

BE A CHARACTER!

After a while me and Ducky Medwick, Leo Durocher, Rip Collins, Kayo DeLancey and Pepper Martin developed what you might call a real knack for harmless high jinks. They called us the Gashouse Gang. Maybe you remember. Like that time in Philadelphia, the Cardinals was camped out at The Bellevue-Stratford Hotel, plenty high-tone diggings. A fancy banquet was goin' on.

Right in the middle of the soup a bunch of men in overalls walks in. They sets up ladders and starts hammerin' and sawin' on the ceiling. The toastmaster screams for the manager. He comes a runnin'. He wants to know, "What's the meanin' of it?"

Well, them painters and carpenters was Ol' Diz, Rip Collins and Pepper Martin. The toastmaster was nice enough to invite us to sit down to the rest of the dinner and we did. It was a fine meal. But the real meanin' of it was that the newspapers carried a lot of stories about it, and the ball park was jam-full up the next day.

When Babe Herman was playin' for Brooklyn he was a swell fellow and a great man with a bat. But the sports writers said he couldn't field a soap bubble. Then one day, so the story goes, a hot liner slipped through his hands and he stopped it with his head. The ball rolled off into his glove, tame as you please. This taught Babe how to use his head in fielding. The fans got a good laugh. Everybody liked Herman — and next year he got more money.

Learn to Take It

Now, it's true that once in a while bein' a character gets you in a jam. Still, if you want to make something of yerself you got to be willing to learn to take it. I remember one time back in Houston I was pitchin' a cool no-hitter. Then Al Todd gets a nice, clean single. I got terrible upset. Next time Al come up, my hand was shakin' so hard the ball whistles past his head and he hits the dirt.

He give me a dirty look and says, "If you do that again I'll punch your nose!"

Well, I get even more nervous and the next pitch burns his ear. Down he goes again. He drops his bat and starts for the mound. I walk in, ready with a good wise-crack. Every fight I ever been in, there's a lot of talkin' before the hittin'.

But Al fools me. He slugs me on the jaw and I see stars. I figured that the talkin' would then commence, but he hits me again. He never did do no talkin', and I never did get so tired of bein' knocked down in my whole life. That's what I mean about being able to take it.

You Need Confidence

It's awful important to have confidence in yourself. Babe Ruth hit a lot of home runs, but the one people remember is the time he pointed right where he was gonna put it — and then put it there!

Then there was Satchel Paige. He didn't get up in the major leagues much before he was old enough to be a grandfather. Otherwise he would sure of made baseball's Hall of Fame, like I. But Satch knew the value of being a character. Many's the time in the minors a hotshot batter would be standin' up to him and he'd call in all

the outfielders and make 'em sit down cross-legged on the ground. Then with everybody on both teams and the managers and the owners all pretty near ready to faint, he would strike the feller out.

Back when St. Louis was playin' Detroit for the World Series, I told everybody that me an' my brother Paul together was gonna win four games and the Cardinals would take the Series. We did and they did. You can be a crystal-ball gazer, too, if you want. I will tell you how. All you got to do is be willin' to stick out your neck. If you know your onions you are bound to be right some of the time — and when you aren't, just don't remind no one.

Like me, last spring I picked the Brooklyn Dodgers to win the National League pennant and the Cleveland Indians to repeat in the American League. It looks like I'm sure to be half right anyway.

I make a prediction every year. When I'm right I run around town sayin', "Remember? Didn't I tell you?" And everybody says, "Ol' Diz sure knows his baseball!" But when I'm wrong, I don't say nothin'. Most people remember your successes and fergit your failures.

Of course, nobody can get away for very long with bein' a blowhard. That's when you got a big, ferocious windup and can't deliver nothin' but feather balls. I once knew a pitcher who never went out to the mound without he said, "I'll strike out the whole side!"

Well this feller couldn't hit the side of a hunnerd-cow barn with a basketball. He weren't funny. And pretty soon he weren't pitchin' neither.

Some Voice

But if you want to make your mark on the world, don't let no side-windin' critics discourage you from givin' it a try. All my life I liked to sing. But some folks is unkind. They used to tell me, "Diz you got a pretty good voice — for a bobcat with the aigue!" But after 25 years of gettin' up my nerve I just finished makin' a record of my favorite tune, "The Wabash Cannon Ball." Some say it ain't music. But you'd be surprised how many are buyin' it.

You got to have faith enough in yerself not to get rattled when you throw a few wide ones. When I first went on the radio, all the schoolteachers in Missouri came

down on me. They said I was sayin' "ain't" and pretty soon all the school kids that listened to me would be sayin' "ain't."

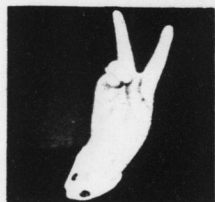
I felt right humiliated, and I fixed things up the best way I knew how. I advised the children to stay in school and listen to their teachers. Just the same I felt I had to learn them something, too.

"But don't forget," I said, "a lot of people who ain't saying 'ain't' ain't eatin'!"

If you just tell yourself there ain't a person in the world without some kind of ability, you'll be makin' the first step toward success. Find your ability and learn to make the most of it. Don't bother puttin' on no false front — people always see behind it. But people always think good of the fellow who does a good job and ain't afraid to advertise it!

That's the way I look at it. What I mean is, if you learn how to aggravate your own natural talents, you'll get all the recognition you got comin'.

NEXT QUESTION: *Elsa Maxwell, America's most famous hostess, answers two intriguing questions from readers next week in, "People and Parties I'll Never Forget."*



1 A little gesture that helped win a large war



2 Even the stars bow to this bonnet's splendor



3 It hasn't dropped out once in a 60-year career



4 This glass proved 50 million Frenchmen wrong



5 He had one other little "prop" called the Empire State Building



6 One of five brothers who made good. This is not a recent photo



7 These glasses turned out to be history's most penetrable disguise



8 Our top piano player, till Liberace took over



9 It's no microphone — it's a live hand grenade!



10 His watches droop but never his mustache



11 Some years ago this chap up and quit his job

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