In the World of Skill and Muscle

TAGGING A BASE RUNNER OFFERS ONE OF GAME'S THRILLS

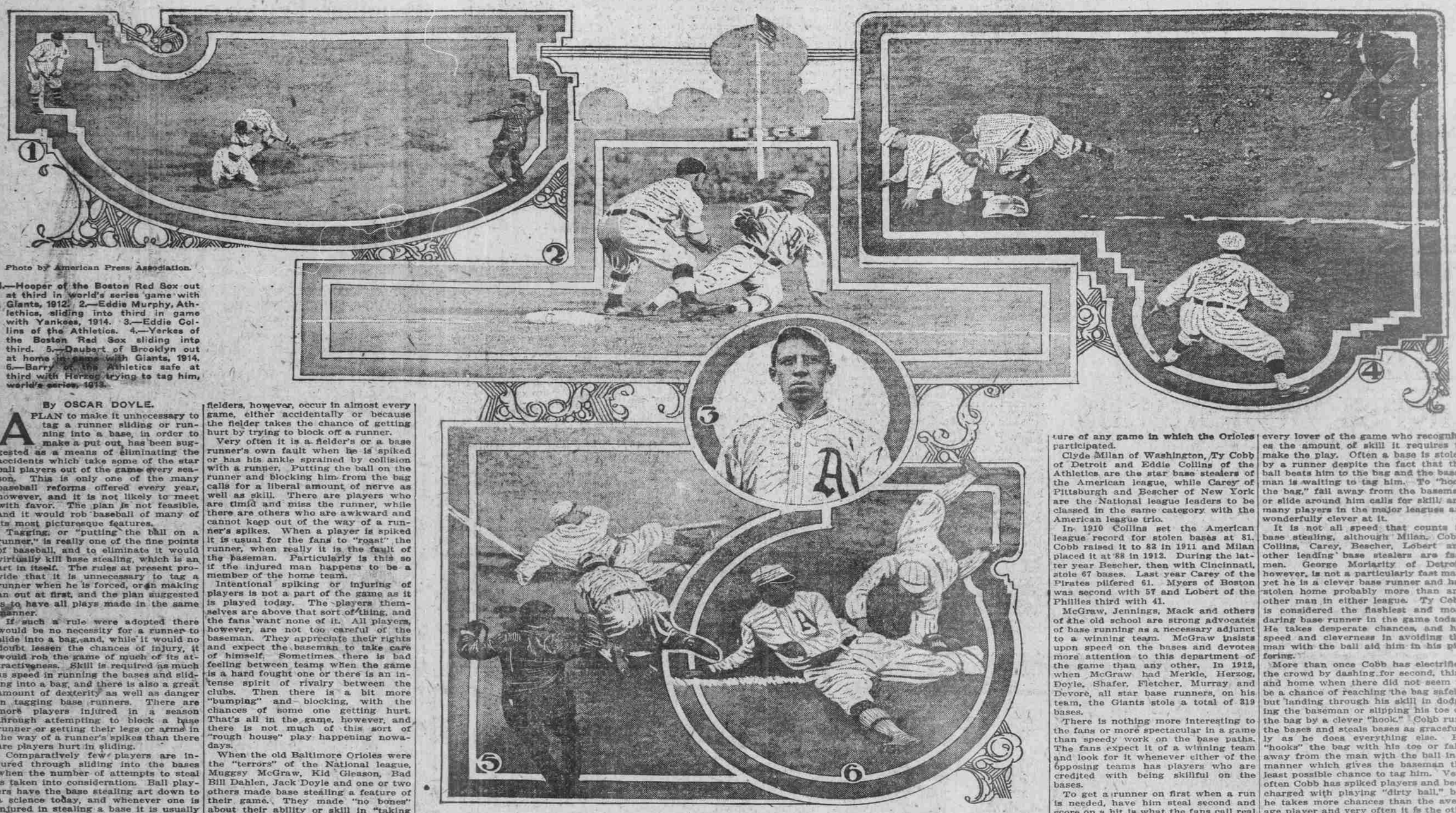

Photo by American Press Association.

1.—Hooper of the Boston Red Sox out at third in world's series game with Giants, 1912. 2.—Eddie Murphy, Athlethics, sliding into third in game with Yankees, 1914. 3.—Eddie Collins of the Athletics. 4.—Yerkes of the Boston Red Sox sliding into third. 5.—Daubert of Brooklyn out at home in game with Giants, 1914. 6.—Barry of the Athletics safe at third with Herzog trying to tag him, world's series, 1913.

By OSCAR DOYLE.

A PLAN to make it unnecessary to tag a runner sliding or running into a base, in order to make a put out, has been suggested as a means of eliminating the accidents which take some of the star ball players out of the game every season. This is only one of the many baseball reforms offered every year, however, and it is not likely to meet with favor. The plan is not feasible, and it would rob baseball of many of its most picturesque features.

Tagging, or "putting the ball on a runner," is really one of the fine points of baseball, and to eliminate it would virtually kill base stealing, which is an art in itself. The rules at present provide that it is unnecessary to tag a runner when he is forced, or in making an out at first, and the plan suggested is to have all plays made in the same manner.

If such a rule were adopted there would be no necessity for a runner to slide into a bag, and, while it would no doubt lessen the chances of injury, it would rob the game of much of its attractiveness. Skill is required as much as speed in running the bases and sliding into a bag, and there is also a great amount of dexterity as well as danger in tagging base runners. There are more players injured in a season through attempting to block a base runner or getting their legs or arms in the way of a runner's spikes than there are players hurt in sliding.

Comparatively few players are injured through sliding into the bases when the number of attempts to steal is taken into consideration. Ball players have the base stealing art down to a science today, and whenever one is injured in stealing a base it is usually because he slides improperly or through his spikes catching in the bag and twisting his ankle. Injuries to the infielders, however, occur in almost every game, either accidentally or because the fielder takes the chance of getting hurt by trying to block off a runner.

Very often it is a fielder's or a base runner's own fault when he is spiked or has his ankle sprained by collision with a runner. Putting the ball on the runner and blocking him from the bag calls for a liberal amount of nerve as well as skill. There are players who are timid and miss the runner, while there are others who are awkward and cannot keep out of the way of a runner's spikes. When a player is spiked it is usual for the fans to "roast" the runner, when really it is the fault of the baseman. Particularly is this so if the injured man happens to be a member of the home team.

Intentional spiking or injuring of players is not a part of the game as it is played today. The players themselves are above that sort of thing, and the fans want none of it. All players, however, are not too careful of the baseman. They appreciate their rights and expect the baseman to take care of himself. Sometimes there is bad feeling between teams when the game is a hard fought one or there is an intense spirit of rivalry between the clubs. Then there is a bit more "bumping" and blocking, with the chances of some one getting hurt. That's all in the game, however, and there is not much of this sort of "rough house" play happening nowadays.

When the old Baltimore Orioles were the "terrors" of the National league, Muggsy McGraw, Kid Gleason, Bad Bill Dahlen, Jack Doyle and one or two others made base stealing a feature of their game. They made "no bones" about their ability or skill in "taking the shoes off" the baseman and used it to scare the opposing team before the game started. It was a common practice for one of them to appear on the bench with a file in his hand and start to sharpen his spikes while the other team was practicing, winking and laughing at the effect it had on the opposing players. Of course the Orioles were not as bad as they tried to appear, but it made base running easier, and it was always a spectacular feature of any game in which the Orioles participated.

Clyde Milan of Washington, Ty Cobb of Detroit and Eddie Collins of the Athletics are the star base stealers of the American league, while Carey of Pittsburgh and Bescher of New York are the National league leaders to be classed in the same category with the American league trio.

In 1910 Collins set the American league record for stolen bases at 81. Cobb raised it to 83 in 1911 and Milan placed it at 88 in 1912. During the latter year Bescher, then with Cincinnati, stole 67 bases. Last year Carey of the Pirates pilfered 61. Myers of Boston was second with 57 and Lobert of the Phillies third with 41.

McGraw, Jennings, Mack and others of the old school are strong advocates of base running as a necessary adjunct to a winning team. McGraw insists upon speed on the bases and devotes more attention to this department of the game than any other. In 1912, when McGraw had Merkle, Herzog, Doyle, Shafer, Fletcher, Murray and Devore, all star base runners, on his team, the Giants stole a total of 319 bases.

There is nothing more interesting to the fans or more spectacular in a game than speedy work on the base paths. The fans expect it of a winning team and look for it whenever either of the opposing teams has players who are credited with being skillful on the bases.

To get a runner on first when a run is needed, have him steal second and score on a hit is what the fans call real baseball. A bit of daring base running which permits a player to steal home while the pitcher is winding up thrills every lover of the game who recognizes the amount of skill it requires to make the play. Often a base is stolen by a runner despite the fact that the ball beats him to the bag and the baseman is waiting to tag him. To "hook the bag," fall away from the baseman or slide around him calls for skill, and many players in the major leagues are wonderfully clever at it.

It is not all speed that counts in base stealing, although Milan, Cobb, Collins, Carey, Bescher, Lobert and other leading base stealers are fast men. George Moriarity of Detroit, however, is not a particularly fast man, yet he is a clever base runner and has stolen home probably more than any other man in either league. Ty Cobb is considered the flashiest and most daring base runner in the game today. He takes desperate chances, and his speed and cleverness in avoiding the man with the ball aid him in his pilfering.

More than once Cobb has electrified the crowd by dashing for second, third and home when there did not seem to be a chance of reaching the bag safely, but landing through his skill in dodging the baseman or slipping his toe on the bag by a clever "hook." Cobb runs the bases and steals bases as gracefully as he does everything else. He "hooks" the bag with his toe or falls away from the man with the ball in a manner which gives the baseman the least possible chance to tag him. Very often Cobb has spiked players and been charged with playing "dirty ball," but he takes more chances than the average player and very often it is the other man's fault in trying to block him off or in putting the ball on him in an awkward manner.

Roger Bresnahan Of the Cubs Is Still A Great Catcher

Photo by American Press Association.

ROGER BRESNAHAN, for some years manager of the St. Louis Cardinals and now with the Chicago Cubs, did most of the catching for his team for a time this season owing to the illness of Jimmie Archer, the regular backstop. Bresnahan's friends point to the fact that about the time Archer returned to the game the Cubs started a slump which took them out of second place and made the real struggle to defeat the Giants rest with the Cardinals and the Boston Braves. Bresnahan is not batting as well this year as in previous seasons, but he is still an adept at blocking base runners sliding for the home plate, and he is still a terror to base stealers.

PHILLIES LET TWO STARS GO

PHILADELPHIA demands a probe why George Burns, who lives a few blocks from the two ball parks, and Marty Kavanaugh, who played within a short train ride of Philadelphia last year, were permitted to get to the Detroit club.

An investigation revealed the fact that the Phillies could have had Burns without paying a nickel not very long ago. Burns, who was eager for a trial and had been turned down by Marty Hogan, then manager of the Lancaster team, reported to Manager Dooin of the Phillies.

Dooin told him to get a uniform and work out with the other players in the morning. Burns did this for several mornings, but finding that Manager Dooin did not watch morning practice and that none of the players took any interest in him, he became irritated and kept away.

There was less excuse for letting Marty Kavanaugh get away, think Quaker fans.

Marty played right under the noses of the Philadelphia clubs all last season. The York team was scarcely able to mask the feats of this peppery juvenile, who led the Tri-state with a batting average of .357, yet for some reason he escaped the eyes of the Philly scouts.

Fans are figuring that had the Phillies obtained Burns and Kavanaugh they would more than have made up for the defection of Doolan and Knabe and the team would be in the pennant race instead of the lowest position they have held for years.

Detroit, however, is the gainer by the slothfulness of the Phillies.

STROBINO TO QUIT RUNNING.

GASTON STROBINO, America's hero of the Stockholm Olympic Marathon, has run his last race, should he live up to a declaration he made to a friend recently. Strobino has decided that it is time for him to quit athletics and devote all of his energies to his business. Accordingly he has made plans to leave Paterson, N. J., and locate in Detroit, Mich., where he will enter the toolmaking business.

Strobino, who is a sensible young fellow and one of the most straightlaced amateurs in the United States, declares that he now realizes that if he is to get along he must begin to get started right away. Training for the races that Strobino has been competing in—from five to twenty miles—takes hours from five to twenty miles—takes hours, and Strobino must give these hours to his work.

Should Strobino carry out his threat to retire from the cinderpath the United States will lose the man who looks best to the athletic experts for the Marathon races to be run at the Panama-Pacific sports at San Francisco next summer and at the Olympic games one year later.

Rickey Can't See Pennant

BRANCH RICKEY threatens to outleap the leaps of Hugh Jennings with his Tigers in 1907 and Clark Griffith with his Nationals in 1912. Jennings took a team that had finished sixth in 1906 and won a pennant with it the year following. In 1912 Griff, with the addition of five first year men, finished second, after the team had finished seventh the year before.

Many baseball fans marveled that Griff should be able to unearth five youngsters and mold a pennant contender in one season. Rickey is turning the trick with only three new men.

Rickey had the Browns in third place, a few games behind the world's champion Athletics, with the same team, barring three positions, that finished a bad last under George Stovall in 1913. These new men are Clarence Walker, Jack Leary and Clyde Wares.

Rickey refuses to listen to any pennant talk for his team. When friends congratulate him and inform him that the Browns are brushing elbows with the world's champions his usual come back is, "How many games are we out of last place?"

Rickey said before the season opened that he would be pleased to finish anywhere above eighth place. The Browns landed last a year ago and any position above that would be looked upon as a successful campaign by the new manager.

M'GRAW IS AFTER FOURTH PENNANT

Photo by American Press Association.

MANAGER M'GRAW, the "Little Napoleon" who commands the destinies of the New York Giants, is hopeful of winning his fourth straight pennant though his team has not been going as well this year as it did last season. His value as a field general is shown by the fact that his absence from the diamond usually results in his team having a slump.

A 269 Yard Golf Shot With an Iron

JEROME D. TRAVERS, amateur golf champion of the United States, writes about "Wonder Shots That Won Golf Championships," in the American Magazine. Among the remarkable stories he tells is the following of an extraordinary iron shot made by Ray, the great English professional:

"There is still another class of golf shots not so interesting, as they lack the mental side, but wonderful from the physical power required. An example is the shot Ed Ray played at the sixteenth hold at Shawnee. This hole is about 268 yards from the tee. It is guarded by a deep brook, and beyond the brook a decided uphill slope. Before Ray came up Vardon, McDermott and Alec Smith, all long hitters, took drivers and, after clean wallops, struck one side of the bank and fell short. The shot had to be nearly all carry, as the ground was soft from recent rains and the uphill slope prevented much run. When Ray stepped up he took a look at the hole and then stepped back, called his caddie and replaced his driver, taking out a cleek. The crowd around gasped—and then laughed. But Ray knew what he was about. With a tremendous swipe he hurled the head of that cleek into the ball, and when it landed on a full carry the white pill was within ten feet of the cup. He had carried brook, slope and everything else in the way with a cleek, where other long players had failed with a club that is supposed to get twenty yards more distance."

JOHN PAUL JONES IS DONE WITH ATHLETICS

AMERICAN athletics lost one of its greatest exponents from active competition when a year ago, with his graduation from Cornell university, John Paul Jones announced his retirement. He has since asserted he will never race again.

At the same time Jones' course proved beyond cavil that he was not of the class that remains in college solely for the chance it affords to engage in sports or by reason of his athletic prowess. He retires without a single blot upon his personal escutheon and without bringing any shame to the institution he has so manfully and so successfully represented for the last three years.

It is doubtful if a mile runner of the ability of John Paul Jones will be unearthed for many years. He has held the world's record at the distance since May 27, 1911, when he set the mark at 4 minutes 15 seconds in the intercollegiate meet at Cambridge, Mass.

As a fitting climax to his marvelous career, only a few days before he completed his college course he lowered his own record, putting the figures down to where it seems well nigh impossible to touch them.

Friends of the great runner admit that he throws "form" to the winds when he is running. It is good track form to spin off the last quarter of a mile at a gait which leaves something for a sprint at the finish. Jones has burnt up the track on the first quarter at a pace which completely outdistanced all rivals and at a rate of speed which would have done credit to an entrant in a 440 yard run, yet he always had something to rely upon in case of a close finish.