

Our National Pastime

The Cincinnati Baseball Club of the National League

By A. Bart. Horton

NEARLY a half century ago the Cincinnati Red Stockings won the first baseball championship. In those days there were no leagues, and but few ball clubs. They traveled throughout the East, met nearly every ball team in existence and came home without a single defeat. This record, of course, will never be equaled again. Since those days baseball has grown rapidly in public favor, and in Cincinnati alone there are several ball teams, and nearly a dozen organized leagues, and the fairly good ball clubs in the United States run up into the hundreds of thousands. Imagine crowding the population of a town of thirty thousand people into a space of about one thousand feet square, every one of them intensely interested, enthusiastically cheering some particularly good play, and one can gain a fair conception of what happens frequently at some of the big league parks. The attendance at the major leagues on opening day has been more than a quarter of a million.

We are indeed fortunate in our national pastime for baseball has every qualification necessary to make it the greatest outdoor sport. The youthful school boy equips himself with a baseball outfit at a small outlay, organizes a club among his especial friends and hurls defiance at the rest of the school boy world, always, however, qualifying his challenge as to weight and age. Vacant lots are sought with avidity and more than often these bits of school boy paradise are retained by might of superior physical prowess. Neighboring windows are smashed, neighboring gardens are trampled down, but what matters these minor incidents, for the youthful Mathewson is started on his career. Rare in number indeed is the American boy, who would not prefer being a Walter Johnson than to be the president of the United States. Crowned heads, Rothschilds, Rockefellers, sink into puny insignificance when compared with McGraw or Connie Mack. As he grows into manhood this point of view undoubtedly changes considerably, but his enthusiasm and love for the sport remains. It is healthy, invigorating, clean and necessarily honest, excepting for the occasional straying from the paths of rectitude on the part of the umpire. An honest baseball umpire never existed, that is judging honesty from the view point of the player or spectator, who is displeased at his decision.

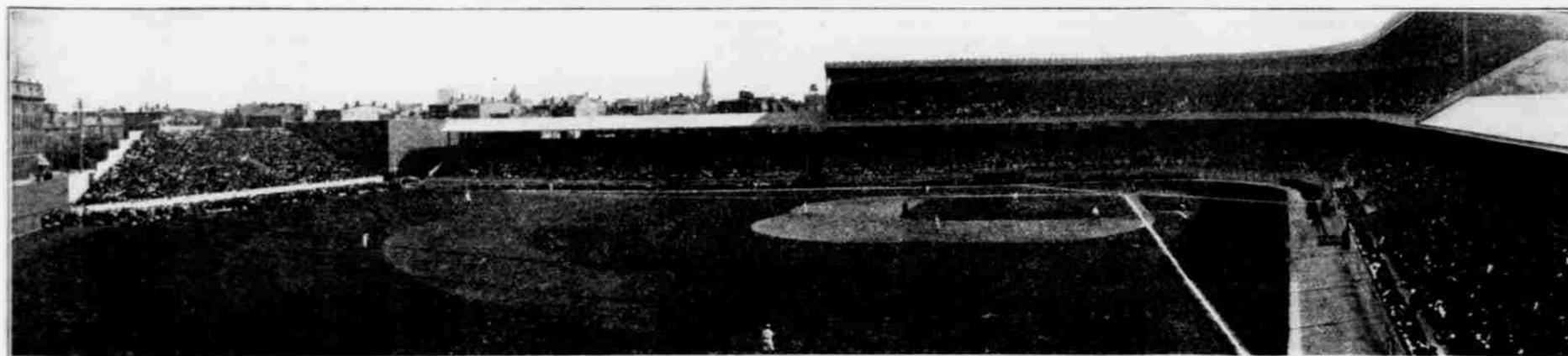
Long ago the wise heads that presided over the destinies of baseball foresaw the absolute necessity for maintaining the integrity of the



Charles L. Herzog.
The Reds New Manager.

game. Stringent rules against gambling were adopted, thus removing the temptation that might be thrown in the way of the ball player, and thus possibly cause the defeat of his club. Every possible safeguard has been added and new rules adopted so that the game of baseball today is as perfect as human ingenuity can make it. The press of the country has undoubtedly been the largest factor in the success and popularity of the game. Column after column is devoted to base-

ball news, that, if paid for at the ordinary advertising rates, would run up into the millions of dollars. The amount of capital invested in the big ball clubs of this country is tremendous, and that the returns are proportionately large is only just and right. In some instances, especially in the case of clubs who play in the world's championship series, where the receipts are probably as large as during the rest of the entire year, the profits are very great. The public, however, is too prone to over estimate the profits from baseball. It is impossible for the ordinary laymen to properly estimate the enormous expenses attached to the conducting of a big baseball club. The cost of maintaining and operating the grandstands and grounds alone is very great, but is small compared with the salary list and the traveling expenses of the players. In a number of the clubs this latter item exceeds one hundred thousand dollars yearly. In order to properly protect the financial interests that are willing to make this outlay to provide for the great national pastime, and to properly protect the players themselves, organized baseball became a necessity. A further step was the creation of the National Commission in whom was vested the authority to settle all disputes relating to the rights of the players and clubs. At their hands both players and clubs have invariably received justice. There has been much criticism as to the reserve clause in baseball contracts, but it is undoubtedly due to this very clause that great benefit has accrued to the players themselves. Were it not for some provision of this kind the clubs could not afford to buy and draft nearly as many players as they do, nor could they afford to carry them on their payrolls for several seasons, teaching them real baseball and developing them for future use. There have been a great many instances of ball players carried on the pay roll of the club and only playing one or two games a season. It is a surprising fact that but few ball players who come into the big leagues know but little of real baseball. It is also an undoubted fact that most of the habitual "fans" know more about real inside baseball than do a great majority of ball players who have never been in the big leagues, nor witnessed big league games. It is, therefore, only just and proper that the club which has spent much time and money in developing these players into a valuable asset should have the first claim to their services and an estimate of



Redland Park, the Home of the Cincinnati Reds.

On the day this photograph was taken there were twenty-eight thousand people in attendance.