TOUCHING SECOND

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CHAPTER XV—Continued.

...ly success was due almost en... his "Bazzazaz" balk, which ...ed by persistent training. He ...nly pitcher who ever balked ...balking—if such a thing is ...

In the first four innings of ...game he pitched against Bal... Burns resurrected him, nine ...ed first base. He caught ...off the base and, although ...watched every move he ...they declared that under the ...did not balk.

...explained after his permanent ..., his system of training by ...he acquired the "Bazzazaz ...the old soup bone was ready ...undertaker," he said. "So I ...work on the balk. I always ...balk motion, but wanted a ... I spent half the winter ...yard at home with a chalk ...the wall for first base and ...the fence for the home ...practiced morning and after... from two hundred and ...hundred throws a day ...wrist and forearm trying to ...base line while looking ...one and without moving ...feet or body.

...thing I got so I could shoot ...to first base with wrist ...than I could pitch it to ...with a full swing. That's ...to it. Just look straight ...plate, pull your hands up ...breast, raise your left one ...of your ear, then drive the ...without looking until after ...and you've got him. The ...don't see whether you look be... throw or not."

...get them. Probably he made ...thousand practice throws at the ...but he perfected the motion ...him to pitch two years ...was "dead."

...damaged his shoulder in ...American league cam... 1908, and reported in 1909 ...with the spit ball which had ...one of the wonders of the ...world. His shoulder was so ...he could not swing his arm ...overhand to get the sharp drop ...ball. Robbed of his chief as... set, Walsh set to work and within a few weeks, by steady, slow work, developed another spit ball, pitched slightly sidearm and curving outward, that proved almost as effective as the other had been.

The three most remarkable instances of training perhaps, are found in the cases of Radbourne, who pitched practically two-thirds of all the games played by Providence one season, and pitched the last third of the season alone; Jimmy Ryan, the famous old outfielder, who, after thirty years, still pitches well, and Theodore Breitenstein, who pitched for St. Louis twenty years ago, and now is one of the star pitchers of the Southern league. The odd coincidence (if such it is) is that these three men all had the same hobby, and both Ryan and Breitenstein adopted it from Radbourne. They treated their arms through their stomachs. During the spring training season they resorted to the old-fashioned treacle (sulphur and molasses) taking large doses night and morning. Ryan says he started using treacle on Radbourne's advice, and believes that his long service in baseball was due in large proportion to the spring tonic.

Perfect condition is the aim of spring training, condition of blood and digestion being held as important as condition of arms and legs. Condition is the biggest asset of any club during the first six weeks of a season and counts more than "class," as one team is about as good as another mechanically during that period. The manager of a weak team who can bring it north to open the season in better physical condition than his rivals wins many games from stronger clubs because his men are further advanced toward playing form. This fact accounts for the early season strength of the southermost clubs of the major leagues, who usually have better weather at home than Boston, Cleveland, Detroit and Chicago, and condition more rapidly, while the northern clubs are set back by bad weather.

Comiskey, owner of the Chicago White Stockings, usually has the best trained and conditioned team in the major leagues, and not only starts the season that way, but continues the training throughout the year. He has won championships on condition alone, his team outlasting stronger clubs that have neglected to keep in condition.

Yet Comiskey has little system in training men beyond requiring steady work. His great success lies in his judgment in picking ball players who have brains enough and ambition enough to keep in good condition all the time.

Conditioning for baseball is unlike training for any other sport, and many college boys, accustomed to training for short football seasons or for the crew, reach an "edge" within a few weeks and break down before the season is a month old. The ball player must begin March 1 to work for the maximum of speed, agility and strength, yet store up enough reserve power to carry him to October 15.

A layman unaccustomed to the idea of the possibilities of remarking the body by exercising would be amazed at what can be accomplished. A team of thirty men arriving at the spring camp usually is between five and six hundred pounds heavier than it will be at mid-season. The ordinary man would imagine amputation to be the only method of reducing 600 pounds in thirty days. How a man, who looks hard, does not seem fat, and is in better physical shape than ninety-nine out of a hundred men, is going to take off twenty-five pounds is a mystery to an outsider, yet they do it without great trouble. Frank Chance lost fourteen pounds in one afternoon at Philadelphia in two games during his debut as a major league catcher.

Overall and Hofman met at the training camp in March, 1909.

"I've got to take off twenty-five pounds, said the giant pitcher.

"What are you going to pitch at this year?"

"One hundred and ninety-four; I think I carried too much weight last year. What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to put on five more pounds. I'll be stronger with more weight."

Overall kept his record of weight as follows:

March 5, 219; March 22, 206; March 29, 202; April 5, 199; April 10, 192; April 14 (opening season), 194½; July 4 (midseason), 193; October 15 (close), 195.

Hofman, playing just as hard, reported nine pounds heavier than he was the previous season, and added five more pounds before the season opened, and both were in almost perfect condition during the entire season.

Every player seems to have his own system, and some of the methods used are laughable, and few are of any practical value. One young catcher who joined a National league club two years ago brought five gallons of iron, beef and wine in jugs in his trunk to make him strong. Cannon balls that weigh twenty pounds are used to roll over the abdomen, iron rolling pins, special bandages, a thousand kinds of rubbing oils and lotions, ranging from patent medicines to horse liniments and oil made by boiling down fishing worms; vibrators of all sizes and shapes, bandages, arm bakers to be superheated with electricity, and rubber bands are employed.

Hotel rooms are turned into gymnasia, and one of the funniest sights of a year is to sit in a card game with half a dozen players swathed like puffy mummies in blankets, sweaters and flannels until they look as if they were starting on an Arctic journey.

One spring a cold rain fell upon the Chicago Cubs training camp, and continued to fall incessantly, dismally putting an end to practice just as the players were working off the first soreness.

The dejected athletes, knowing they would have to undergo the soreness and stiffness all over again, moped in the hotel. Toward the middle of the gloomy, cold afternoon some one proposed to turn a bath room into a Turkish bath establishment. The steam heat was turned on, cracks stuffed and the hot water was allowed to pour into the tub until the room was superheated and filled with steam. Four husky players, in Adamic condition, proceeded to swath themselves in blankets and take off weight. Half a dozen bath towels, folded, were placed on the steam radiator, and the players took turns sitting on the radiator with a half dozen blankets wrapped around them. Chance's turn came. He adjusted the blankets, parted them carefully, and sat down. Steinfeldt had a narrow escape from being killed, and Chance to this day thinks it was Steinfeldt who took the towels off the radiator.

Brown, the three-fingered wonder, has a system of exercising that would make his fortune and banish corpulency as a human ailment if ordinary beings could endure it. Brown invented the system himself and uses it night and morning when desiring to reduce flesh or strengthen the muscles of abdomen or legs without running. Every spring he organizes a class in calisthenics, from which no one, not even the poor correspondent, is exempted if his room happens to connect with Brown's. It is a common sight during the spring training to see six or seven men, a la natural, each with the coverlet from his bed spread upon the floor, trying to follow the movements and orders of the premier pitcher.

Brown counts slowly—one, two—up to thirteen, and at every number the class struggles to follow his movements. The pauses between counts are more painful than the movements themselves. After two minutes the novices are doubled up like small boys who have eaten too many green apples; in three minutes the fat men weaken, and in four Brown usually is left to continue the exercise alone until he stops to assess fines on the delinquents.

Anyone can try Brown's exercise. It looks easy.

Brown lies on his back full length upon the floor, his heels together and thumbs touching each other on the floor back of his head, with palms up. He counts one, raises his feet six inches, ankles tight together, and holds them there an instant. At the count of two he raises the legs to an angle of 45 degrees, and stops them again; three, the legs are raised slowly until perpendicular with the body; four, the feet are lowered until over his face; five, he drops them until the toes touch the floor above his head; six, the feet are raised half way up again; seven, they are again perpendicular; eight, they drop to 45 degrees; nine, to six inches from the floor; ten, the heels touch the floor; eleven, the arms are raised slowly until perpendicular; twelve, they are dropped outward until the backs touch the floor; thirteen (and worst), the body is raised slowly to a sitting position without the aid of the hands. Then he rolls back and starts over again.

Brown can go through the exercise a dozen times without breathing hard when in perfect condition, and he does it morning and night during the training season. Some of his students have gone through the exercise four times.

With five hours of running, throwing and fielding, several miles of jogging back and forth from the bath houses to grounds, and hot baths, rub downs, boxing, wrestling and walking, combined with individual exercises in rooms and massage at least once a day, the player's day is fairly busy during the training trip.

(To be continued.)

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