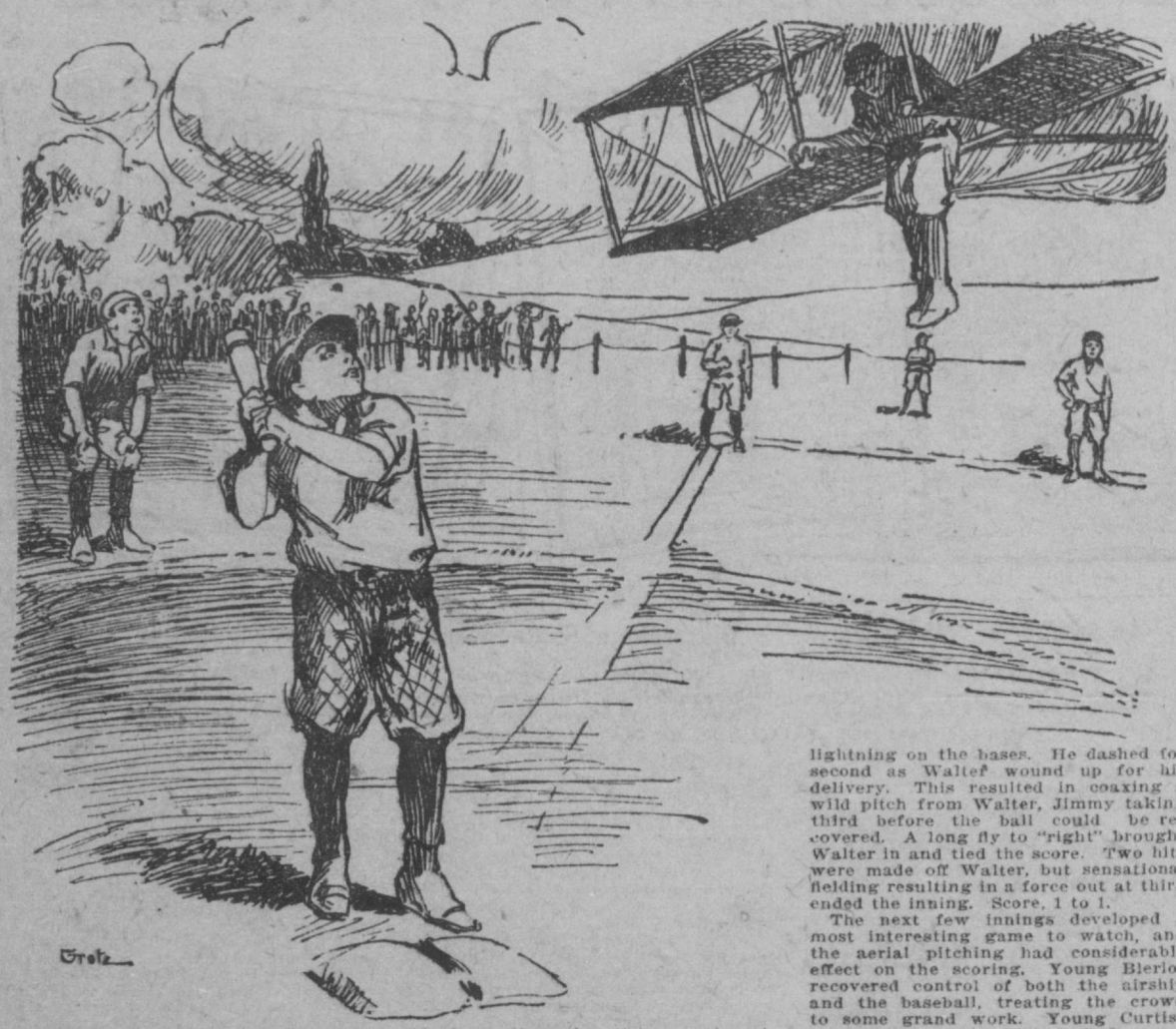
SKY BALL AN INNOVATION IN THE NATIONAL SPORT



"HURRAH! she's done at last!" exclaimed Pliny, surveying the long expanse of snowy fabric which stretched almost across the width of the Quick quartet's workshop in the barn.

And the Cyclone was a work to be proud of, for she was no three foot model like the Aerolite or Meteor, of which you may have read. The Cyclone was a real aeroplane in every detail but the engine—that is, she was a "glider" of the Wright type, whose main planes were 17 feet long by 2½ feet wide, with a stationary rudder extending astern 8 feet and 5 feet in width. She was guaranteed to hold a 150 pound boy and was built from the latest scientific plans. Being a glider, there was no motor. Then you ask, "How could she go?" Come with the Quick brothers and watch the trial trip.

They loaded her on the back of the buckboard and drove out to the Oakdale field club, about a mile from town, where the aerodrome was located. This long, level field was approached on one side by a gradually ascending hill, which terminated in a small plateau about 100 feet higher than the aerodrome.

The Cyclone was carried up on the plateau. The other boys held her up while Pliny Quick crawled underneath and inserted himself in the space left in the center of the lower plane. He then firmly planted his forearms on the arm rests on each side of the space, gripping the front frame sticks of the lower plane with both hands. And now he was all ready for the Cyclone's first flight.

The glider had been stationed about 50 feet back of the brow of the hill. At a signal from Pliny all ran toward the edge as fast as they could, including the aviator, who still retained the position described above with the upper part of his body.

Just as they reached the "jumping off place" the three assistants let go their hold and barely saved themselves from going over the hill. Pliny gave a great leap outward. The broad expanse of canvas "took the air" beautifully, and amid an awed silence his brothers saw the daring young aviator sail smoothly down the sloping meadow and on over the aerodrome at its base until he alighted safely over 300 feet away!

The Cyclone was a successs. After proceeding to get acquainted with all the working points of his machine the Quick aerial exploitation company was formed, with Pliny Quick as president. Then Austen Quick, as president of the Oakdale field club, formally tendered the aerodrome to his brother president for a series of ascensions.

These took place as per schedule. The first was a tremendous money maker, the money being equally divided between the club and company. The second was less successful, while the third was a "frost." Possibly the public expected more for its 10 cents; maybe it expected to be thrilled by accidents. Anyway it showed unmistakable signs of being surfeited, and something had to be done to revive interest.

The bright idea department was called upon, with the result that the baseball teams were put into training, while the town was billed for a wonderful ball game, which was scheduled on the billboards to introduce a new wrinkle in the national sport. The greatest secrecy was maintained, however, and the crowd that eventually gathered had not one inkling of what it was to see.

At 3 p. m. the teams trotted on the field and Austen Quick as umpire solemnly read out the role of their distinguished (!) names while the spectators laughed. The two teams had been christened after the two swiftest model aeroplanes in the club's collection—the Aerolite and the Meteor. According to the batting lists all the greatest aviators in the world took part. "Wilbur Wright" caught for the Aerolites, while his brother "Orville" stood behind the bat for the Meteors. "Glen Curtiss" (in whom we will recognize Pliny Quick) pitched for the Aerolites, while "Bleriot" hoped he wouldn't make many "balloon ascensions" for the Meteors! And so forth down the rest of the list.

While Austen was occupied with his announcement the white wings of the Cyclone suddenly appeared on the brow of the hill just behind the outfield. This hill, by the way, was a continuation of the same ridge from which the glider had made her trial and exhibition trips. The conditions of flight would be the same, the glider flying over the diamond instead of over the aerodrome. For this reason the crowd was held back from the diamond, plenty of space being roped off to give the glider room to alight.

Then Austen explained how the game was to be played. He hoped the crowd was not under the erroneous impression that all the players would "go up in the air." Only the pitchers were scheduled to fly. Thus the fans would be treated to two flights an inning. The first ball of each half inning would be pitched from the Cyclone while in flight! The pitcher must drop the ball within the 30 foot circle marked on the diamond. It didn't matter if it rolled out, but it must strike inside the circle. If he could do this without the batsman hitting the ball or even touching the ball as it descended, the batter was out. But if the batter did even touch the ball in its decent he was entitled to a home run. If the aviator pitcher missed the circle altogether the batter was given a base. Thus a clever way was contrived to make the flying machine part of the game.

The game began. Away flew the glider down the sloping hill, beautifully guided by Pliny Quick Curtiss. The breathless crowd watched it sail over the diamond, settling lower and lower, until, about 20 feet high, it crossed the target of the diamond circle. The batter stood with raised bat tensely watching for the flying pitcher to drop the ball.

There was flash of white—the batter sprang forward, lunged with all his might. His efforts were so strenuous that his bat flew out of his hand and was plainly seen to touch the decending sphere with the tip end!

Austen hesitated. The crowd howled and cheered, some claimed it was a home run even if it was a fluke; others claimed the batter was out. The two nines crowded around the umpire, each side demanding what they conceived to be "their rights." Austen was a very fair sportsman or he would not have finally decided as he did—against his own brother. For the rules had not specified how the ball should be hit—it simply had to be touched. So Gus Rankin gayly trotted around the bases for his aerial home run.

But no more were added. Pliny now abandoned the Cyclone, took his place "on the slab" and the regular baseball game proceeded. He was sore about that run made off his aviation delivery, and the way he "came down to earth" and "tightened up" was a caution. The Meteors completed their half inning by two inglorious strikeouts. Then the Aerolites came to bat.

Walter Armstrong Bleriot pitched for the Meteors. Thus he was called upon to make the opening aerial pitch when his team took the field, just as Pliny had done. Amid encouraging shouts, such as "Now, then, Young Bleriot, just think you're crossing the channel!" Walter (who'd been carefully trained) started his flight for the diamond circle.

The Cyclone didn't like the change of masters, or perhaps young Bleriot did not balance just right—which resulted in the glider landing away back in left field. Instantly there was a clamor to know what to do now. Austen ruled that the ball must be thrown into the circle from where the pitcher aviator alighted, on the same terms as governed a pitch in midair. Walter made a good attempt, but the ball fell just outside the circle, and Jimmy Barton got his base.

This aerial failure rattled Walter Armstrong Bleriot. Jimmy Barton was lightning on the bases. He dashed for second as Walter wound up for his delivery. This resulted in coaxing a wild pitch from Walter, Jimmy taking third before the ball could be recovered. A long fly to "right" brought Walter in and tied the score. Two hits were made off Walter, but sensational fielding resulting in a force out at third ended the inning. Score, 1 to 1.

The next few innings developed a most interesting game to watch, and the aerial pitching had considerable effect on the scoring. Young Bleriot recovered control of both the airship and the baseball, treating the crowd to some grand work. Young Curtiss (as Pliny was now dubbed) had a very bad time of it in the sixth. The Aerolites crept into a two run lead in the fifth inning, but in the sixth young Curtiss lost his aerial grip and fell out of the Cyclone from quite a dangerous altitude.

The crowd shuddered as his fellow players rushed over to the fallen pitcher; but he proved to be only shaken up and insisted on continuing to pitch. It was bad judgement, as the Meteors had a regular batting carnival. Young Curtiss didn't "have a thing on the ball"—in other words he'd lost control of his curves, and being a slow pitcher it was a "cinch" to hit his straight ball. When the slaughter was over the score stood—Meteors, 8; Aerolites 6.

But the Aerolites proved they could "come back." In the seventh inning they scored a run, and then, to the delight of their "rooters," forged one run ahead in the eighth, making the score Meteors 8, Aerolites 9, when the Meteors came to bat beginning the ninth inning.

If the Aerolites could only hold 'em down the game was theirs. Pliny was extra careful in making preparations for his final young Curtiss act. Away floated the Cyclone over the hilltop, winging her way toward the circle. On she glided, then slowed and began to settle right inside the diamond!

The last glide brought her to earth within ten feet of the white circle and was such a swoop that Pliny didn't even have time to drop the ball, he was so occupied in making a safe landing. It happened that the Meteor's strongest batsman was at bat. As Pliny fell with the ball undelivered, he was compelled under the rule to pitch it into the circle or to give the batter his base. If he pitched it into that circle at only ten feet distance Harvey Smith would almost be sure to "connect."

Pliny hated to present him a base at this critical point. He thought a second, then suddenly decided what to do—something that at least would give him a chance to put the batter out. The astonished fans saw the boy draw his hand back and pitch the ball—not into the circle, but straight up high in the air! Down it came, veering a little in the drop. There was a yell of warning. Harvey tried to judge where it might fall, dancing about the circle with uplifted bat ready to strike. Swish! went the heavy bat. Plunk! the ball fell, untouched, just inside the circle. Harvey was out.

It was well he was. The next man up made a three bagger that would have scored Harvey had he been given his base. But the next two batters went out on fast grounders and the game ended with the Aerolites winners by a single run.

Everybody voted the skyball game a fine sport, especially the Quick aerial exploit company, when they counted their "bulging coffers." And according to the Oakdale Observer a new pitching stunt has been invented. The editor calls it the great skyscraper curve.

ENGLISH SKYSCRAPER WITH 18 "LIFTS"

There is now nearing completion at Liverpool a "skyscraper," 320 feet high—the new offices of the Royal Liver Friendly society by the river side. A representative of this journal who inspected the building on Saturday writes:

The inside staircases of the turrets are not yet finished and we completed the last stage of our ascent—at a level only a few feet lower than that of the cross of St. Paul's cathedral—by builders' ladders tied vertically against the masonry. But this unpleasant steeplejack work done and the conviction once won that the 15 inch granite ledge, where we stood on one of the turrets, was not about to turn turtle and topple one over into the street, the position was well worth the ascent.

For all Liverpool and its river, and even the waters of the Dee beyond the Wirral peninsula, lay at one's feet. The people in the street below, the horses, the tramway cars, and the little steam ferry boats pushing their way against the outgoing tide were all reduced to mere doll and toy size. Only the great sweep of the river past Liverpool remained to preserve one's sense of the true proportion of things.

The new "skyscraper" is a remarkable building. Including the twin turrets that form its apex, it has 16 stories, each of a generous depth. From its main roof (at the base of the turrets) the nine story cotton warehouses near the Princes dock below look very puny buildings, tall as they are in reality. There are no fewer than 18 lifts in the building. They are worked by electricity and the lift motor room is one of the sights of the building. Here weirdly complex machines perform weirdly complex evolutions at the whim of a man with a handle 300 feet or so below. Some of the lifts run "nonstop" journeys from bottom to top of the building.

The structure is built on the ferro concrete principle, and its foundations are some 60 feet below street level. It is to win distinction by having a clock larger than that of Westminster. There will be three faces on one turret and one face on another 300 feet away. Each face will have its separate motor to drive its 14 foot fingers.—London Daily Mail.