

Home Run Haggerty Talks of Managers

Corndroppers' Slugger Says That Josh Haggerty, of the Alfalfas, Is the Best Ever.
A Mesmerizing Shortstop.

Joshua Lazarus Haggerty, the manager of the famous Alfalfas, is a poet, a poker player, and a philosopher. He's written the history of the Corndroppers' League in verse, but it won't be out very soon, for he only wrote a few lines. It is an old story that he can get more out of a bottle of beer than any man I know. He can bank the money ball in the corner pocket nine times out of nine, and c'n match pennies with the man that runs the mint. When he loses a game he don't go up in the air and release some one, but he goes down and sits on the ground and when it arrives he's there on the job. That's his philosophy.

Johnny McGraw, the manager of the New Yorks, goes around hollerin' at the empires, an' gets fired off the field and fined a bunch o' money. So does Joe Kelley. Josh Haggerty never opens his mouth on a ball field except to tell one o' us players to do somethin' foxy. Ned Hanlon an' Clark Griffith are touted as very clever people, but they can't seem to keep their teams out o' last place. Josh Haggerty never had a last place team in his life. Players that won't work for these managers are called managers will work for Josh, because he jesses them, as you might say, though that ain't meant as a joke. And he's got a hard job out here in the Corndroppers. As he says to say:

Players Come Easy.

"Them managers in the big leagues don't have no trouble gettin' good players, for the good material is tryin' to get to them all the time. All they've got to do is to pick it out. As soon as a man makes a name for himself in a little league they match him up. It's just like a woman gettin' a new hired girl, fresh from the other side, an' breakin' her in. As soon as she's worth havin' the woman way up in society on the next block offers her more wages an' gets her—'an' she says to herself, 'her developin' work to do all over again.' Josh Haggerty certainly knows a ball player. Why, he could tell one in the dark. We were goin' to Hayville to play a game one time an' were shy a man—our center fielder an' extra pitcher had been pinched for spillin' Alfalfa's best saloon. The night before we came to a sunburnt young feller in blue overalls an' a big straw hat plowin' in a field near the road.

"Hold on," Josh says to the driver. "That feller can play ball. Let the chariot stop." Then he got down an' asked the young feller his name.

"Hiram Haggerty," says the farmer, reinin' in his horses.

"Ever play ball any?" says Josh.

"Only one old cat an' such, when I was a boy," says Hiram. "That's quite a spell ago. Ain't got no time for ball playin' when wheat's 50 cents a bushel."

"Shucks, you sit," says Josh. "I'll put you where you can make the price o' ten bushels o' wheat an' hour. You'll do. You ain't got no bad habits to break from. Get in here an' play center field for us at Hayville this afternoon."

Star Center Fielder.

And Josh made him do it, too, an' he played center field that day in a way that'd make Roy Thomas an' Seymour an' Beaumont an' a lot more o' them stars run for the water keg. Why, he covered an acre o' ground, caught 'em drivin' goin' out an' comin' in—they all looked alike—backed up throws to second as though he'd never been off a ball field in his life except for meals, an' batted in half our runs. In a month he was the talk of the league, an' now he's got a good job tendin' bar in the biggest saloon in Hayville. He'd never got that start in life only for Josh Haggerty's knowin' a ball player when he seen one.

Lots o' other times Josh showed his good eye, but I think he showed off greatest the time we played the Cloverdale's openin' game one season, when Pinch Hobbie was the cheerleader with a name as a shortstop. You know Josh took Pinch off brakin' on a freight train an' made him the wonder that he is. Developin' one shortstop like Pinch would give any man a reputation for life.

The Matzebursts had never figured very strong in the Corndroppers, generally bein' about sixth, but this year their manager had somethin' up his sleeve, an' we found out what it was in front o' a big crowd at Matzeburst at that very first game. They had a mesmerizer on their team—a hyo-no-tist, Reggie Van Houten, an' he was, though you couldn't believe him. He gave it out he'd been through college till we found out what a pitcher he was. No man could learn the curves he knew at college.

Yes, they had the same old stuff o' a ketcher, an' the same bunch o' stiff-armed pitchers, an' the same dopey old first baseman—all the same nine but their shortstop. And he was the mesmerizer. When I went up to bat first against Corny Duff, who had only a slow out an' no control of that, I felt a pair o' gimlet eyes born' through the peak o' my cap. I looked up, caught that shortstop's eye, an' it was all right. I just stood there an' looked straight ahead like a feller at a crossin' on a rainy day, while Duff slung three straight ones over the plate. They had to push me out of the way to make room for the next man up, so completely was I under the influence.

All Fanned Out.

But it was the same right through the game. Our batters'd just stand there an' wave their bats an' grin, while that feller waved his arms an' caught their eye, an' then they'd fan out one, two, three. Josh Haggerty got there from countin' the gate receipts in the sixth, an' a near had a hemorrhage when they told him I'd struck out three times.

"You're released," he says, snappin' it out like he always did when he got excited. "Gib back to the pitcher, an' delectin' you come from an' git a job slingin' pancakes to a gang o' lumbermen. I don't want no quitters workin' for me."

Reggie got hold o' him then an' cooled him off a bit, tellin' him how he'd have to hit the ball when he fired me. When he told him about the mesmerizer, Josh's eyes blazed.

"Hypnotist, eh?" he snorted. "Sufferin' beeswax! They'll be holdin' seances on a ball field yet, an' callin' back the spirits o' the dead ball players to play the game for 'em if we don't put a stop to this, gib, when that feller comes up, knock his head

off with a swift in'ard. We'll win this game yet."

Reggie tried to do what Josh told him, but he afterward said that every in'ard he slung in at that feller's head the mesmerizer just took it an' it turned into a out that floated by him on the other side o' the plate.

Ninth Winning Rally.

If Reggie hadn't pitched such corkin' ball there'd been nothin' to it but Matzeburst, but we held 'em down to one run, an' the score was 1 to 0 when we came in for our last innin'.

"Duff an' the mesmerizer fanned our first two men. That brought up Pinch Hobbie. Just as the pitcher threw down his first ball, Josh was standin' on our bench, let drive a stone at that mesmerizer's shortstop. He dodged, lost his hold on Pinch's eye, an' Pinch landed on the ball for a clean two-bagger to deep right. That brought me up, but I had to wait while there was a powwow in the middle o' the diamond over John's throwin' stones, an' the umpire finally decided that if any more was thrown he'd give the game to the Matzebursts on the spot.

"They thought they had Josh then, an' I thought they had him, too, for I just stood by the plate an' watched the glitter in the mesmerizer's gaze while a couple o' beautiful strikes were called on me. But just then Josh Haggerty came running over from the horse sheds where he had gone directly after the powwow. In his hand he had a horse's headstall, an' before I knew it he had it on my head with the bit, all grass stained and foamy, where he had just pulled it out the horse's mouth, stuck under my chin, an' the blinders flappin' over my eyes.

"Now line her out," says he. "There's nothin' in this year's book o' rules against that."

Well, after that it was easy. It's a short, sweet tale. Duff pitched up one of his old lollypop outs, an' I hit it so hard there was pieces o' yarr, an' leather blowin' in the wind 'round Matzeburst for two days. I chased Pinch Hobbie over the plate, an' we won, 2 to 1.

We all wore blinders the next day, an' we won again, 4 to 0. After that they released the mesmerizer. But could any o' these present day managers have thought that out? I guess not.

THE BAREFOOTED BOYS.

"Are we going to lose the barefooted boys?" asked an aged citizen as his eyes surveyed a spick and span youth, about ten years old, his feet incased in natty patent leathers.

"It seems to me that with each re-appearing of these barefooted boys, and fewer barefooted boys, an' I'm sorry for it. In my time boys went barefooted until they were fifteen and sixteen years old. Even ten years ago a twelve-year-old boy would have scorned shoes and stockings in June, but they're wearin' shoes now."

"Stone bruises were fashionable in the olden days and foot races were in vogue. Now it's silk stockings and patent leathers for the youngsters."

"Ah, me, how times do change. I believe they'd be healthier if their parents would turn them out with bare feet."

THE CHEERFUL IDIOT.

"Why," began the cheerful idiot—when the chorus of groans had died down a little he began again:

"What is the difference between Jason when he passed the Shren shore on his trip for the golden fleece, and an old couple who have been married fifty years or so, and are still in love with each other?"

The Bachelor Boarder murmured that there was no difference, because the characters were notitious in both cases. "Well, well," he said, "I'm sorry to see you grin, 'one was lashed to the mast and the others are mashed to the last.'"

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