

COLLEGE BASEBALL.

The More Glaring Faults—The Base on Balls—The Demands on a Captain.

[Clarence Deming, Yale '72, a former baseball captain, in New York Evening Post.]

Foremost of them is the tendency of the college pitchers to send men to bases on balls, included in the phrase being "batsmen hit by the ball." The evil, in a general way, is known and realized by the college experts, but without any attempt to measure it with accuracy. Such an attempt is made in the table subjoined. The figures cover twelve games played last season at Yale Field, including two Freshmen and the "big" University games with Harvard and Princeton, and, with one possible exception, all the matches played in 1899 at the Field by the Yale Nine. The first column of figures gives the total Yale runs in each game, the second column the number of Yale players sent to first base by opponents on balls and batsman hit, and the third column the runs made by those players after "walking" to first base. Corresponding columns give the same records for Yale's opponents:

YALE.		OPPONENTS.	
13	4	3	4
18	13	7	4
6	4	1	7
7	8	2	12
4	6	1	7
5	6	2	6
8	7	2	0
23	4	2	6
13	8	3	6
7	3	1	6
13	8	4	7
3	8	0	4
120	79	28	69
		55	21

The figures show that Yale in the twelve games of the season at the home grounds was given 79 bases on balls, and that the men who received them in consequence scored 28 runs, or a little more than 23 per cent. of the total runs in Yale home games. Corresponding figures and profits for her opponents were 55 bases on balls and 21 runs, or almost exactly 30 per cent. of the total runs. Taking the figures for Yale and opponents together, they show a total of 189 runs, 134 bases on balls, and 49 resulting runs, or nearly 26 per cent. of total runs. These, it must be noted also, were the direct results of bases on balls and batsmen hit, as measured by the figures, while indirect results might raise the average effect on scores to 40 per cent. or more. The tabulation does not allow for men advanced on four balls and subsequently let in by errors, or hits, men forced in, or the remoter and demoralizing influence of the "bases on balls" factor on college teams. Every observant baseball critic must have noticed how often a bad inning opens with the first man at the bat walking to first base. Moreover, the record set forth in the table was made against nervous college batsmen, too prone to strike at the bad ball and let the good ball go by.

The base on balls factor in college games, resulting so often in literal self-defeat of college teams, is due very largely to an error in judgment of college pitchers, and not so much as is commonly believed to mere lack of control of the ball. Excluding, of course, fouls, the pitcher has four balls as a kind of capital to be used in the purchase of three strikes. His prime fault is his tendency to treat the first two of these four balls as surplus rather than capital. He uses them to deceive the batsman by a bad ball rather than to compel strikes. The first and second balls are thus, for example, wide in or out curves away from the plate or a kind of experimental "up-shoot," the most difficult ball of all for the pitcher's control. The wise batsman knows this weakness of college pitchers in general and often banks on it successfully. With two balls called and no strikes, the pitcher's capital is half gone, and the risk of four balls is only to be modified by straighter pitching and easier opportunity for the base hit. There are, of course, pitchers and pitchers. Some of them, cool-headed and with fine control, can afford the initial "tricks" and to treat the two first balls as surplus,

but such experts are few and exceptional. In general, the college pitcher is far wiser if he treats his four balls as capital, forces strikes, or relies upon the fielder. How far the old evil will be abated by the new form—if college nines adopt it—of the home plate, which will, in effect, allow the pitcher to deliver his ball over a straight line instead of, as heretofore, between two points, remains to be seen.

THE IDEAL BACKSTOP.

No position on a college ball nine offers more vivid contrast with the professional precisians than that of catcher. It is a place where, assuming as first essentials fair accuracy and speed in throwing to bases, the chief efficiency depends on form, and form consists mainly in economizing motion and distance, thus saving the small fraction of a second that cuts off the runner at second base or catches him momentarily napping at third or first. The college catcher of bad form—and he belongs to the great majority—overdoes his body work. His habit is by violent exertion to always place himself in front of the ball. He will leap for an overhead ball that he can readily reach, fling himself sidewise for a moderately wide ball, and before he throws to a base is prone to take a needless step. Each of these body efforts wastes the vital instant, not compensated for even though the catcher is agile and quick. The type may be called, for brevity, the "body," or "curvilinear" catcher. Contrast with him the "arm" or "straight-line" catcher. He stands firmly planted. His work is arm work. The wide or high ball he rarely uses his body to reach. He is always poised ready for the quick throw without waste of motion. His general action is mechanical—but not wooden—precise, even. Steady himself, he steadies the whole team. Not many such catchers have college baseball captains been able to find, but they would have found more of them had "form" been more deeply impressed on candidates. Yale has had but two—Dann, the great catcher of fifteen years ago, and the later and even superior John Greenway. This year Cunha, whose overweight body absolutely forces straight-line catching, exhibits strikingly some of its vantages. Were he a lighter man and with a little longer reach, he might be bracketed with Dann or Greenway.

BASE RUNNING.

A more palpable flaw in college baseball teams is poor base running, which has been a persistent fault with Yale nines. Depending as it does on the individual judgment and temper of the base runner, it is one of the hardest of faults to eradicate, and is the stumbling-block of captains and coaches, especially when they have to deal with men inexperienced in match games. The voice of the coach may assist the runner in such a game, but only in those cases where the runner's instant decision is not necessary. As a general result, the academic base runners fall into one of two defective groups—the too timid or the too bold, the man who risks nothing and loses his opportunity to make his base—after reaching first—or the player who risks too much. But the crying fault of the college base runner is his tendency to be "dead" near a base. He is rarely poised ready to take instant advantage of the slip of an opponent. If on third base and leading homeward, he does not follow up the pitcher's arm, nor does the settling of the ball in the catcher's hands find him in forward motion—not too far to be caught by the catcher's throw, but actually under the momentum, which is better for a start than a long lead. So, too, the college runner after a base hit fumbled in the outfield has a chronic habit of pausing at first base instead of overrunning and, at least, poising for second; nor have college base runners, as a rule, fully appreciated the importance of the drop behind the base. All these last are defects which ought to be within the easy power of the captain to correct. So, too, is the exasperating habit in too many outfielders, otherwise good players, of pausing at the end of a forward run for a short fly, taking it on first bound instead of trying the fly-catch. If scorers could more often mark as an error that defect—usually due to timidity—it would occur less frequently on college teams.

A similar error, that of waiting for slow—or high bounding—ground hits, is too common in collegiate infield play.

More familiar defaults in college baseball, such as striking at balls palpably bad, striking after two or even three balls called with no strikes, and the tendency of errors to breed errors and "rattle" a team, are to be charged to that nervousness natural to college teams and which training at best can only diminish. It is a trait which, after all, adds to the freshness and charm of academic baseball, in contrast with the sodden coolness of the professional hireling. What that inherent nervousness peculiarly tests is the quality of the college baseball captain—a man in whom, more than in the head of any other branch of college sports, must strong traits unite. College baseball exacts from him the judgment which discriminates the moderate player who will become strong from the strong player who will become weak; the player nervy from the player nervous; and the player who in one position is a pillar of the nine, in another its load. To quick and acute decision on the field and in the emergencies of play the captain must join the steadiness which ballasts his team and a character and self-poise which command its respect—all these in addition to his knowledge of the technique of the game. A prime fact in college teams, as contrasted with professional nines, is what may be called the sentimental and emotional element giving rise to problems which the professional captain rarely faces or faces in much less degree. Its very susceptibility makes the college nine easier both to make and to mar, and demands from the captain peculiar gifts of tact and of judgment. As an example of what the great college captain in baseball can do, not many Yale men of that college generation will forget how Phil Stewart of '86, himself but an indifferent player and inheriting the weakest of baseball material, put together, as it seemed by sheer force of personal character, a Yale nine that pulled out the championship.

Law School Baseball.

The baseball team of the Law School returned April 19, from its Easter trip to the South, having lost four of its six games scheduled. On the whole the work of the Nine was very creditable, the scores of the lost games being very close. The result of the trip is given below: Wednesday, April 11, at New York, St. Francis Xavier 18, Law School 17; Thursday, April 12, at Myerstown, Pa., Albright College 5, Law School 15; Friday, April 13, at Annville, Pa., Lebanon Valley College 8, Law School 7; Saturday, April 14, at Baltimore, Md., John Hopkins University 7, Law School 6; Monday, April 16, at Washington, D. C., Howard University 11, Law School 12; Tuesday, April 17, at Ashland, Va., Randolph-Macon College 8, Law School 7. The team was made up as follows: Payne, 1902, c.; Fessenden, 1901, p. and 1b.; Malone, 1900, 1b. and p.; Lane (Captain), 1900, 2b.; Buchanan, 1901, ss.; Robertson, 1901, 3b.; Bacon, 1902, lf.; Hine, 1900, rf., and Lyman, 1900, cf. Substitute, McGrath, 1902.

The Famous Drop Kick.

[Arthur Poe at Princeton's Chicago Banquet.]

As to the football game and the team of which I have been asked to speak, I honestly think there were ten men on the field in that game who could have done as well or better than I did. I happened to have the opportunity, that was all. Our success was due to the fact that there were eleven men in every play. It was the Princeton spirit that won. It was drummed into us to sacrifice the individual for the good of the team. We were confident we could defeat Yale. No one can truthfully say that we didn't outplay Yale from beginning to end. Princeton has had better teams in the past and will have better teams in the future, but no team with better spirit than that of 1899. Captain Edwards has not been given proper credit for this. The play which won the game did not originate with Duncan or myself. It was Captain Edwards who decided to try that kick. Four of us were anxious for the honor of making the kick, so confident did we feel that it could be done.

Score by innings:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Yale 1903 1 3 0 0 2 0 1 0 1—8
Park City A. A. 0 0 0 0 2 3 0 0 0—5

Summary: Earned runs—Yale 3, Park City A. A. 1. Stolen bases—Oglesby (2), Tobin (2), Littlefield, McKnight, Blount, Smith, Lockwood, McFarlane, O'Rourke. Passed ball—White, Burnes. Wild pitch—Alsop. Bases on balls—Off Alsop 1; off Lindenberg 3; off Flint 5. Struck out—By Flint 4; by Alsop 4; by Lindenberg 1. Time—Two hours. Umpire—Rogers.

Saturday's Games.

The more important college baseball games on Saturday, April 21, resulted as follows: Princeton 11, Columbia 2; University of Pennsylvania 6, Lafayette 2; Cornell 13, Carlisle Indians 4; Brown 34, Amherst 4; West Point 11, Union 7; Lehigh 4, New York University 3; Fordham 9, Wesleyan 0. Harvard was scheduled to play Georgetown at Washington, but the game was called off on account of rain.

The Yale Baseball Situation.

[Walter Camp in Collier's Weekly.]

Yale will close up her Princeton games (even in case a third game is necessary) before beginning her Harvard series. The schedule is considered a good one, and confidence has grown amazingly in Captain Camp and his ability to turn out a winning Nine. While it is true that the unexpected and the generally believed avoidable final defeats of last season led the University to be sceptical about the qualifications of a promising Nine, it is generally felt that the errors of last season are now fully realized and that they will be corrected this year. The deterioration noted toward the end of the season was so extraordinary as to produce most decided comment, and another season like it would bring down the wrath of the entire University.

The management is very strong upon one point, and, it is said, has reached a satisfactory understanding with Harvard upon it, and that is the exclusion of mucker ball-playing, and the scenes of the Polo Grounds and the discredit therein reflected upon college baseball will not be repeated.

No Games with Englishmen.

The long-continued negotiations between graduate and undergraduate representatives of Yale and Harvard, relative to a return meet between joint teams representing these two Universities, and Oxford and Cambridge, have finally ended in a disagreement which will make it impossible for the American Universities to send a challenge to the Englishmen. The point on which Yale and Harvard failed to agree was the place of the games, Yale maintaining that they should be held on neutral grounds, while the Harvard Athletic Committee insisted that they should take place in either Cambridge or New Haven. Oxford and Cambridge had unofficially expressed their intention of accepting and agreed with Yale in desiring a neutral track.

The Yale News of April 21, commenting editorially on the question says:

"We have hoped all along to be able to join with Harvard in returning the same welcome and courtesy to the Englishmen that they showed our representatives last Summer in England. We are more than sorry that the Harvard Athletic Committee have seen fit to extend their rule regarding the holding of games on college grounds to such a contest—all the more so because it would, if maintained by them against the wishes of our guests, preclude any possibility of such games in the future. We are strongly convinced that the attitude of the Yale management has been the right one—an attitude based on precedent and on a just consideration of fairness to both the home teams and the visiting teams."

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