

CORNER LOT ENTHUSIASM

Jack Miller Didn't Get the Dumps When His Owner Sold Him To An Inferior Organization, But He Helped Make Winners Out Of Laggards.

One thing the corner lot baseball player learns early in his career which many professional players seem to have forgotten, is that they must go into the game to win. The corner lot ball player may not know very much about team work and he may not know very much about the fine points of the game, but he does want to win and he wishes for victory so terribly hard that he plays with all his might to the finish.

When the other fellows are rolling up a big score the ambition of the corner lot fellow is to hold that score down as low as he can. He never quits dreaming of a big ninth inning rally until the third man is out.

Jack Miller seems to be that sort of player. Although a professional in a major league he never lets up in any game and he never points no matter how disagreeable things may be. While the baseball world has known for a long time how thoroughly the players are bound by contracts the facts never were so thoroughly aired as in the recent suit of the Federal League. A baseball player is bound to servitude at so much a season. The owner of his team has the right to sell him to any team he wishes at any time. Of course the player gets big money for his servitude, but the point is that he is in servitude. If he signs up to play in Boston he can be sold to Philadelphia. He may want to see Boston win, but he may be playing for so much a day for Philadelphia.

Jack Miller was one of these unfortunate fellows who had no right to say who he would play for. Yet after he was sold to a team he did not care for a bit, he kept on playing ball and made a bigger reputation for himself with the new organization than with the old one.

Miller is still playing the game like he used to play it back on the corner lots at Kearney, N. J., where he was born in 1886. Miller first played professional ball in 1907 with a home team. The team was not strictly a professional team, as it was not paid a regular salary. The next season he played with the Atlantic league at Easton. The Pittsburgh Pirates saw he was playing good ball and plucked him for their annual crop of novices.

When Miller tried out with the Pirates his pluck caught the attention of Henry Wagner. Wagner wanted to make an infielder of Miller and it is generally told around the Pittsburgh club house that Wagner never missed a chance to tell Miller something new about baseball. Especially did Wagner coach Miller on playing the infield positions until Miller became a crack first baseman. For five years Wagner coached Miller, teaching him fine points from his own long years of experience. Miller said nothing about what he was going to do. He played ball. As one first baseman after another kept getting into the Pirates' camp Wagner was on hand to coach Miller as to the failings of each. Miller listened and profited some more.

In five years Miller had reached his greatest perfection. He was then 27 years old and was as steady a player as could be found. Now no one is saying that Miller is the finest player in the world or the finest in the United States or the finest in any league. All that is claimed for Miller is that he played ball as best he could all the time and he learned all he could all the time. He became a good hitter and a good first baseman.

RYVAL MANAGER WANTS MILLER ON TEAM.

When he reached that stage of near perfection Miller Huggins took a glance at the Pirates' bunch and decided he would like to have Miller. He needed a first baseman and a man who could play short stop as well. He wanted to strengthen up his infield. Every year the baseball chiefs go into a game of swapping players just like the Indian swap ponies or dogs, to use the expression of a Federal Leaguer in court.

Huggins approached Fred Clarke of the Pirates and offered to make a swap. Clarke had plenty of good first basemen. He wanted Konetchy of the Cardinals. Konetchy had been playing inferior ball with the Cardinals and although he was a good player he never was at his best in St. Louis. Huggins was delighted to make the swap, but in Indian fashion he haggled over the bargain. He wanted more players to boot. Clarke also haggled over the bargain in an endeavor to get more players to boot. Finally they threw several other

players in to make the bargain good and Miller was notified he was to play with St. Louis. Konetchy was notified he was to play with Pittsburgh.

Now if there is any place in the world a player did not want to go to in the spring of 1914 it was St. Louis. The Cardinals had been tail enders consistently for years. They didn't seem to have a chance to get out of the subway for a generation at least. Players are given extra bonuses when they land high up in the league. If the team can lead in the first division at the end of the season it gets a small bonus. The nearer to the top it gets the bigger the bonus. Pittsburgh was a first division club and had kept itself in the first division for some time.

St. Louis was hopelessly a sub-way club. Miller had played all his days in the major leagues at Pittsburgh. He knew the fellows there and for five years had never thought of playing anywhere else. His ambitions led him to believe some day he could be one of the greatest Pirates in the club and he hoped to be able to play for the Pirates in the world's series some day. Had some one thrown a barrel of cold water on Miller's head it would have given him more cause for joy than to be cast away out in the Mount City. By actual computation based on the theory of progressions it would take 2,004 years for the Cardinals to play in the world's series as based on their status in recent years prior to 1914.

Miller shook hands with his old club mates and went where dollars called. He showed up at the Cardinals' camp and went to work. There were some prophets who said he would jump to the Federals. They prophesied he would be out of St. Louis before the season was half over. Then the prophets said Miller would sulk and wouldn't play ball. That would be in harmony with the actions of other professional baseball players. When a baseball player cannot get what he wants from his manager he lays down on the job. He can pretend to play hard and the manager cannot sue him for breach of contract. The only thing the manager can do in the matter is to wait until the next opportunity when he can swap his unmanageable player off to some one else.

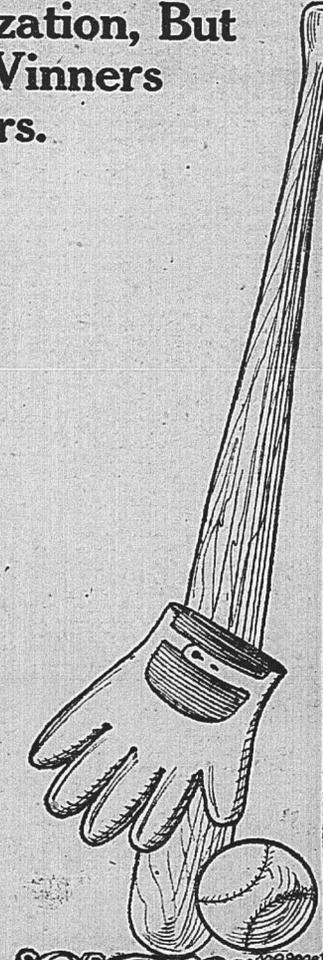
That was what the prophets said Huggins would have to do with Miller unless the New Jersey player would jump to the Federals. The first game in which Miller played, he played ball. The second game he played ball again. The third game he played ball some more. When the fourth game was called the fans turned toward Miller to see if he had yet developed the sulks. They did not develop and Miller played ball. Then the fans decided Miller was made of good stuff and that he would keep on playing ball.

MANAGER'S RIGHT HANDED MAN IS UNUSUAL VERDICT.

When the season finally ended and the Cardinals had finished in the first division and the Pirates had dropped back several notches the sport experts of the country began to diagnose the case. They now are saying that Miller Huggins proved to be the wise man of baseball. He had gathered together a lot of steady players who could play in championship style right down to the finish. For many weeks before it was definitely decided that the Braves would finish first, the Cardinals were in the running for the championship in the league.

Of all the swaps Huggins made to get good men, it is conceded generally that the swap he made to get rid of Koney and to get Jack Miller was the best swap of all. With-out any pronounced stars Huggins put out a team which had a big following and which had to be reckoned with until the last few days of the season.

Miller was a great help to the Cardinals as a living force. He played such steady ball all the time that the fans admired his ability and the other players always felt he could be depended upon in a pinch. Miller had two chances when he joined the Cardinals. One chance was to play a rotten game and depend on his record at Pittsburgh to give him another chance with some other team. The other chance was to play good ball and make a reputation for himself in the Cardinals as well as with the Pirates. He chose the latter course. Today he is worth more than ever in his career. When he signs up new contracts his playing in 1914 will always stand him in good



stead. The fact that he played ball when it was thought he had every excuse to play rotten ball is the biggest card of all.

When the baseball season was over baseball writers all over the country commented on Miller's playing and many of them classed him as the best player on the team.

Harry Schumacher of the New York Evening Mail said of Miller: "Jack Miller of the Cardinals is my selection as St. Louis' most valuable ball player. In a measure he was responsible for the Giants' defeat, as he figured largely in every game between New York and St. Louis, and at a critical period of the race was instrumental in holding the Giants in check."

"There are more showy players than Miller, but few possessed of greater capability. He is a versatile fielder, and Huggins was quick to avail himself of this asset. Miller is one of the best first sackers in the country, a heavy hitter, a brainy



JACK MILLER in two poses.

a number of important factors in the fine struggle made by the St. Louis Cardinals for the attainment of a high place in the pennant race last season was the work of Jack Miller. One could point to a number of players on the team whose efforts were responsible for the excellent showing of the Huggins-led array. But after everything relating to the rise of the Cardinals in 1914 has been sifted and weighed, and it comes down to a selection of the individual whose daily playing stamped him as contributing most to the success, conclusions will point to Jack Miller as the man.

"First, last and all the time, Miller showed himself a tower of strength, both in the field and in the attack. In filling the shoes of Ed Konetchy, departed to Pittsburgh, Miller more than satisfied the critics that in that position the Cardinals had suffered no loss of strength. And then, when called upon to fill in a yawning gap at shortstop, Miller accepted the shift to make his value as a versatile infielder so strongly evident as to impress the baseball world with the fact that, lacking his presence, the Cardinals would probably have missed their arrival in the first division."

Oscar Reelchov of the Chicago News said of him:

"Of the regulars included in the Cardinal outfit, Jack Miller is clearly entitled to primary consideration for his all-around work with the team he was traded to last season. He put the St. Louis club in the pennant fight and made it a most formidable factor till the 11th hour of the race."

"As the record will show, Miller stands well up among the leaders in fielding and hitting. In case of emergency he can be shifted to remedy a temporary weakness and, above all things else, he has a dis-

position and temperament which makes him easy to handle. He is fighting for the club interests all the time and would make a good leader for any outfit."

Here is the testimonial of Ed McGrath:

"Boston fans who witnessed the games between the St. Louis Cardinals and world's champions Braves last season were pretty well of accord that the contests were about the most spirited in years. Miller Huggins, the peppery playing manager of the Cardinals, aroused admiration by the way he inspired a rather ordinary team to play to the limit of its possibilities. On the face of it a considerable number of good judges would be puzzled to determine which of the individuals of a limited number could be designated the most valuable player of the outfit."

"Eliminating Bill Doak, the pitcher, whose fine record meant much to the Cardinals, and leaving the field clear to players who were in the game day in and day out choice would appear to lie between Jack Miller, Huggins and Lee McGehee. But in the final analysis, and taking every point into consideration, the best choice from the standpoint of general high value would be Miller. The ex-Pirate in his first year as a Cardinal, holding down two positions—first base and shortstop—demonstrated his great value in both important berths."

"Offensively, his work was on a par with his defensive work, while in the elements of play that are not officially tabulated, especially in ambition, spirit and willingness to exert himself to the utmost for the good of his team, he was on a par with, if not superior to, any of the team's most valued members."

"It looks as though the ayes have it. If the men who are playing the great national game in the big professional leagues would take a tip from Jack Miller, baseball would have a long time to run before it started toward the scrap heap along with prize fighting and horse racing. The fans like to see real live baseball all the time. They pay real money to see the real game and when a player doesn't play his best he is drawing his salary under

false pretenses.

After all is said about the wrongs of organized baseball and after the United States courts get through hearing about the monopoly, the sale of players like dogs or horses and the slavery of the game, the players themselves do not need to be contaminated.

"When they are sent to some out of the way place to play they ought to play whether they want to play there or not. When they signed the contracts in the original place they bound themselves to accept the commands of their chieftains. They can get out of the bonds by going into some other occupation. Perhaps in time a golden age will come when every player can play for his home team and can grow up with it. Perhaps in time a man born in New York always will play for New York and one born in Buffalo always will play with Buffalo if he wants to do so."

"He will have real town pride when such a state of affairs does come. He can play the game for all he is worth then and his playing will be worth while because he is playing for the town he lives in. Then he can expect to be enthusiastic as a corner lot player. In the meantime he can earn his salary as best he can."

Circumstantial Evidence.

"Please, ma'am your dog has killed three of father's prize fowls," said the small boy.

"Oh, I'm quite sure my Fido would never do such a thing," said the old lady.

"But father saw one of the chickens in his mouth," said the boy.

"Purely circumstantial evidence," she snapped, and the boy departed.

Some time later he returned.

"Please, mum, father sent me to tell you that circumstantial evidence might point to his having shot your dog, but he reckons you'd find he died of lead poisoning."

Peculiar Combination.

"Bernuda raises onions and hills."

"Seems a queer arrangement. I wonder why they picked out that particular combination."

"Maybe the smell of one offsets that of the other."

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