

Nationals Hot Springs Squad Shows Result of Early Practice

RAIN IN EARLY MORNING FAILS TO STOP NATIONALS

Players Put in Four Solid Hours of Practice in the Afternoon at Ponce de Leon Park.

By WILLIAM PEET.
Special to The Washington Herald.

Atlanta, Ga., March 8.—The Nationals, twenty-six strong, hiked out to Ponce de Leon Park this afternoon and put in nearly four solid hours of the hardest kind of work. With the exception of First Baseman John Somerlott every member of Manager McAleer's family is on hand.

An old-fashioned thunder shower late last night put the ball park on the blink as far as morning practice was concerned, and arrangements were made to have the boys out this afternoon. The weather, as on Monday, was ideal, plenty of sunshine and balmy breezes, a soft field was the only handicap.

The boys from Hot Springs, Capt. McBride, Walter Johnson, Tom Hughes, Germany Schaefer, Wild Conroy, Clyde Milan, Bill Otey, and Walker, were on hand for the first time, and easily showed by their work that they had obtained a flying start on the others. It was in the batting practice that this was most apparent for Pitchers Otey, Tom Hughes, and Walker had the young sluggers guessing throughout.

"Dixie" Walker bids fair to be the real works this season. His twirling today was a revelation, and to-night he has the laugh on the entire bunch. It all started with Germany Schaefer. Walker was in the box and the men lined up to take turns at the bat.

"Bet you a cigar I ring up a single," shouted the Teuton.

"You're on," replied Dixie, and then whistled over two strikes so fast Schaefer could hardly see the ball. A couple of balls followed, then an out-curve, and Schaefer's attempt ended in a little dinky grounder to the pitcher's box.

"Do I win the cigar," Walker followed to McAleer, who answered, "Yes, you win it, but you don't get it."

Schaefer's back was up by this time, and he started to get even by betting a cigar on every man who came to the plate that the batter would drive the ball safe. Everybody stopped and looked on as the various Nationals faced Walker. The big fellow was master of the situation, and only one man knocked the ball out of the infield, Almsmith sending a low liner in the direction of short, and it was questionable whether or not the third baseman could not have scooped it.

All the pitchers, Moyer, Tom Hughes, Dolly Gray, Bob Groom, Bussey, Otey, Sherry, and Walter Johnson took their turns in the box, shooting the ball over to the batters, while Gabby Street and Almsmith were on duty behind the bat.

The change in Tom Hughes is marked. He is not the same man Washington fans remember two years ago. If he has gone back any his looks do not show it, and now everybody has been brought around to Manager McAleer's way of thinking that Long Tom is going to be one of our leading performers this season. The way things look now, Tom Hughes is not only "coming back," but has already arrived.

After the extensive batting practice and a good hour spent in rapping out files to the outfielders, Manager McAleer himself, armed with a willow bat and a brand new horsehide, called out the regulars to take their places, and with Henry and Lelivelt alternating on first base, Cunningham on second, McBride short, and Elberfeld third, a lively half hour of snappy practice was gone through. With the exception of Jack Lelivelt, sore arms have disappeared. Elberfeld and Cunningham slammed the ball around in midseason form, and it was a treat to see them work.

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Manager McAleer has not talked with Johnson, Gessler, or Groom about signing up contracts. There is plenty of time for this, declares Manager Jim, and the players themselves do not seem to be worrying any.

Eddie Sykes, of Chicago, whom Manager McAleer wanted to sign for a trial last fall and who has been heard of by the New York Yankees, dropped around at Ponce de Leon Park to watch the boys work out this afternoon. He was on