? Rest is much better than gossip, and rest makes for good ball playing.



## Origin of the Catcher's Mask

In the early days of base ball, including the period during which the rules of 1872 were in effect, the third strike was out on the first bound, and so was a foul hit made by the batter. The rule read in 1872: "When three strikes are called, and the ball be caught either before touching the ground or upon the first bound, the striker shall be declared out." For that reason the catcher played a distance back at some point in front of the catcher's back-stop which seemed to be most convenient to catch the ball on the bound.

As early as 1859 catchers had experimented in playing close to the batter, but they did not like the risk of being hit by a foul tip. It was as painful then as it would be now if there were no catcher's mask, protector and mitt. The advantage of playing "close up" was often argued. Some favored it and others held against it, claiming that more put-outs could be made by standing back, because the catcher could get fouls on the first bound. Of course, we know better now, but in those days departures from custom were given thorough debate, as they are at present.

Little by little the advocates of catching close to the batter won their way. They continued to experiment. After they had proved that the ball could be caught successfully close to the batter, they demonstrated that runners could be thrown out who were trying to steal bases, and that was the argument which won more and more catchers to the method of standing "close up."

The next thing to do was to find protection for the catcher from foul tips. The mouth and the teeth were considered to be more vulnerable points than the nose and eyes. So a piece of rubber was devised to be held between the teeth, the theory being that the rubber would absorb the shock of the ball if a foul tip should hit the catcher in the face. Sometimes when the boys could not get rubber, which was not as plentiful in those days as it is now, a lemon would be cut in halves and one half would be held between the teeth, the theory being that the half of the lemon would act as a buffer against the ball.

### **Origin of Base Ball Mask.**

Ingenuity was being used even then to put together something which would be better than the piece of rubber. About the year 1876 Fred W. Thayer of Harvard began to experiment with a mask, taking his idea, as he says, from the fencing mask. He continued his efforts until in 1877 he had devised the first catcher's mask, which was publicly used in that year by James Tyng, the Harvard catcher. Of course, there was a little reluctance first off to use it. Some of the oldtime catchers thought it babyish. Nevertheless its possibilities were so apparent that it was patented in 1878 and in no time had been generally adopted.

It was a crude arrangement as compared with the present excellent masks which are made by A. G. Spalding & Bros., but it was hailed as making catching "behind the bat" not only possible but a fixture in the game. The modern mask, in addition to protecting the front of the face, protects the ears and the neck, and is made of such

durable material and so cleverly padded that it successfully wards off the terrific blows which would otherwise be delivered because of the swift pitching that is now in vogue. The speed of pitchers has more than doubled with the evolution of the national game.

In the beginning of base ball there was some attempt at originating uniforms on the part of the players. Long trousers were worn in the early times, but long trousers were a nuisance in trying to field hard-hit ground balls. Little by little the present style of uniform came into fashion and it surpasses any garment that has ever been modeled for a sport which demands the great athletic activity of base ball. There is no part of the garment in the way to embarrass the attempts of players to handle the ball.

There is a wide choice of material and range of prices for modern base ball uniforms, and the flannels from which Spalding uniforms are woven are of patterns specially produced for the national game. They are tailored in a clean, sanitary factory and, in addition to having the wearing quality which makes for economy, are fashioned and put together by those who have had the widest range of experience in making base ball clothing.

### **Neat uniforms have a visible effect on a player's skill.**

Nothing makes a base ball nine look brighter and gives its players more self-respect and pride while on the field than a uniform which is of a neat and distinctive pattern. Provide a team with good equipment and an appearance of style which is attractive and be assured the players will put forth their best endeavor on the ball field. If



they are not well uniformed and another team against which they are playing is well uniformed, the players who are poorly equipped will feel that they have been slighted and their work will fall off with their mental dissatisfaction. Another point never to be forgotten is that uniforms which are well made and correctly cut for their purpose are real helps to ball players. When uniforms are right it is easier to field grounders and to run for fly balls.

Not only has the mask been invented to help make base ball more attractive and the uniform been given special attention for a similar purpose, but the base ball shoe has been improved until today the Spalding shoe is the most perfect of all for wear in base ball games. Shoes have a direct bearing on a player's physical fitness.

### **Shoes have a direct bearing on a player's physical fitness.**

The shoe is now considered to be the most important part of a base ball player's outfit. No longer is "any old footwear" good for the ball player. The feet of his players are a primary consideration with every manager. That fact has been so strongly impressed upon the ball player that he has learned the lesson for himself. A man in uniform who limps is speedily asked by the manager for an explanation. If it is due to a bad shoe, or to a shoe improperly made, the player is asked to improve that condition immediately. Players whose feet are not in the best of condition are not ready to run at their best or start at their best. Inability to run well and start well means a handicap to the team which is playing to win.

In almost every play on the ball field the player is a sprinter. When he runs bases, with the short intervals between them, he certainly is one. When he starts for ground hits and for fly hits he is one. He must always "be up and on his toes." Sprinters select their shoes with as much care as they would select precious gems, and ball players must select their shoes in the same manner if they hope to remain in fast company. A ball player with poorly fitting, poorly patterned shoes literally has handicapped his running. He needs every bit of his running ability to pull him through to success. If a bad shoe meant missing one or two grounders, or one or two fly hits every game because the player could not get over the ground properly, it is easy to see what a tremendous handicap the player would lay himself before starting in any contest.

### **How a badly fitting shoe may lose a championship.**

If there were two games at the end of a championship season between the pennant and the team which had finished second, and the loss of those two games could be directly attributed to shoes which were unfit, what a feeling of regret would be held, not only by the player whose shoes might have been at fault but by the other players, because of the failure of their team.

Spalding shoes are made in Spalding factories from the finest materials by workmen who specialize on base ball shoes. All of the Spalding shoe experts have the benefit of years of experience and direct information which they have received in person from players who wear nothing but Spalding shoes. The players have so clearly explained

and expressed personally the requirements for a good shoe that every Spalding shoe can literally be called a product of "first-hand information." It is proved on the diamond every season that Spalding shoes help to make good ball playing and good base ball players.



Courtesy Pittsburgh Dispatch



## Catcher's Equipment

The most important part of a catcher's equipment is the mitt. It was devised as a convenience and it has become a necessity. It is as much a part of the game as the bat and the ball. In perfecting the mitt the work of the catcher was perfected. There is no invention, with the possible exception of the catcher's mask, which has done so much for base ball since the beginning of the game. The mitt has accomplished even more than the mask, because it has made better players out of all kinds of catchers. The mask is solely for protection, while the mitt has been utilized to change the style of catching. It has given the catcher every confidence in his ability to hold the ball, no matter with what speed it may be delivered, and it has removed nearly all of the element of chance so far as he is concerned. Passed balls have become infrequent since the mitt has become more and more perfect.

Mitts of all sizes and models are made by the firm of A. G. Spalding & Bros. They are manufactured with first-hand information which has been gained from the leading professional catchers of the United States, and are devised with thorough and practical knowledge as to the requirements of a good mitt. The evolution of the catcher's mitt from the old-fashioned glove, some with fingers cut off half way, to the present modern-shaped and patterned defense for the hand, is one of the real advancements of base ball.

Next to the mitt in necessity comes the catcher's mask. Some say the mask made it possible for the catcher to

“get up behind the bat,” and others that the innovation of the catcher going behind the bat brought forth the mask. Perhaps it was both. It is now the rule of the game for the catcher to stand up under the bat and the game is better for it, but he could not stand there without the protection of the mask for his face. The A. G. Spalding & Bros. catchers' masks include every style that can be sought. There are masks for all ages. They are of such special patterns and equipped with such special modifications as have been found necessary where there are so many differently shaped faces to fit, and so many different ideas to meet.

A body protector was the next device to be found worth while for the catcher after the invention of the mask. Foul tips brought forth the idea of the body protector. A foul tip cannot be gauged. The ball meets the bat and shoots from it to the first objective at increased speed. The first objective is usually the catcher and utter inability to get out of the way of a foul tip brought forth the invention of the body protector. These are manufactured by A. G. Spalding & Bros. in shapes and styles best adapted to the use of players.

The last invention for the catcher was the leg guard. Again the foul tip is responsible. Frequently the fouled ball is deflected to the feet and legs of the catcher. Its flight from bat to body is almost instantaneous and the force of its blow is unpleasant. A. G. Spalding & Bros. make leg guards of the latest and most suitable model which are adaptable to all catchers.

## Backstops

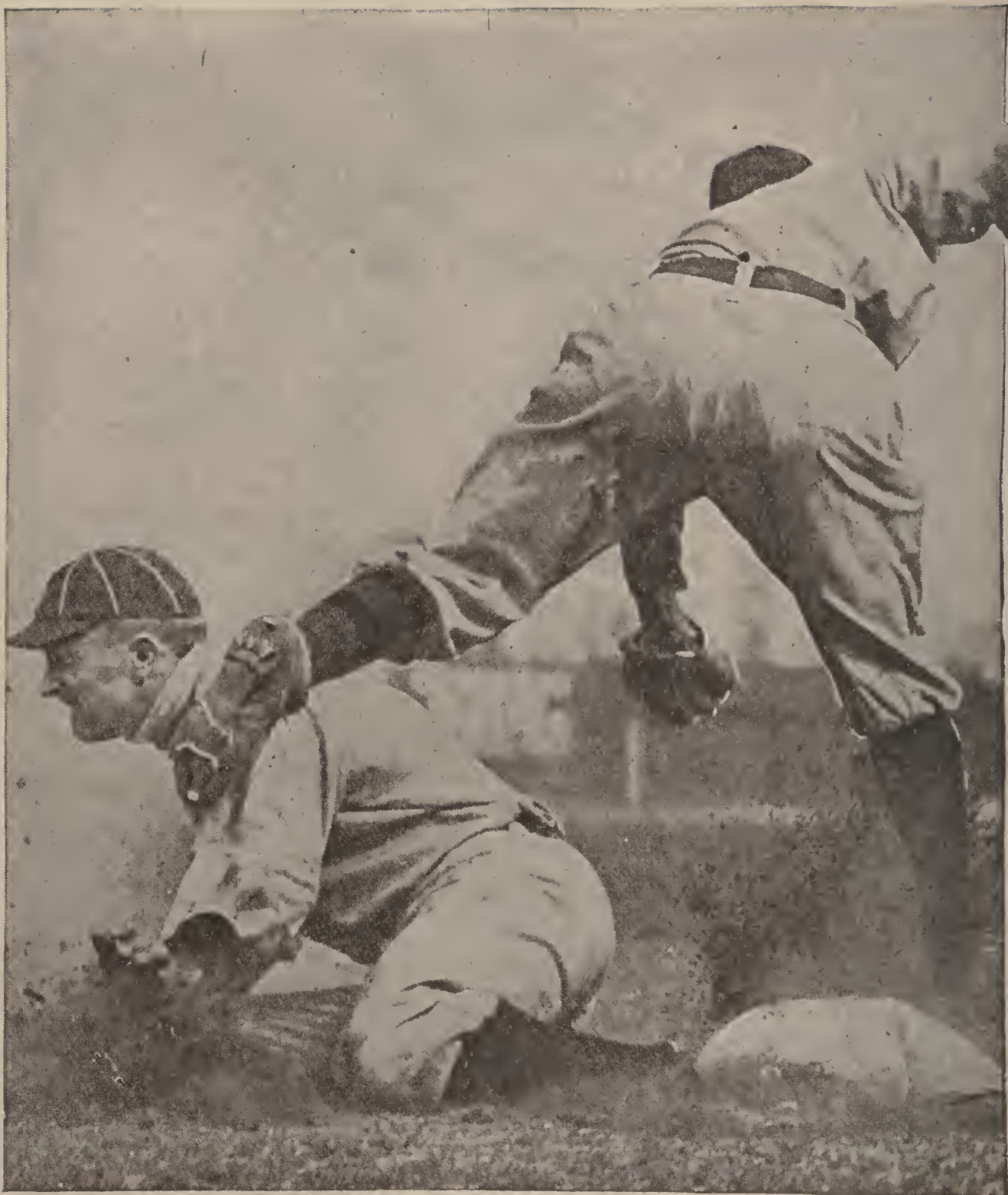
In professional base ball grounds the principal stand is built in such a way that it acts as backstop for the catcher.

Where there are not enclosed grounds the backstop is located ninety feet back of home plate when there is room. It may be at a shorter distance, if desired, but in that case a ground rule will be in effect which gives the runner a base when there is a passed ball or a wild pitch which gets away from the catcher.

The backstop on a ground which is laid out on public property or on an open field without stands may be made of plain boards, which are braced from behind and built to the height of at least ten feet. They should be strongly propped by posts fixed in the earth to prevent the wind from toppling the structure over. A backstop also may be built of chicken wire meshing stretched between posts of wood or metal. Wire is usually very desirable where there is much wind as it offers much less resistance.

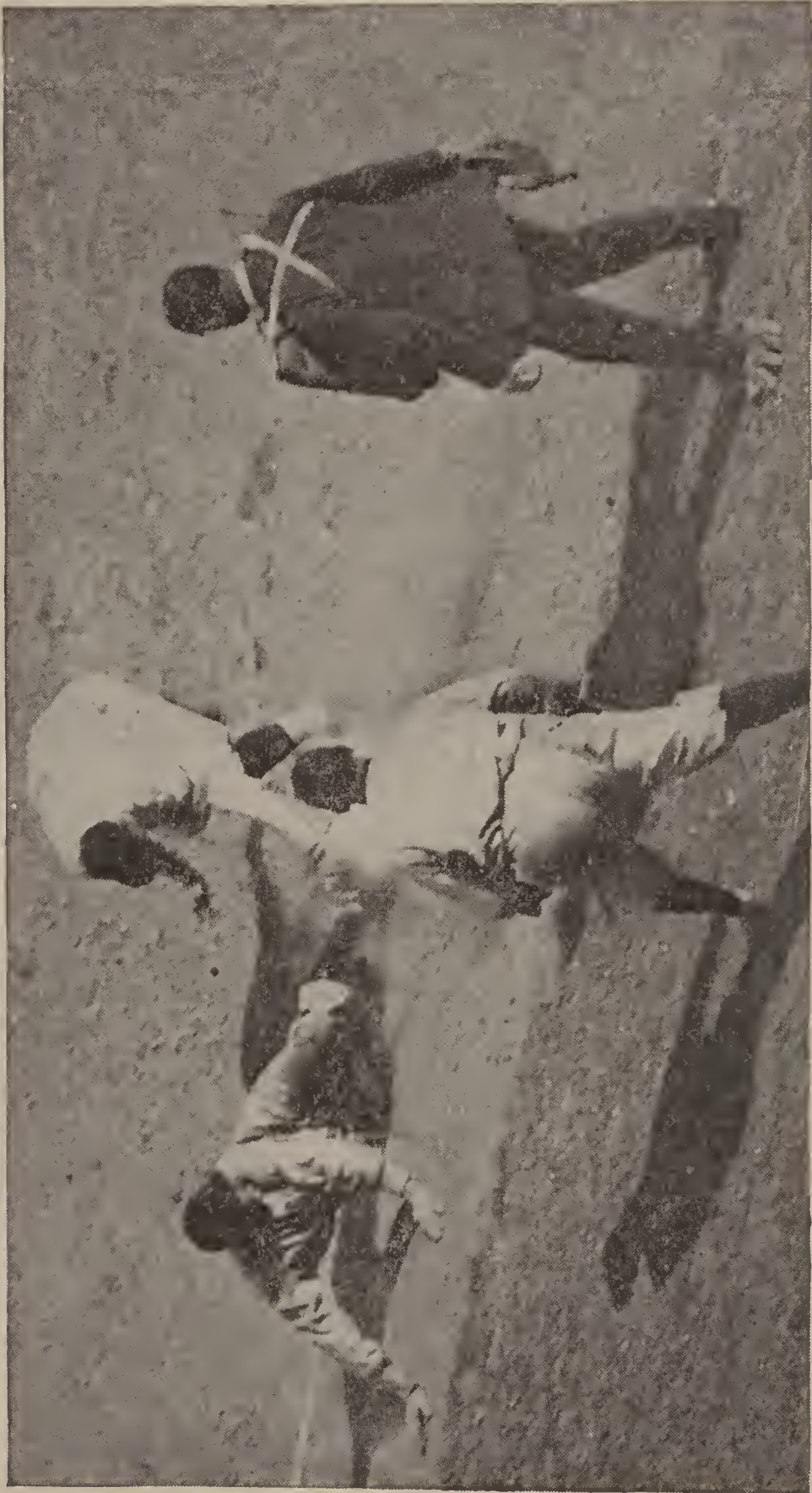
The Spalding batter's cage used during practice by the leading professional teams, and which consists of a screen on wheels which can be stationed with ease behind home plate and removed when it is time to play. Its purpose is to assist the catcher during practice as wild pitches, foul balls and passed balls are easily checked by the barrier. Prior to the time when the catcher assumes his position the pitcher often pitches directly into the cage. He uses three or four balls and the batters pick up the balls and return them to him, if they have not been batted and after they have been stopped by the cage.





Making a desperate slide to third under the very foot of the baseman. Snapshot of Ty Cobb in actual game taking a base feet foremost and compelling Austin to give ground by the force of his slide.

# HOW TO RUN BASES



Fine judgment on the part of the base-runner, who throws his body completely away from the base-man so that only the toe of his shoe touches the base, leaving the smallest possible target to be touched by the baseman. This slide usually meets with success.

Conlon, Photo.



## BASE-RUNNING

Base-running is one of the qualifications of a good ball player and good ball playing, which receives small consideration in comparison with the importance that it plays in the game. It is a diverting quality of base ball. There is no reason why it should be slighted. Perhaps the fact that so little attention is paid to it is that the average ball player has his attention engrossed too deeply in making a good batting record or a good fielding record. He looks upon running as something which is to be classed as essential, but a task rather than a pleasure. In addition to that there is no doubt but that there are a great many players who are discouraged at the beginning, because they believe that nature did not endow them as freely as she might have done with speed. In other words, they are beaten before they begin.

On the other hand, let us cite this view of the art of base-running. One afternoon, after a game had taken place in Pittsburgh, toward the close of the season, George Burns, the excellent left fielder of the New York National League Club, happened to meet the writer after the exciting contest in which he had scored three runs. "I guess I've got the record now," said he. Perhaps no one had known, or had been conscious of the fact except himself that he was trying for a record. Naturally the first question put to him was: "What record?" "The record for the most runs during the season," was the answer, "and I would not have made it had it not been for the number of bases that I have stolen."

Burns is the type of the conscientious ball player. All through the season of the National League he had been trying for the record of the most runs in the National League. He had not declared himself on the subject, but he had made up his mind that he would get that record, if possible, and so he had worked from the first game of the year until the game played in Pittsburgh to establish a lead. The Pittsburgh contest did not positively assure the lead at the end of the season, but he felt that he had done so well that he could be sanguine over the future. He did make the best record for scoring that year.

The young ball player who is starting out to learn base ball, whether he has any intention to continue to play it professionally or not, should make up his mind that he will excel as much in base-running as he may try to excel in some other qualification. He should not say to himself, "Pooh, base-running is simply getting around the bases the best way that you can," because that is not base-running in its best essentials. It is merely moving to keep out of the way of the ball. Base-running combines study of the pitcher, the catcher and the other players—at the least it requires careful observation—and he is a very stupid player who will not observe. If not stupid, then let us say he is stubborn.

### **Long hits of no value unless they score.**

Having in mind all of the time that it is runs which win in base ball, Burns made a sincere effort for his team to score runs. There was another player on the team whose great hobby was long distance hits. He had long

distance hits in his mind and discussed those to the exclusion of almost everything else. It is not the long distance hitters who are invariably likely to stand up well in runs at the finish of a base ball campaign, but it is the heady, intelligent runners, who combine intelligence in running the bases with what skill they may have at the bat.

Generally speaking, base-running has two divisions. One is that of runners who run the bases well, handling themselves right on the turns—it makes much difference whether that is done well or not—and the other is that of studying plays and pitchers to get the best of every start from a base after the runner has reached first base.

### **Why some players are successful.**

From the time that the runner leaves home plate, and he leaves it as a runner the moment that he ceases to be a batter, he should have it in his mind to make a run count for his team, if he can, and he should not be a dullard when, by the use of his brains, in co-operation with other runners and the batter who follows him, he may succeed in scoring. It doesn't matter much if one gets to first base six times in a game if one never gets further than first base. It is the getting onward which is worth while, as well as the getting on.

Were Ty Cobb a less skillful base-runner he would be a less skillful ball player. He is cited because he was always in the public eye as a player who combined base-running ability with other evidences of skill. Had Willie Keeler been a less skillful base-runner he would not have been the great ball player that he was. Speed, and



its combination with rare base-running intelligence, made Max Carey a good ball player. It was the perception and the good judgment of Hans Wagner on the bases that made him a great ball player. Anson was a wonderful batter and always will be considered to be one of the best of the ball players of history, but think what he might have been had he been able to run bases with the skill and craftiness of Ewing and Kelly.

### **Indifferent running a great handicap.**

It is taken for granted that runners will try to learn how to run in the right manner. You will note that the expression "taken for granted" was used, because runners do not always attempt to run in the right manner. Some are slothful and so indifferent that they do not make any effort to improve. If a player has no speed, like a bulky pitcher, for example, there is little hope for him, and a manager must sometimes shut his eyes to the fact and do the best that he can. It is true that a player of that disposition is likely to be a drag on a nine, and there have been instances where such a player has cost his team a victory, yet the manager must bear it on the theory that the player is so good at something else that his base-running, however bad of form it may be, will have to be taken as it stands.

Even with that condition it is exasperating at times to see such a player go on year after year and not make the slightest attempt to better himself.

## Running Out Hits

First of all the beginner in base ball should make up his mind that he will never lag between home plate and first base. *Run every hit out, no matter where the ball goes.* The surest infielder may make a fumble. The most accurate thrower may make a bad throw, and the only one in a game on the very ball that you hit. The best outfielder may drop a fly when the ball seems to be right in his hands. If the batter has failed in any one of these three instances to run at the top of his speed to first base his failure may be the play which will cost his team a victory.

In recent years there has been a tendency on the part of a pitcher not to run the ball out if it appears there is no chance for him to get to first base ahead of it. The theory for this is that the effort is too great for the pitcher and that he will take the pitcher's plate for the next inning—especially if it looks as if it may be the second hand or third hand out—so winded that he will not be able to pitch at his best. Whether the result brings out good for that theory is a question. Games have been lost by it. Games may have been won by it, but it would not be an easy task to cite them. The point is that the pitcher should be in such good condition physically that he can take a hard run as well as any other player of his team.

There have been pitchers in the past who would never think of not trying to get to first base. Go back to the day when John Montgomery Ward was a pitcher. Did

any one ever see him not trying for first base? It is sure that running to first base did not end his career as a ball player, as long after he had ceased to pitch he was playing the infield and still trying, as conscientiously as he ever did in his life, to get to first base whenever he batted the ball. If there are nine players on the field to try to win the game the pitcher should be as fit and willing to attempt his share in those games as any other player of the team.

### **Always run out your hit.**

To the younger players, who are to be the good ball players of the future, the admonition is ever forcible to play the ball out to the limit. There is no chance in base ball which should be slighted. It is exasperating to the spectators to see a batter not try for the base, and criticism finds its voice as quickly in amateur games as in professional contests, when this principle of the game is not fulfilled to its greatest degree.

What would be thought of a base-runner who would stop half way between third and home and deliberately walk out to the field because he felt certain that he would be put out at home plate? Now reverse this condition and ask what would be thought of a ball player who would turn from the base line half way between home plate and first base and go to the field because he thought that he would be out at first base, when the tying run was coming home from third base. Suppose that the first baseman should drop the ball and it would be evident that the runner would have been safe at first had he continued.



That is not a usual instance nor is it an exaggerated instance, for that very thing has happened in professional base ball, where we are supposed to see the very best of everything that is a part of the national game.

**Always run; nothing is certain in base ball.**

First base is the first objective after the ball becomes in play between some point on the field and first base. If it is a missed third strike, start for first base at top speed. If it is a grounder go for the base with an effort to make it. If it is a fly ball do not loiter down the base line watching to see whether the shortstop is going to catch it before you get there. First base must be touched before a run can be scored. Just the reverse, no run can be scored until first base is touched.

The lamest of all excuses is that running to first base is too severe a task when the chance seems to be going against the player. If a member of a team goes to bat six times in a game he has gone more than the average. If the same player is not in good enough physical form to try to run to first base six times at his best speed, there is something wrong about his makeup as a ball player.



Sliding into home plate by a long body slide inside the diamond, the runner keeping completely away from the catcher and scoring by throwing one hand over the base as he goes by. This slide gives the catcher only the smallest target to touch.

Photo N. Y. Daily News.

## Much to Learn About Base-Running

Presumably every ball player among the boys will say that running the bases—just plain running—is the easiest part of base ball, and many of them will think it a subject too trivial to waste time in talking about. It does look easy. Hit the ball and run. Even the ordinary players do that without instruction. The fat men, and the lean men, and the big boys, and the small boys run when they hit the ball, unless they are disobeying one of the fundamentals of the game—running the hit out. I can hear some boy asking what more there is to do than run.

There is this much more to do—run right. There are more ways than one to run around the bases. In the first place, learn to get a quick start from the plate. Some players have a tendency when they hit the ball to hesitate and watch where it is going. If there is anything in base ball which is downright foolishness that is it. What difference does it make where the ball goes? If it is foul no harm is done, and if it is safe no time is to be lost to reach first base.

On the way to first base, if the runner is apt, he will learn in time to turn his head and get some idea of the direction taken by the ball. There is a coacher at first base who is presumed to have intelligence enough to be able to communicate to the runner whether he is to continue for second base. If he lacks that intelligence he should not be on the coaching line.

Start when you feel the bat meeting the ball and keep on going the very best you know how. If you follow



this rule all of your base ball career you will make a record which will be worth while, whether you are an amateur or a professional. There are professionals who have beaten themselves out of superfine batting records because they were bad starters. They got into a bad habit and could not get out of it. Once let curiosity get the better of you so that it becomes a habit and you will lose by it, as you would by the development of any other habit which is detrimental.

### **How to touch the bases when running on extra-base hits.**

When you are started for first base make an effort to regulate your pace so that you will round, or pivot, the base on the right foot. You will gain enough by that to make up many a mile before you have finished with ball playing.

### **Try the experiment for yourself.**

Does such a statement seem to be an exaggeration? Then it is suggested that you demonstrate for yourself.

Run to first base and turn on the left foot. Did you see to where it took you? You were away behind the base, because that was the only way on which you could touch it, and turn the bag on your left foot.

Now run to first base and pivot on the left foot but turn on the right foot. Instead of being behind the base you are in front of it. That means you have cut off a corner of so much magnitude that if all those corners happened to be stretched out, you might find yourself looking over a straightaway course which you

never would believe you had run if it had not been demonstrated in front of your eyes.

**It is important to "pivot" correctly.**

Pivoting on the left foot and touching with the right means that you are taking the short cut of the diamond and still have touched all bases properly.

Pivoting on the right foot means that you are going the long way of the base paths. In other words, if you pivot on the left and turn on the right foot you are running on the inside of the track, and if you pivot on the right foot you are running too far and on the outside of the track. You know that on a circular track the outside is the longest distance to run. Every runner—except in sprints in which lanes are marked off—tries to get close to the inside edge of the track. That is what the ball player should try to do when he is running bases.

**Necessity for a slide often saved by intelligent base-running.**

A base-runner who is going from first to third base when trying for a long hit, runs on a curve of which the center is about the center of the infield. If he touches the inside point of each base he will run on a curve about 4 feet 6 inches shorter than he would run if he touched the outside edge of each base. There is also a difference in running from home plate to first base, and in running from third base to home plate, so that the base-runner who touches the inner edges of the bases and pivots correctly on the right foot is likely to gain not less than six feet over the runner who touches the outside edges. A

slide of six feet to any base is a fairly long slide. It will be seen that correct base-running on the inside frequently will save a slide.

A diamond is four cornered, but a great deal of the running on a diamond takes place as if there were a nearly circular track. This is true when the batter raps the ball for a long distance hit. If he ran on a straight line to first base, checked himself, and took another straight line to second base, and repeated the same thing at second base and at third base, he probably would not get around the diamond in advance of the ball which was being fielded in. The only safe long distance hit which he could make would be one over the fence. When running to first base, and when running for extra bases, assume your natural stride. If you can improve your natural stride by practise, so much the better. To try to step too far is as bad as to mince steps to try to shorten distances.



## With the Runner on First Base

The runner on first base is of more importance most of the time than the runner on any other base. It may not look that way offhand because the runner at third base is much nearer home, but it is true nevertheless that the runner at first is the most bothersome of runners. To begin with, more players arrive at first base than arrive at any other base. They keep the pitcher in a ferment all of the time, because he does not wish them to advance further, and he must use all his craft against the batter as well as against the runner to see that they do not advance further, if he can prevent it. The pitcher begins to wonder whether the runner will try to steal second or whether the runner will wait for the batter to advance him. If he is a good base stealer the pitcher will not dare to give him a lead, providing the pitcher is good at watching bases.

Not all of the presumably good pitchers are worth much when it comes to watching bases. Some of them are too slow in motion to catch five base-runners during a season, and some of them do not make the slightest effort to improve in what should be one of the principal qualifications for authority to pitch.

### **Pitcher and catcher should try to catch hit-and-run sign.**

Both pitcher and catcher are bound to try to catch a hit-and-run sign. If the runner at first is not a good starter, and known to be a little slow, they will figure

that a hit-and-run play will be tried in preference to anything else. That is good logic.

### Getting a lead off the base.

If it is not a hit-and-run play the chances are that the batter will try for a safe hit, or wait for a base on balls if he can worry the pitcher long enough. Knowing this, the runner should take a little action on his own account. He should try to find out whether the shortstop or the second baseman will take the throw at second if the play is made there against him. The best way to find this out is to make a pretense of stealing. Not every runner can take a lead from first base, and right there begins the weakness of modern base-running, because so many runners will not try to learn how to take a good lead from first base.

The time to make a bluff to ascertain what the catcher and the basemen have in mind is when the pitcher delivers the ball. It is a pretty poor bluff when a runner leaves first base while the pitcher is standing in his position with the ball in his hand. The runner should let the pitcher start his delivery, and then leave the base and run a few steps toward second. The man who is to take the ball at second almost unconsciously will start for the base. The only thing which is likely to prevent him is the possibility of the batter hitting the ball. If he bats it, the infielder will be distracted from covering second base, unless the play is to be made to him for a "force."

It is to be presumed that the batter is taking note of what the runner is trying to do. Otherwise all the good

effort of the runner will have gone to waste. Suppose we take it for granted that the runner is sure the second baseman will cover second base, because the batter is a right-hand hitter. The runner signals that he will go to second on the next pitched ball. He must get an answering signal from the batter. The runner is off with a dash the moment the ball leaves the pitcher's hands, but he must not be in too much of a hurry or the pitcher will catch him napping. The batter then makes every effort to push the ball to right field or to bat it with force to right field, if he has acquired that much skill. At the least he can try to bunt it toward first base.

#### **When the hit-and-run play is used.**

Whatever he does, he must accomplish something that is going to help the runner. This is known as the hit-and-run play, and if it should so happen that the batter can get nothing out of it except a bunt which makes the runner sure of second base it is the sacrifice play. Some managers use the sacrifice play to excess. Some do not use it enough.

If there is a left-hand pitcher in the box the base-runner should never take undue liberty. Remember that the pitcher who throws with his left hand is able to face first base most of the time. There is not a move to be made by the runner which the pitcher does not see. With a left-hand pitcher at work the runner should be conservative and depend more upon assistance from the battery, especially if he knows the pitcher to be a player who is able to get the ball over to first base with a snap that is quicker by far than any throw which can be made

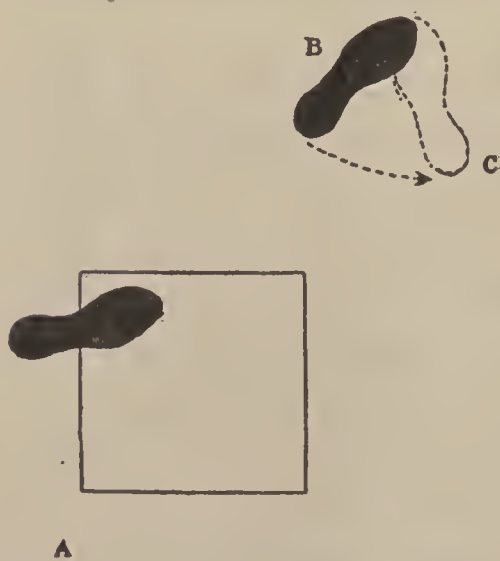


by a right-hand pitcher. Never lead too far away against a left-hand pitcher. Even the slowest of them have an advantage by the use of a shorter throw than a right-hand pitcher.

### Keep in action all the time.

On the other hand, if you are quick and clever afoot keep in motion around first base all of the time. In the first place the baseman will never be sure that you are not going to start, and that will keep him hugging the base. The pitcher will not know whether you are bluffing or really on your toes for a start, and so long as you can keep him guessing you will prevent him from getting set well where he can pitch with more effectiveness to the batter. Running up and down may get the crowd a little excited, because the pitcher keeps throwing the ball over to first base to catch you, but you are right and the pitcher is right.

### Rounding a base, especially first base.



Runners should make all effort when rounding bases after making hits for extra bases to touch the base with the right foot, A, and pivot on the next step on the left foot, B, which is shown by the outline, C, as being turned outward to carry the runner in the line of the following base. The reason

for pivoting on the left foot is that distance is shortened several feet in circling the bases. If the right foot is used as the pivot foot the runner is taken at least one step, and possibly two steps, out of his way, and may lose an extra base which he would have made had he used the proper foot for a pivot.

Don't bother much about the crowd. It hasn't any mercy if you are wrong and forgets quickly when you are right. In fact, it reverses its own judgment with sixty seconds' notice and with the utmost unconcern.

You must study pitchers and know something of their peculiarities before you risk too much. There are pitchers against whom it is dangerous to move, and there are others who do not have the knack of getting the ball over to first base, because they cannot throw quickly and because they cannot throw accurately. The latter are the worse off, as they are afraid to take a chance, being aware of their own weakness.

### **Keep your eye on the ball.**

Whenever you are sure that the pitcher has delivered the ball run along the line toward second base. Do not run imprudently far, as that is not good base ball, but run a little. Be in motion always when the batter hits the ball. It may crowd the fielder who is trying to handle it, and the latter will be forced to throw hurriedly and perhaps poorly, but the outcome of the game will be changed, which would not have happened if you had been standing flatfooted at first base.



The long body slide, in which the runner holds to the base with one hand, throwing his body completely out of the baseline and away from the baseman who is waiting for the ball. This slide is used most frequently when the runner is trying to get behind the player with the ball.

Photo N. Y. Daily News.



## Sliding to Bases

Second base is next in order after a runner has made first base, but the question before the runner is how to get to second base when the play is close. Nowadays, so little time elapses between one play and the next that the wise runner has mentally sketched what he will try to do before the play has begun. When the term "mentally sketched" is used it means that the player has thought out what would seem to be the best thing to do under certain conditions.

If the batter hits the ball in fair territory and it is not a fly ball which is likely to be easily caught, it is fairly safe to say the runner on first base may have to make a slide for the next bag. Suppose that he does have to slide, how shall he go? Shall it be feet foremost or head foremost?

The head foremost slide may be said to be a back number. It is used now and then, but there is so much danger of hurt as compared with the feet foremost slide that, in the general opinion of coaches, it should not be used unless the runner is a very expert ball player, and even then there is much risk. The base-runner who slides head foremost instinctively throws his arms in front of him, and he is quite as apt to have his arms or his hands injured as he is to have his head injured. No real ball player wishes to have either injured.

Sliding to bases is as near personal risk of injury as any play in base ball. This might as well be accepted as trying to deny it. To catch and to bat a ball are purely

mechanical in their way, but to slide to a base and at the same time to attempt to get away from the ball as the baseman reaches with it in hand to touch you and yet keep in contact with the base, is almost an acrobatic feat.

### **Many extra bases are gained by sliding.**

Even the long-distance hitters do not overlook the importance of the slide, because many an extra base is gained by ability to slide. Ball players with much weight—and some of them are much too heavy—hesitate to slide. Now and then one will make a conscientious effort to steal a base, but, on the whole, they are drags upon the run scoring machinery of their teams. The importance of runs is too apparent to dwell upon the subject.

This criticism seems to apply more particularly to the heavy men of today. There were heavy ball players more than a quarter of a century ago who had speed and who had base stealing ability. They were as nimble at getting into second base without being touched as many of the players who professed to be more agile and weigh less. For some reason or another, very likely self-preservation, players now are none too keen to take the chances of base-running if they can avoid doing so. Even those who are physically constituted to make good base-runners will not try to slide to bases if they can avoid it.

### **Fair play should be the spirit of base-running.**

Sliding to bases feet foremost is not done to give the baseman cause to respect you. Because the feet foremost slide is more favored the player must not assume that it is favored because of any lurking menace that if

may possess. Base-running is not sound when it is undertaken for the purpose of intimidating a baseman. Real base-running is an essential to scientific scoring.

The runner who goes to second base has the ball coming from behind him if the play is made by the catcher, or even by the third baseman. As a rule he gets his one idea from whence the ball is coming by means of the attitude which is assumed by the baseman. If the baseman is playing high the chances are that the throw is high and the feet foremost slide is just the thing. When the player throws his leg out to try to make the slide he should not double it beneath him, nor should he make a lunge at the base. Neither of these is good sliding. Push the leg which is bearing the brunt of the slide into the bag and throw the body around to one side so that it will be difficult for the baseman to touch the runner anywhere except on the foot or the lower part of the leg that is aimed at the base. That is called the "hook" slide, as the front part of the foot is used to hook into the yielding base bag and the latter used as a pivot in the swing. The "hook" slide is by far the best method of eluding a baseman who is waiting with the ball.

**Practise continuously; awkwardness may lead to injury.**

Do not forget the injunction not to double the leg beneath you. Awkwardness in that respect produces the injuries of which we read occasionally when sliding is attempted. Dig a pit of soft sand and practise sliding in that. Keep at it until you can really slide along on one leg. Sliding in base ball means exactly what it says, in



spite of the fact that so many have been taught to believe that a slide is a dive for the base, a jump for the base, or a clumsy half roll of the body.

If the runner should be quite positive before he gets to the base that the baseman is certain to have the ball in hand in a fixed position to try to make the putout, it is within the province of the runner to try to elude him and prevent him from doing so, as it would be his right in a similar play standing up. This must be done by learning to throw the upper part of the body away from the ball. Time cannot be lost in making any play in base sliding. Whatever is done must be done in the fraction of a second. If not, the runner will find himself going head on, standing up, perhaps, and bumping into the baseman, who will touch him with ease and possibly make a double play, which will be just that much worse for the side at bat.

There is not enough difference in sliding to third base or sliding home, to give a different direction or suggestion. Sliding is an art which can be tried on any base, and is also an art which must be learned if a ball player desires to stand up well when a general accounting is made at the end of the year.

**Keep your temper always under control.**

One thing more. Sliding feet foremost has been suggested as being more advisable than sliding head foremost, because the runner is less liable to personal injury. The runner should remember that being less liable to personal injury himself he should refrain absolutely from any effort to frighten the baseman by lunging at him.

Deliberate spiking is a cowardly trick. Any injury to another, even in the heat of excitement, shows a mean and unnatural disposition. Control of temper is one of the fine lessons that base ball teaches and one who can control his temper has started on a successful career in life. We all like the good will and esteem of our fellow men. Base ball never was meant to be a game of intimidation. It is possible to slide to any base without injuring a baseman, and a runner should make all effort to bring about that method of sliding.

What boy or man has any respect for the sneaking, cowardly person who, if he cannot win by open, legitimate methods, resorts to underhand devices to help him. The English have a saying when speaking of unfair methods: "It isn't cricket." We can adapt the same expression and when we see an unfair play say: "It isn't base ball."



The "Hook" slide. Always good at second base and third base. Runner slides on his side, eluding the baseman by bending his body while he thrusts one foot forward and "hooks" it into the bag. A slide that is used by most of the leading major league base-runners. Conlon, Photo.



## With Runners on Second and Third Bases

Twenty attempts will be made to steal second base where one will be made to steal third, and yet there is a very fair percentage in favor of stealing third as compared with stealing second. One reason why fewer attempts are made to steal third is that the runner having arrived safely at second is fearful of taking too much risk and losing a possible run by being thrown out at third.

There are some managers who have contended that it is easier to steal third than it is to steal second. Under some conditions that may be true, but do not forget that the catcher has only to throw the ball 90 feet to have it get to third base, against the 127 feet that are necessary for a throw across the diamond. With a difference of almost 40 feet in favor of the catcher, and not overlooking the fact that the ball travels at a faster speed than the runner, it is sure there will be no odds in favor of the runner, so far as the throw to third is concerned.

The runner at second base is presumed always to be ready to start for third. If the ball is batted in such a way that he can score he must be on his toes, as it would be suicidal to his team if he failed to get home when a safe hit was batted to the outfield where not one chance in fifty would ever get the runner at home plate. The runner at second is also supposed to follow the ball every moment so that he shall be able to have a lead if

there is a wild pitch or a passed ball. With only one out, if the runner can get from second to third, he will be in position to score on a long fly to the outfield, and that may be the winning or the tying run.

Suppose it does not appear as the winning or tying run at the moment, how brief a time may elapse before it will become the winning or the tying run as the total of runs is whittled down, tightening up the score.

### **When conditions favor runner.**

The best combination at second in favor of the runner is speed on his part and a pitcher with a slow delivery. A left-hand pitcher always is somewhat embarrassed when a runner gets on second. The left-hander has all the better of it when the runner is on first, but conditions are reversed when the runner is on the next base. If the pitcher is slow in turning or not over keen in perception, a good runner at second can keep him so worried that it may affect his pitching, and that is as good for the team on the inside as it might be if the runner were able to steal third base without the ghost of a chance to get him.

Now and then there is a runner who is smart enough to jockey back and forth between second and third until he has drawn a throw from the catcher at the wrong time for the catcher. The runner may bolt for third base, and often make the play. If the catcher can be induced to throw when the runner is fairly well up the line, or when the runner is ready to pivot and turn toward third base, there is a good chance to succeed in this play. On the other hand, if the catcher gets the runner flatfooted, or even goes after him from a throwing

position inside the diamond, it is more probable that the runner will pay for his foolhardiness by being put out.

When the runner has reached third base he has fulfilled his part of the task and should wait for the batter to drive him home. Now and then it is possible to steal home. Of course, it is a play which carries with it plenty of hurrah from the gallery, but there are very few times when it is good. Those who attempt it heedlessly have heroics on the brain, or else they lack a good brain balance, without which it is impossible to play base ball judiciously and to win.

### **“Bone” plays inexcusable.**

The runner who jeopardizes the chances of his team by foolishly taking hazards at third base, is not a good ball player. There is nothing more deserving of sound criticism than being caught off third base or being caught asleep at third base, by not being observant of the play. Keep your eye on the ball.

Let well enough alone at third base. That is to say, let the batter do the best he can. If a run cannot be scored by reason of good batting the chances are 99 to 1 that one cannot be scored in any other way.

If base-runners can draw wild throws by clever shifting around the bases it is wise to do so. It is a sign of good base ball to note a young player apparently leading off with carelessness until you analyze his motions. Then you may observe there is no carelessness about it but method. He played to catch the catcher, or one of the infielders napping. In other words, played to get a wild throw.





Awkward attempt to slide, which shows lack of practise and is dangerous to the runner, one leg being doubled, while the other is out of position.

Photo N. Y. Daily News.

## Faults of the Novice

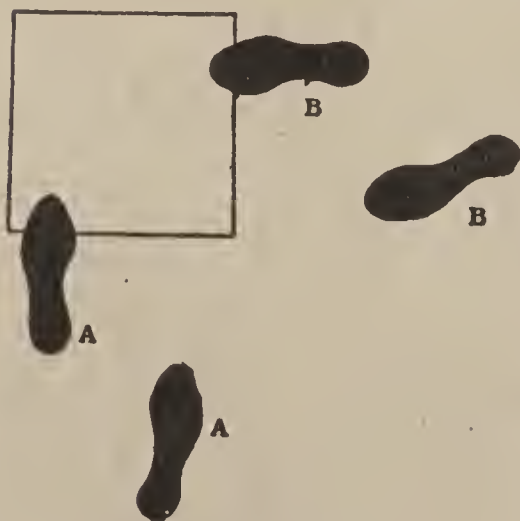
Among younger players there is ever a tendency to throw the ball too much and too often. The pitcher wishes to throw to the bases and the catcher thinks that every player who moves a foot should be frightened back by a throw to a base. If you have the good fortune to be able to see professional teams play notice how very seldom the catcher throws the ball to second base. Sometimes he will stand still and permit a runner to go deliberately along his way, realizing that he has a very poor chance to get him, and that if he makes a wild throw the runner will surely go to third base or may even go home, and that if the man who covers second base makes a misplay on the ball the same thing will happen. The catcher reasons—and correctly—“The chances are too great against putting the man out, so why be foolish?” That is good base ball, and that is the kind of play that the novice will find he must learn if he expects to get up in the world of base ball, whether it is his college team or the big league arena.

### **When player is caught in a run-up.**

If a player is caught in a run-up—that is, in a trap between bases—the thing to do is to make it as hard as possible for the other side to put him out. Very seldom is it the case that a runner gets out of a run-up. Now and then it happens, but as a play it is about as much against a base-runner as anything can be. For that reason, when you are in a run-up remember that you are

probably going to lose out, but that you must keep the other side busy as long as possible with the hope that the unexpected may happen. In the meantime keep an eye on the following runner in your team, if there is one on base. It is his business to move in as closely as possible to you so that he shall occupy the base that you had occupied prior to the time that the run-up began. If you can keep from being touched out until you have done that much for your side you have played good base ball. It is poor base-running when you lose out in a run-up and are touched so closely to the base you occupied that your club member behind you can not make the base and is placed in danger of being put out before he can get back to his own base.

With two runners touching the same base.



In the accompanying diagram A represents the runner who was originally on a base, usually second base or third base, as the play happens very rarely at first base. B represents the player who has advanced from a preceding base and is touching the base at the same time as it is

touched by A. Young players are confused as to which of the players should be touched out by the ball when it is possible to make a play, and neither runner has been forced from his base by the batsman becoming a base-runner. B is the runner to be touched out by the ball.



The base always belongs to the runner who originally held it, if he has not been forced from it, and he cannot be forced if the runner at the following base has not been forced himself. If the fielder should touch A he would not be out and B would have the right to retrace his way to the base that he had held. By touching B he prevents that runner from going back to the base originally held, to which he has forfeited his right. If A should foolishly step off the base he could be touched out, and if B at the same time should step from the base he, too, could be put out and a double play would follow. If both are touching the base, as the diagram makes plain, and both are touched by the ball, A is safe and B is out.



Making the "Hook" slide into a base by starting feet foremost, pushing one foot directly into the bag and throwing the body out at the same time.

Photo N. Y. Daily News.

## Keep Your Wits About You

There is nothing in base ball which calls for better presence of mind than trying to steal bases and running bases. So little time is given to judge of a situation that instantaneous action is necessary on the part of the base-runner. His is a question of "hurry up" all of the time. He must have daring and he must take certain risks—not foolish risks that endanger the success of his team, but the intelligent use of opportunities. We hear of players who are always taking chances and "getting away with it." If you note carefully the alleged chances that he takes it will be ascertained that type of player is a "thinking" player. He has studied his opponents, has made his plans and is ready to take advantage of the slightest opening.

The base that is stolen in a midsummer game may actually have been stolen weeks before. A similar circumstance may have occurred in a game in which this particular base-runner was not even playing. Being accustomed to using his brain, he figured out what he would do under similar conditions and applied his theory when the occasion arose. The old saying, "When one door shuts another opens," may well be applied to base ball. It is the slow footed who follow the routine and are helpless when their plans are crossed. The mentally alert player can switch his combinations in an instant. It is not superior mental ability either that is responsible, but a daily drill in his own mind of what he should do under varying conditions that earns for him the reputa-



tion of being quick-witted. Every ball player should continually *Think*, THINK, THINK.

### Base runner by holding base prevented double play.

One important play that calls for quick thinking is best illustrated by an incident that occurred in a world series.

A runner was on first, when the batsman hit a grounder to the second baseman who was playing almost half way between second base and first base. The second baseman threw to the first baseman, who while standing on the base, touched the base-runner who had not made any attempt to go to second despite the oncoming runner who had just hit the ball. Many of the spectators, and even the first baseman, who was comparatively new, assumed that a double play had occurred and were astounded when the umpire called the base-runner safe who had held his base, the runner to first being the only one to be called out.

To obtain a double play the procedure should have been as follows: The first baseman should have stepped off the base to receive the ball. Then he should have touched the runner, no matter where he stood, on the base or off, the first baseman still keeping his feet away from the base. That being done, the first baseman by touching the base before the batter arrived there would have completed a double play. When he touched the base before touching the runner who was to go to second he ended the force play. With the batter out, the runner who was on first base originally was entitled to remain there.

Effort has been made to impress upon the reader that although fast running is an accessory to base-running, it

is by no means all of it. One could go back over the records of the past and cite dozens of instances of ball players who were not particularly fast runners but who were most excellent base-runners. The present era is not developing as good base-runners as a few years ago. There is one reason why this subject of base-running has been introduced in this book. It is hoped that its discussion has been instructive and an inspiration. Base-running is needed to enliven a style of play which is becoming monotonous because of too much mechanical direction.

The base-runner must think for himself. To think well he must combine coolness, good judgment and headwork—plenty of the latter. It is always advisable to know when to start in base-running and the best way to know when to leave first base independently is to keep a careful eye on the pitcher. Of course, in saying this it is realized that the boy and the youth cannot give the pitcher the same study which is given by the professional, but if the novice will take careful notice of the pitcher opposed to him he will discover some little peculiarity which asserts itself when the pitcher is about to deliver the ball. When he has learned that much he has learned his first and most important lesson in base-running so far as that pitcher is concerned. From then he will never fear any pitcher.

#### **When a base-runner may take chances.**

To elude the catcher is possible. There is one principal difference in catchers and only one. That is in the speed with which they can throw and the directness.

Some catchers are less observing than others and less to be feared on that account. If a catcher is known to be a poor thrower take a start on him. That is where the base-runner has the advantage if he has acquired information by observation.

If the pitcher has a long windup before he can deliver the ball to the batter take advantage of it. If the catcher is erratic you will not fear him much. Those are two things which your wits should tell you. In other words, it is as essential to think while running bases as it is while you are playing in the field. On the whole perhaps there is nothing which asks you to think more in base ball than base-running.

### **Be daring always, but never foolish.**

We do not fine unorganized ball players in sums of money, but we can look at them reprovngly. They need a good, long reproachful look whenever any one of them fails to run out a hit, starts slowly from any base, unless it be for strategical reasons, run blindly into a run-up without giving his partner a chance, and makes some utterly inexcusable effort to steal a base when he has not one chance in fifty to get to it. Worst of all is the effort to steal home merely as a "grand stand play," for the very best work of a team may be sacrificed by an egotistical player. Nothing is sure in the fielding of a batted ball, so be ready at all times when you are on the bases to get away on your toes. Don't be caught flat-footed. It makes you feel so miserably that you wish to hide from the spectators, and they are more inclined to criticise that one particular blunder on the bases than they are some others.



Take excellent care of your feet, and whatever you do be sure if you are playing in base ball shoes that they fit. More than that, if you can afford base ball shoes get them. It is a positive joy to play base ball in the regulation shoes, and you can run bases better in them, too.

### Use a sliding pad.

In order to protect base-runners the Fox Sliding Pad, made by A. G. Spalding & Bros., from a design by W. H. Fox, will be found most excellent. Mr. Fox, who is director of municipal athletics in the public parks of Minneapolis, has had long experience both as player and manager and is therefore familiar with the correct requirements. They are a splendid guard for the fleshy portion of the thigh and hip, which they defend against the grit and sand of the base paths. They are used by professional players, who find them the best of inventions to prevent abrasions of the skin and bruises.

## The Delayed Steal

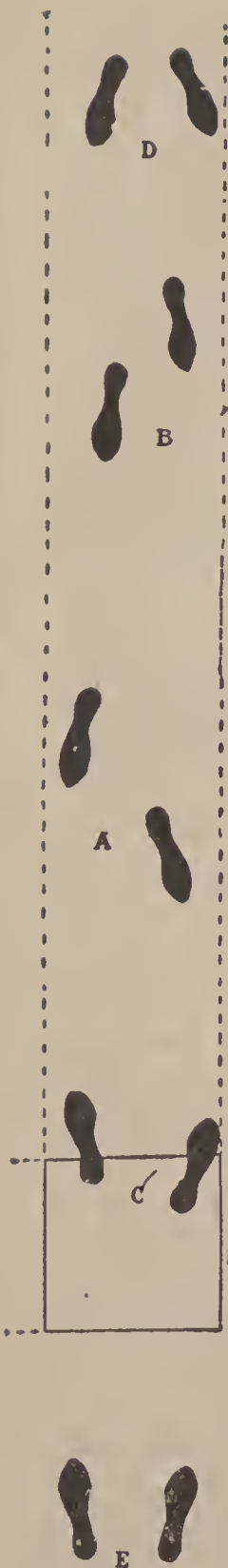
The expression "delayed steal," which is used to describe one kind of stolen base, refers to a base which is stolen while the ball is in play between the catcher and the pitcher and not while it is in play between the pitcher and the catcher. Most stolen bases are undertaken when the pitcher delivers the ball to the batter. The runner who is on first or second or third base, as the case may be, attempts to get his start while the pitcher is winding up for delivery and to steal the base between the time that the pitcher delivers the ball and it is received by the catcher, followed by the catcher's throw to a baseman.

When a delayed steal is undertaken it is when the ball is in the hands of the catcher who may be slow in handling it or caught off his guard in returning it to the pitcher, taking so much time to get the ball back to the pitcher that the runner, alert and ready for the situation, darts for the next base when the ball leaves the catcher's hands.

After the catcher has thrown the ball in the latter instance, it is evident that a relay throw must be made by the pitcher to the baseman and if the pitcher is surprised and disconcerted by the runner's move he is apt to make a bad throw. It is also to be remembered that when a delayed steal is attempted the baseman who should cover the following base for which the runner is headed now and then is caught napping and, with the base lying unguarded, the baseman makes a desperate and hurried effort to get to it with varying success.

## "Run-Up" of a Base-Runner

A is the base-runner. B is the fielder with the ball in hand. C is the baseman. D is the fielder who is backing B. E is the fielder who is backing up C. The fielder, B, should pursue the runner, A, as closely to the baseman as possible before throwing the ball. The reason for that is to give the runner the longest possible distance to go to the next base, if he tries to retrace his steps, yet not to withhold a throw so long that he can slide safely into the base that he is trying to regain. When the fielder, B has thrown the ball, he should drop out and fall back behind D, who is to come forward to relieve him. If he remains too close to A, the latter may collide with him and claim interference. E should remain behind C all of the time, ready to retrieve the ball in case it passes C. In a run-up always try to reserve the throw as long as possible, and on the other hand, do not wait to throw until the runner is only a few feet from the player who is to receive the ball, as there is a possibility that the runner will be hit by the ball when it is thrown. The fielders who back up, must be sure to play behind the fielder who is expecting to receive a throw, but must not play so close as to obstruct him if he is compelled to run back suddenly.





## Ground Rules

It is very important to agree upon ground rules before a game begins, especially when it is played on an open space such as a park playground, for instance, where there is no fence or barrier. So many spectators go to base ball games in automobiles nowadays in the towns and cities of the Middle West and the Southwest that many motor cars are often parked behind the bases, and it should be distinctly understood how many bases are to be taken if the ball goes beyond the coaching line into the crowd or into or among the automobiles.

If the captains cannot agree upon ground rules, the umpire must make them. It is advisable for beginners in base ball, and for those who play upon grounds which are not enclosed, to have a fixed understanding as to the number of bases to be taken in case of an overthrow to first base or to third base.

The rules say that in awarding bases under certain conditions the umpire shall be governed by the position of the runner, or runners, at the time the throw is made. In the games of beginners much controversy will be avoided if the captains of the teams state that an overthrow is to be followed by two bases or one base, as may be determined, the position of the runner being taken at that base which he held, or had just left, when the mis-play was made.

If a runner is on first base when a wild throw is made, either to the first baseman or the third baseman, he should be given one base or two bases, as agreed upon,

irrespective of whether he has started for second base or whether when the throw was made he was a step or two over second base, because he had started to steal that base with the pitch. This advice is offered as a suggestion to do away with argument and disagreement which follow almost inevitably when a dispute arises as to where a runner may have been.

Players, captains and managers should read the "Knotty Problems," published each year in the Spalding Official Base Ball Guide and also in the book of the Spalding Athletic Library series called "Knotty Problems." Many contentions would be avoided and much useful base ball information would be gained. It is the kind of information which is valuable both on the field and off.

## Books to Read

Although this book is devoted especially to instructions for catchers and on the art of base-running, the other positions of the playing field are so intimately connected with the subject that it would be advisable to read the instructions contained in them also.

The companion volume to this book is "How to Play the Infield and the Outfield." Heretofore the various positions have been treated of in separate books. They are now so dependent upon each other for success that it was decided to print all of the instructions in one volume. Every player should make himself familiar with not only the duties of the position at which he plays, but he also should have at least a working knowledge of the other positions, so as to be able to get the best results of team work. "How to Play the Infield and the Outfield" is a new book and will be sent to any address upon receipt of 25 cents.

"How to Bat," "How to Pitch," the Base Ball Guide and Base Ball Record of Spalding's Athletic Library are so well known that it is not necessary to tell more about them. Their universal use testify to the good qualities of each book.

Players who desire decisions on points of play or further information on any particular point of play should address Mr. John B. Foster, American Sports Publishing Company, 45 Rose Street, New York, and enclose a stamped envelope for reply.

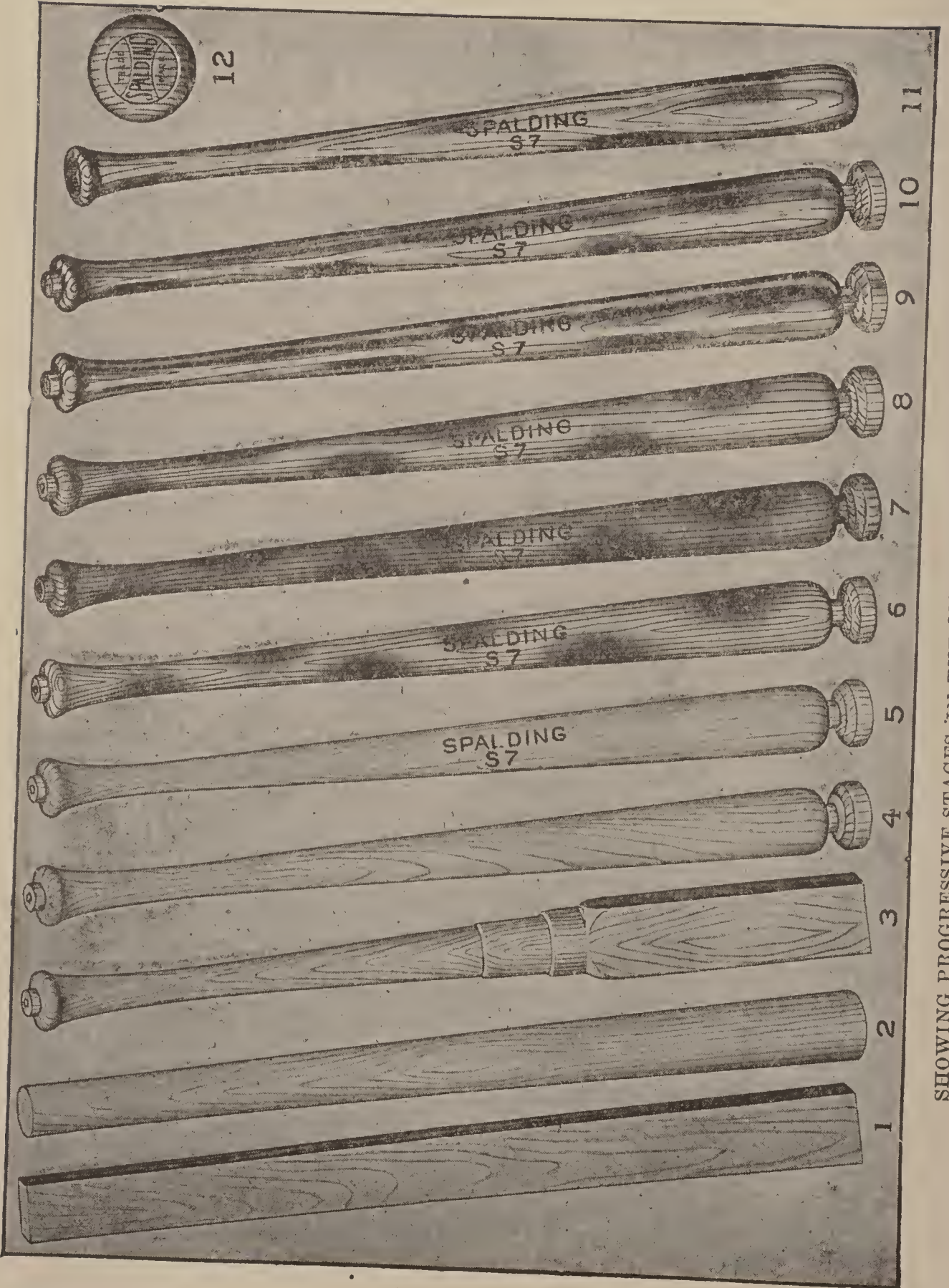
Undoubtedly the least sought position on the ball field is that of umpire. Yet an umpire who knows his duties



and has a firm character will find that he will earn the respect of players and spectators if he knows his business. "How to Umpire" was compiled by Billy Evans, the noted arbiter of the American League, which is sufficient to show that it is done in the same efficient and thorough manner in which he officiates in the season's championship race. Price 25 cents.

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Every reader who wishes to know anything regarding details of base ball is invited to write to Spalding's Athletic Library, 45 Rose Street, New York, enclosing a self-addressed stamped envelope for reply. Every effort will be made to give the correct desired information.



SHOWING PROGRESSIVE STAGES IN THE MANUFACTURE OF A SPALDING BAT.



## How a Base Ball Bat is Made

Showing the Successive Processes which a Bat Undergoes in its Evolution from a Square of Timber to the Finished Product

As it was said that every soldier of Napoleon carried a marshal's baton in his knapsack, so it might be similarly asserted that every boy carries a big league bat on the ball field.

It's the bats that tell the story. While the pitcher's reputation is based principally upon his dexterity with the ball and his ability to outguess the batter, the usefulness of the rest of the team is bound up largely with their ability to bat. For that reason the average ball player is as particular about the selection of his "weapon" as a virtuoso is of his violin. Many players have their own specifications, which are implicitly followed in the Spalding bat factory, and when a tried and trusty implement disappears it is a real catastrophe.

The searcher for Base Ball bat timber in the North Woods, from whence the finest material is obtained, has an eye only for second growth northern white ash. The tallest pine or the lordly oak concern him not at all. Home runs and base-hits are in his mind, and although he may never see a big league game or hear the plaudits of a world series crowd, nevertheless he feels the responsibility that is his.

As very few persons realize the number of different operations, also the work and time required in manufacturing a high-grade Base Ball bat, the following description may be of interest and give a general idea of the process of manufacture.

The first operations are practically the same on all bats, except specials, up to and including the turning. From this point all different lines vary.

The trees are first cut into bolts and sawed into squares by mill men specially employed for this purpose. This stock when sawed is then shipped to the factory, where inspecting for quality and grades of stock begins. Only about ten per cent of this stock will grade into the highest quality bats. After inspection has been made and reported, the stock is moved and piled according to its several grades to season for one to three years. Thoroughly seasoned stock as it comes into the factory is first cut to length for the model required.

After "turning" on hand lathes, the bats are again inspected and sorted for the several lines. This is a very rigid inspection and many additional bats are rejected at this point as not being up to "autograph" quality. Then the bats are put in racks for model and line in which they are to be used, and from these racks all orders are assembled.

The illustration shows the successive operations which a Spalding bat undergoes in its process of manufacture. For example, in a line composed of twelve models, these models are selected from the rack referred to, taken to the burning room and branded "Spalding 100-S, Model 1," 2, 3, etc. After this operation, they are next spotted by gas flame for effective finish. The next operation is sanding. An automatic machine built for this particular kind of sanding is used, bats passing over four grades of sandpaper. The bats are then taken to the finishing room, where they are filled and stained. Twenty-four hours is required before the next operation takes place, which is putting on the polishing material. Usually three coats are applied by this process, with sufficient time allowed for proper drying, after which bats are ready to be rubbed with steel wool.

After the process of rubbing, the bats are rubbed with pumice stone and oil and are now ready for the final polish. These several operations, such as rubbing with steel wool, rubbing with pumice stone and oil and French polish, are done in hand lathes.



The ends left on the bats by the turning machines are not removed from the bat until the finishing process is complete. We are now at the point where the cutting off of these ends is done, after which they are sanded on a belt sanding machine and ready for the trade mark, which is stamped into the handle end of the bat. One more operation, tipping or coating the ends, and the bat is ready for the stock room. After a final inspection, they are sacked or put into paper bags, ready to be packed and crated for shipping.

As previously mentioned, the process through which this particular line of bats goes from start to finish is only one of several processes of finishing. Bats such as the Spalding No. 300 "Players' Autograph" line are boiled in linseed oil for two successive days before filling. Several of the lines of bats are taped on the grip.

Players who succeed in finding a bat that suits their style of batting order from season to season by model name. Although in some cases stars who originally gave the name to a style of bat have passed out of the game, the model is not abandoned. Hundreds of players who have found that particular style best suited to their needs still call for it by name. The batter who originated the model knew what he wanted and what was good, and those who have tried his model prefer it to any other. As an instance of the widely different styles of batters and the variety of specifications from which a batter may select a model suitable to his capabilities, the following list is of interest.

#### SPALDING "PLAYERS' AUTOGRAPH" BATS.

*Ross Youngs*

AUTOGRAPH MODEL. Medium thick handle, large batting surface, giving immense driving power in the hands of players capable of swinging a heavy bat. Weights from 40 to 46 ounces. Length 35 inches.

Ross Youngs is a good exemplar, in some respects the best, of the modern type of straight-from-the-shoulder-hitting left-handers. His parallel swing meets the ball on the center and his drive is unusually forceful because of the strength with which nature filled his shoulders. Youngs has one method of batting the ball in which he is not excelled by any player in the major leagues. It is what may be best called a running bunt. He pushes the ball instead of tapping it and is on his way to first at the contact of the ball and bat.

*Thos. H. Griffith*

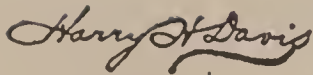
AUTOGRAPH MODEL. Medium batting surface; perfectly balanced, beautiful model adapted to a great many styles of batting, and a perfect all around bat. No more desirable model has ever been produced. Weights from 38 to 45 ounces. Length 34 $\frac{1}{2}$  inches.

Thomas H. Griffith is a hale, hearty, short-arm swinging batter, who mixes that style with occasional long swings at the ball. When he meets the ball with one of those long swings he sends it dusting to the outfield.

*Cy Williams*

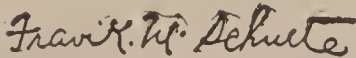
AUTOGRAPH MODEL. Handle slightly thicker than Zimmerman model, good striking surface. Weights from 36 to 42 ounces. Length 34 inches.

"Cy" Williams is a dangerous loop hitter who is likely to drive the ball far and high. He takes a full arm swing when the ball comes up to the plate to suit him and then, if there are any short fences on the right field side of the ball park, the ball is likely to be lost somewhere on the street side of the fence. He has cleared every short fence in the National League.



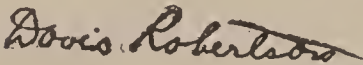
AUTOGRAPH MODEL. Well balanced, comparatively light weight, with sufficient wood to give splendid driving power. Weights from 36 to 43 ounces. Length 34½ inches.

Harry H. Davis can have no better description than that of a batter with a "sterling style." He hits right handed and it is probable that no Base Ball manager would hesitate for a moment to recommend his position to any young ball player who was seeking the best way in which to bat the ball. He, too, is a shoulder hitter, and adhered to a style which he steadily improved, and in the end was looked upon as one of the best of the American League batters.



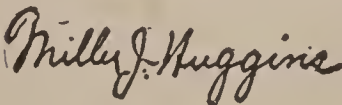
AUTOGRAPH MODEL. Very small handle, and balanced so that with a full swing terrific driving power results. Weights from 37 to 45 ounces. Length 35 inches.

When "Old Wildfire" Schulte walked to the plate for the Cubs with runners on bases the Chicago "fans" sat back and began to gloat before the pitcher threw the first ball. Such was the confidence they had in Schulte. Any time that any pitcher struck Schulte out—it did happen now and then—each Chicago "fan" took it as a personal affront and said words about the pitcher. Schulte liked to get his fingers around a bat in a grip that was convincing enough to crush the wood, and he had a dynamic swing that sent the ball over the heads of the outfielders with a motion that almost seemed like a tap.




AUTOGRAPH MODEL. Longest bat in regular line. Fairly thin handle, evenly tapered. Weights from 37 to 47 ounces. Length 35½ inches.

Had Davis Robertson been possessed of the initiative with which "Ty" Cobb is possessed, he might have been another Cobb and thus there would have been two players from the South famous as leaders in major leagues. Robertson has made some of the longest hits on record in the parks of the National League. Anything which is pitched to him around the waist is likely to be sent back through the field "a mile a minute." When he catches a low ball right it is lifted on a visit to the lot which happens to be next to the Base Ball park.



AUTOGRAPH MODEL. Short bat, small handle, but body quite thick. Weights from 38 to 45 ounces. Length 32 inches.

Miller J. Huggins was a marvel of waiters and the master of the choke grip on the bat. There wasn't so much of him in physique, but the only effect that seemed to have was on the temper of the opposing pitchers. Perhaps they reasoned because of his slenderness he was one who should be easily retired when he came to the plate, but he made more pitchers retire than ever pitchers retired him. He had plenty of body in the bat he used, for when he hit the ball he gave it a blow which he intended to "carry through," and "carry through" it usually did.



AUTOGRAPH MODEL. The smallest, shortest and lightest bat used by any professional player. Specially adapted to small or light men. Weights from 35 to 41 ounces. Length 31 inches.

No batter carried the choke to the extreme that it was carried by Norman Elberfeld, and in spite of the fact that he used a bat which was short, small and light, he was dreaded by every pitcher. He could not be pushed back from the plate, and with a grip on his bat that was powerful and almost crushing, he fairly compelled the pitcher to keep the ball on the plate unless the latter were willing to walk the batter.



*George W. Sisler*

AUTOGRAPH MODEL. Medium grip, generous batting surface, and so designed as to get the greatest driving power out of a reasonably heavy bat. Weights from 40 to 47 ounces. Length 34 inches.

George Sisler was the leading batter in the American League in 1920. His position is one of the best adopted by professional players. He steps into the ball and uses a parallel swing. This method gives him command of the ball at all times. He is "on top of the ball," as professional players put it, and not dominated by curves or speed. He is not a one-field batter, although the power of his swing frequently carries the ball on its longest flight to right field. His bat is balanced to be a part of him.

*F. Frisch*

AUTOGRAPH MODEL. One of the best all around models ever produced. Medium small handle, well distributed striking surface. Equally suitable for full swing or choke style of batting. Weights from 40 to 47 ounces. Length 34 inches.

Frank Frisch cuts at the ball with a rapid motion that puts speed into the hits which he makes to right field. He can hit through second base territory with as fast a clip as any batter. Frisch is a fairly good bunter and improving in that respect. His ability to start quick and reach high speed makes it no easy matter to get him out unless a bunt hit is handled accurately by the fielder. He is not a pronounced place hitter and makes most of his long hits toward right center.

*Chas. F. Hollocher*

AUTOGRAPH MODEL. Medium handle, good batting surface, and a very excellent all around bat for players of medium or light weight. Weights from 37 to 43 ounces. Length 32½ inches.

It is never certain to predict where Hollocher will hit the ball. Although a left-hand batter, he is as likely to slip one through short or between short and third as he is to hit to right field. His grip on the bat is overlapping and he handles it with ease and assurance. His swing is so well timed that he is almost a place hitter by his unerring accuracy in meeting the ball and pulling it or pushing it as it varies in speed.

*Lew McCarty*

AUTOGRAPH MODEL. Medium size handle, generous batting surface, slightly bottle shape grip. A powerful bat, and especially desirable for the choke style of batting. Weights from 41 to 48 ounces. Length 35 inches.

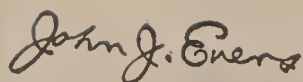
Lew McCarty stands far back in the box, and steps into the ball with a wicked rush and a hard swing that earns him many long distance hits. He meets the ball on the full of the swell of his bat. While at times he hits savagely to right field, he can pull a ball into left field with sufficient force almost to knock a fielder over.

*R. T. Peckinpaugh*

AUTOGRAPH MODEL. Beautifully tapered, medium size grip. One of the most useful all around bats in the line. Weights from 38 to 45 ounces. Length 34½ inches.

R. T. Peckinpaugh, whose steady improvement as a batter shows what practice and thought can do for a ball player, meets the ball with an effective forearm snap that pushes it through the infield at a speed too fast for the fielders. "Peck" likes a bat that responds at once to every shift which he makes with it after it is in his grip. With a good eye, he waits for the ball to get to the angle which suits him best.





**AUTOGRAPH MODEL.** Sufficient wood to give splendid driving power. Weights from 40 to 46 ounces. Length 34 inches.

John J. Evers, manager of the Chicago Cubs, is a fragile man with a kiek, and handled a heavier bat than some ball players who were several sizes larger than the Trojan. A bat to Evers was just something with which to tantalize the pitcher. The moment he took his bat in hand he swung in a manner that was intended to convey a personal challenge to the pitcher. Evers' forte in batting was to slip the ball through some spot in the infield which bore a "To Let" sign.



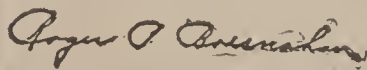
**AUTOGRAPH MODEL.** Well distributed striking surface. Weights from 40 to 46 ounces. Length 34 inches.

Vic Saier swings hard for long drives and chops a great deal the remainder of the time. He is what might be termed a rather steady right field hitter, with plenty of power behind the ball and plenty of speed on the part of the ball after the bat has connected with it in good earnest. His line drives are wicked, and a fairly met low ball that he has been able to lift with all of his shoulder foree will put a right fielder against the fence.



**AUTOGRAPH MODEL.** More tapered than Saier model, good striking surface. Weights from 38 to 45 ounces. Length 33½ inches.

Bennie Kauff is a free hitter who is a zealous advocate of the theory of making a home run every time that he goes to the plate. Single hits are only "excusable," so far as Bennie's ideas are concerned. If he has to make them, he must, but the real pinnacle of batting with him is a home run or a three-bagger. Bennie swings at a ball with all the length of his arms and plenty of body motion.



**AUTOGRAPH MODEL.** Short bat, large handle, well rounded end. Weights from 40 to 46 ounces. Length 32½ inches.

Roger P. Bresnahan, right-hander and with a beautiful swing, was nearer like the type of batsman of the "Buck" Ewing school than any batter of recent years in Base Ball. A bat in the hands of Bresnahan was a slave. Bresnahan was the master, and knew just what that slave did. His body and arms were always timed together. He never, as some batters have done, and do, swung his arms with a rigid body, nor did he try to meet the ball with freedom of body and rigid arms.

Even in the junior line there is a Spalding "Players' Autograph" bat made. It is made especially for the youngsters who still find the larger bats a trifle too unwieldy. John B. Sheridan, the originator of the boys' diamond, is enthusiastic over this boys' bat, and in a letter to A. G. Spalding & Bros. writes: "I have tested the bats of the Spalding line and would recommend 'Players' Autograph Junior' bats as being the proper models from which a boy should make a selection."

The variety in every line of equipment that comprises the Spalding list of articles for the national game seems limitless. Every player—in fact every "fan"—should send for a copy of the Spalding Base Ball Catalogue, which contains pictures and prices of everything that is official and up to date in the national game. A letter addressed to any Spalding store, a list of which will be found on the inside front cover of the GUIDE, will bring one by return mail.



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No. 12-CL

No. O-P. "Semi-Pro" League. "Open Vision," electric welded best black annealed steel wire frame. Convenient opening in front of mouth. Each, \$6.00

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No. O-X. Men's size. "Open Vision," electric welded frame, finished in black. Leather covered pads.....Each, \$3.50

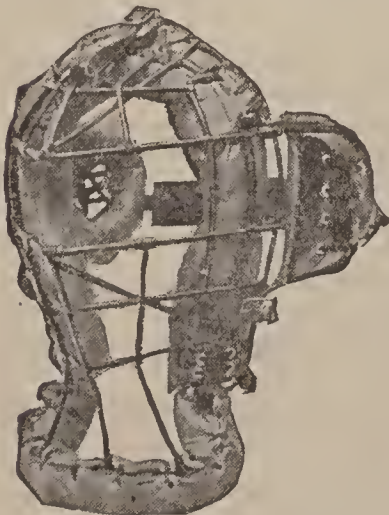
No. OXB. Youths' "Open Vision," electric welded frame, black finish. Each, \$3.50

No. A. Men's. Electric welded black enameled frame. Leather covered pads. ....Each, \$2.75

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No. UO. "Super-Protected." Wires in this mask support each other and are arranged according to an entirely new principle of mask construction. Eye opening is straight across with "Diamond" point wired protection. Fitted with extra padded chin protection and folding padded ear pieces. Each, \$12.50



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No. 12-0. "Honor." The pride of the Spalding factory, Special brown leather. Padding cannot get out of shape, as it is held by an "inside mitt" of leather. Leather laced back and strap-and-buckle reinforcement at thumb. "Stick-on-the-Hand" strap-and-buckle fastening  
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No. 10-0. "World Series." Finest selected brown calfskin. King Patent Felt Padding, leather laced back and special "Stick-on-the-Hand" strap and brass buckle fastening..... Each, \$20.00

No. 6-0. "Collegiate." Special olive-colored leather. King Patent Felt Padding; laced back and thumb; strap-and-buckle fastening. Each, \$18.00

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No. 5-0. "League Extra." Semi-molded face. Special olive colored leather, soft and pliable; patent hand formed felt padding; strap-and-buckle fastening at back. reinforced and laced at thumb, and made with patent laced back. Heel of hand piece felt lined. Leather bound edges... Each \$12.00

No. 4-0. "League Special." Black leather face and finger piece; patent hand formed felt padding; reinforced and laced at thumb; patent laced back, leather lace; strap-and-buckle fastening at back. Heel of hand piece felt lined. Leather bound edges..... Each, \$10.00

No. O. "Interstate." Brown leather face and finger piece; leather back and side piece; strap-and-buckle fastening; patent laced back; leather lace. Each, \$9.00

No. AA. "Athletic." Pearl tan leather face and finger piece, brown leather back and side piece; patent laced back, leather lace; strap-and-buckle fastening..... Each, \$6.50

No. 1C. "Back-Stop." Gray leather face and finger piece; oak colored leather side piece. Strap-and-buckle; patent laced back, leather lace. Each, \$5.00

No. 3L. "Amateur." Oak colored leather face and finger piece; imitation leather back. Reinforced at thumb; strap-and-buckle fastening..... Each, \$4.00

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