

The Youngsters of 1916

Much Has Been Said of the Federal Leaguers, but the Present Season Has Also Produced a Fine Body of Recruits

By J. C. KOFOED

The Federal Leaguers, older players for the most part and better established in their records, have largely usurped the limelight up to date. But the newcomers to the Majors are a promising lot and should by no means be overlooked.

DESPITE the numerous positions Federal League stars have usurped on National and American League teams, regiments of youngsters were tried out at the various training camps. The mere sorting of the excellent from the fair or mediocre players is in itself a tremendous task, for the weather conditions often make a poor tosser appear to better advantage than a star.

Then the manner of handling a man can make or mar his future. Connie Mack's system of "playing his recruits on the bench" made wonders of McInnes, Collins, Barry, Strunk and others. The same tactics used with Schauer and Schupp by McGraw apparently robbed those youngsters of all their original confidence. The handling of boys fresh from the "sticks" is a task worthy of masters of psychology.

When Rube Schauer joined the Giants three years ago I predicted that another really great pitcher had blossomed forth. Since then experts like Charley Doin and McGraw himself have declared that Schauer's "stuff" rivaled Alexander's. But three years on the bench has made



Photo by International Film Service

Infielder Sawyer of Washington, a Good Player as Well as a Star Comedian

him wilder than a hawk, and less confident of his ability than ever.

Last summer Connie Mack sent Bruno Haas into a game, and Bruno proceeded to give sixteen or eighteen bases on balls. Whenever he did get the sphere over it was usually slammed for a safe hit. Mack refused to take him out. "He was learning something every minute he was in there, and as we were out

of the running anyway it would have been foolish to put someone else in."

Haas didn't have the goods anyway, but that lacing taught him more about big league pitching than he ever knew before, and it didn't hurt his confidence in the least. Just such a drubbing set Rube Marquard back a couple of years. So it takes a good judge of character to know how to start a recruit on his big league way.

Now, as to the youngsters who received try-outs this spring. The Giants banked mostly on their Federal League acquisitions, and though a raft of recruits were taken South, none were retained. A few, like Schepner and Martin seem likely to make good in a few years. The latter has a marvellous faculty for judging ground balls, and a pair of hands like Milton Stock. Palmero, the Cuban, came back from the International League heavier and stronger than ever. Though Emilio is a good average player he is hardly in the "probable star" class.

Bill Donovan, of the Yanks, took a number of very promising youngsters below Mason and Dixon's Line for observation. His greatest disappointment was Dan Tipple, the \$9,000 beauty from the American Association. Tipple fell far below expectations, and a number of other youngsters displayed far better form. Mogridge, a southpaw from the Western League, is a seasoned twirler who was with the White Sox several years ago. He is at his best now, and if he fails to run true to form it is hardly likely that he will ever come up from the "bush" again. There are four other youngsters, who, even though they fail to hold places this year, should be anchors to windward for the smiling pilot of the Yankees.

Little Cliff Markle finished up last season in the American League with a splendid display of skill. He has a re-

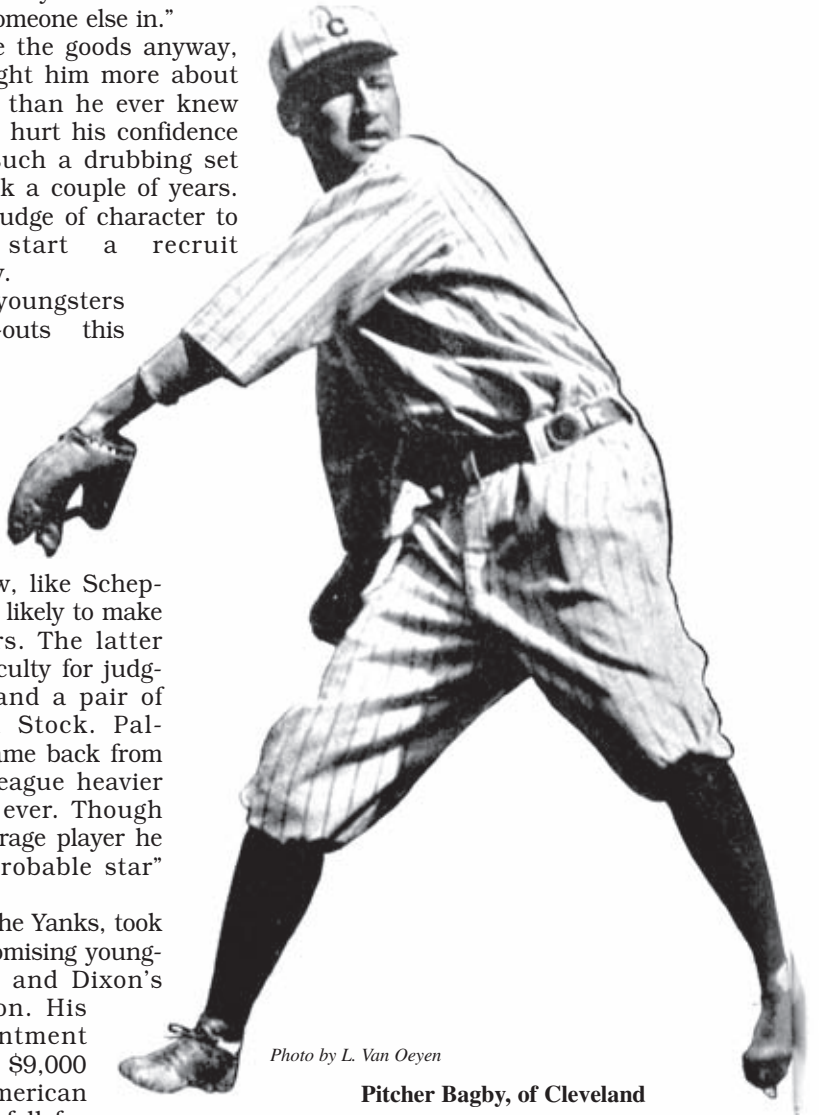


Photo by L. Van Oeyen

Pitcher Bagby, of Cleveland

markably sharp "drop." "Dazzy" Vance, "Slim" Love, the six-foot-six-inch mastodon from the Pacific Coast, and Bill Piercy, a "spitballer," all have the ability that can be brought out by experience.

Donovan's best find was Joe Gedeon, who won the second base position from Lute Boone, Paddy Baumann and Charley Mullen. Gedeon is not a newcomer in the big league, having worked under Clark Griffith at Washington two years ago. He is a fast, hard hitting, clean fielding player. Walter Alexander, a highly touted catcher, had a try-out toward the end of last season with the Yankees, and appears to be a really com-

petent maskman. Frank Gilhooley, who had several trials, came up, to scratch in every department this time.

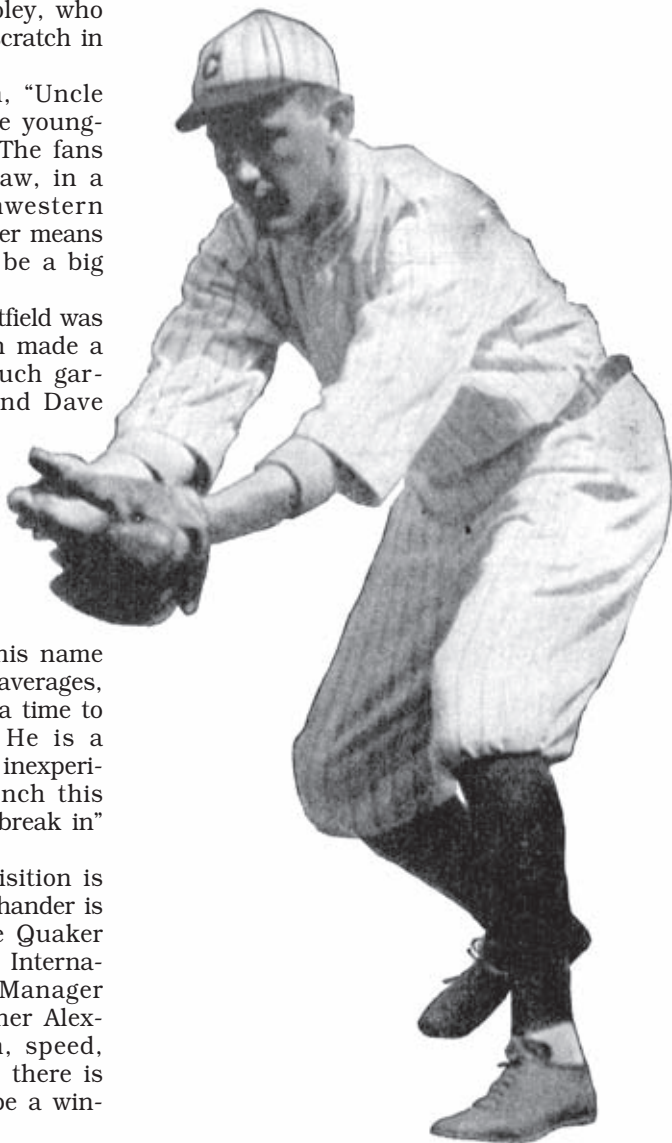
Over the river in Brooklyn, "Uncle Wilbert" Robinson flagged three youngsters who should make good. The fans saw Walter Mails, the southpaw, in a few games after the Northwestern League closed, and if promise ever means anything, young Mails should be a big winner.

Last season the Superba's outfield was lamentably weak, and Robinson made a ten-strike in picking up two such gardeners as Jimmy Johnston and Dave Hickman. Johnson is the greatest base-runner and one of the fastest men the Coast League ever produced. In his short try-out with the Cubs he did nothing extraordinary, but he has every qualification for a major league star. Hickman, though his name appears in the Federal League averages, was with the outlaws too short a time to be considered one of them. He is a brilliant youngster, and though inexperience may keep him on the bench this season he is almost certain to "break in" within a short time.

The Phillies' only real acquisition is Joe Oeschger, and the big right hander is by no means a stranger in the Quaker City. He was a sensation in the International League last year, and Manager Moran counts on him as another Alexander. Oeschger has strength, speed, control, curves and a head, so there is no reason why he should not be a winner.

If the National League Champions made no effort to land youngsters, Connie Mack more than held up the average for Philadelphia. His new crop consists of Pitchers Crowell, Myers, Morrisette, Nabors, Ray, Richardson and Voltz; catchers, Myers and Murphy; infielders, Witt, Crane and Pick, and outfielders Thompson and Stellbauer. A number of these boys have promise, but almost every one of them is lamentably green.

There is absolutely no question that there is talent in the crowd, but it will not be brought to a point of real efficiency this season. Morrisette is the most seasoned of the pitchers, but Minot Crowell, "Chief" Myers and Jack Na-



Shortstop Wambsganss of Cleveland, the Man with the "Never-to-be-Remembered" Name

bors, the lanky Talladega star, excel him in sheer natural ability. This quartet, with Bush, Wyckoff and Bressler is expected to make a respectable showing for the boxmen.

Carl Ray, a left hander, has murderous speed and a good curve, but his control and fielding ability (or lack of it) is wretched. Richardson is a giant whose arm did not round into shape as rapidly as it should, while Voltz has not yet had a thorough trial.

It is doubtful if Shortstop Sam Crane

ever wins a regular big-league berth. He is a player who came up from Richmond touted as a second Jack Barry in fielding skill. Though brilliant at times he was erratic, and his hitting, far below the average. Lawton Witt, the collegian, has more talent than any man in the squad, and plays with the same confidence that Louis Malone showed while "breaking in." A splendid ground coverer, and a natural hitter, Witt should hold the short-stop berth without difficulty. At the far corner Charley Pick, a more experienced man than any of the others, will doubtless play that position for the better part of the season. He is a steady, if not a particularly brilliant player.

The new catchers, Myers and Murphy, though still leagues and leagues removed from the class of Schang and Lapp, are boys with sufficient promise to hold a place with the Athletics for quite a while to come. Myers, in particular, has shown great skill. Connie Mack is rather chary of boosting recruit maskmen since Jim McAvoy disappointed him so sadly, but he thinks well of Myers and Murphy. In my opinion "Shag" Thompson is too good a man to keep indefinitely on the bench, and he is slated to succeed Oldring or Walsh. Stellbauer, the newest outfield recruit, who hit .300 in Peoria, is more or less of an unknown quantity.

The acquisitions in Boston are Fred Thomas, Shorten and Pennock with the Red Sox, and Blackburn, Tragressor, Wilhoit, Compton, Barnes and Nehf with the Braves. Pennock and the last three Stallingsites have been seen previously in the major league cities. Thomas is the New Orleans third baseman, secured in part payment for Tris Speaker. He is a fast, shifty player, who should make good. Last fall the pitching of Art Nehf in the final weeks of the pennant chase was a sensation, and every big leaguer who has seen him work declares he is another Plank. Barnes, though not displaying quite the brilliancy of his team-mate, is a real acquisition for any club. Pennock is more or less of a puzzle. Though he has lots of talent I don't think the Kenneth Square Southpaw will ever shine in the big league. Blackburn was the most brilliant catcher in the American Association last year, and both

he and Tragressor are decidedly promising aides to Hank Gowdy.

Shorten, Wilhoit and Compton are all outfielders, and every one is a gem. With the passing of Tris Speaker, Shorten's chance came, and though Clarence Walker or Olaf Henriksen may be the choice over him at the present time, it won't be long before he holds a regular position on the Red Sox. Wilhoit came to the Braves with a big reputation as a slugger, and from his form at the plate, he should have little difficulty in maintaining it. "Bash" Compton has improved about three hundred per cent. over his form with the Browns a few years ago.

Washington rounded up a prize bunch—one of the best in years. In Dumont and Harper they have the best right and left hand young pitchers in the American League, with Bentley as a promising addition. Gharrity, the young catcher, and Rondeau, the high priced outfielder, both from the American Association, will add strength where strength is needed. Charley Jamieson is also a good ball player who will improve.

The greatest prize, aside from Dumont and Harper, is Joe Judge, the new first baseman. Judge, to my way of thinking, will make the Washington fans forget such a person as Chick Gandel ever existed. He is a clean, hard hitter, and a magnificent fielder. With a few years' experience he should occupy the niche that "Stuffy" McInnes holds to-day.

The West, though not winning as many young stars in the annual lottery, came through with a number of beauties. Pittsburgh added little strength. They secured Eddie Barney, a cast-off Yankee outfielder, last year in the International League, Elmer Jacobs, released by Pat Moran, Schmidt, a catcher from the Southern League, and Jimmy Smith, who is the pick of the lot, though he is not yet a star. Barney has had a lot of trouble in judging short fly balls so far, but will probably improve. The others are experiments pure and simple.

The two Ohio teams, Cincinnati and Cleveland, were strengthened decidedly by veterans, but added little new blood. Herzog secured outfielders John Beall and "Greasy" Neale and Southpaw pitcher, Clarence Mitchell. Beall is no

raw recruit, having seen service in the American League and with numerous clubs in the bushes. The other two are youngsters, Neale being one of the fastest men on his feet to break in the game for some time. Mitchell came from the Western League, with the reputation of being the finest left-hander ever developed on that circuit.

Cleveland's best newcomer was Third Baseman Roy Evans, who played a few games with them toward the fag end of last season. Evans is a slim, fast youngster, a brilliant fielder and a strong thrower, but no Frank Baker with the bat. The other most promising recruits are Jim Bagby, a veteran Southern Leaguer, and Stanley Covalieskie, who once had a try-out with the Athletics. It is doubtful if Stanley ever equals brother Harry's record, but he should be a consistent performer for the Indians.

On opening day Stanley worked for Cleveland against Detroit, and fought them hard for twelve innings. Harry had been scheduled to pitch for the Tigers, but he refused the assignment when he learned that brother Stan was to make his debut.

Moving further west we find that Detroit secured George Maisel, a third baseman; Cunningham, a twirler of numerous trials; Harry Heilman, a slugging Coast Leaguer, and Harper, an outfielder. In the South Maisel won universal praise for his speed, but his normal hitting gait is not strong enough at the present time to beat out such a clever performer as Oscar Vitt. Outfielder Harper and Pitcher Cunningham are good ball players, but present indications do not point to them as stars. The most promising of the new men is Harry Heilman, a combination first baseman and outfielder. Heilman is a sturdy clubber and a good fielder, and the loss of either Crawford or Burns is less likely to be felt with a man of his calibre on the bench.

As usual the White Sox gave trials to a whole army of youngsters, and took Danforth, Lynn, McMullen and Terry back to the Windy City. When Dave Danforth was with the Athletics he gave promise of developing into one of the greatest left-handers in the game. Mack had taken him direct from Baylor Col-



Lee Fohl, the Coming Manager

lege, Texas, and the jump was apparently too great for the youngster. Last year he was the undisputed strike-out king of the American Association, and if Dave is handled correctly he should occupy the place old Doc White held in the esteem of the Chicago fans.

Zeb Terry, the Coast phenom, shouldered Buck Weaver from shortstop to third base, and astounded the Chicago fans with his brilliant defensive work. Though he is not a heavy hitter, he

should easily bat at the average shortstop gait, which would make him as valuable a man as Rowland has on his club. McMullen equalled Terry's reputation on the Coast, and should prove an extremely valuable utility infielder.

The Cubs were so swamped with Federal Leaguers that Joe Tinker gave little attention to minor leaguers, but one youngster attracted the manager's attention. Catcher Clemons showed so well that Arthur Wilson was released to the Pirates.

Much the same situation held true among the St. Louis Americans because of the amalgamation with the Federals. Three youngsters, Miller, McCabe and Park were retained for quite a while. McCabe, a pitcher, showed enough to warrant him a regular position in another year or two.

In Miller Huggins' ball yard the greatest efforts were made to find a first class shortstop, as it was the general consensus of opinion that Butler would not do. Roy Corhan, a Pacific Coast Leaguer, who was touted as another Bancroft, was

conceded the place. Then a youngster named Roger Hornsby, from the Western Association, got into the competition and calmly took the place himself. Both the youngsters are excellent players.

Bob Steele, the best of the junior pitchers, has worlds of "stuff," but is very, very green. With a little more seasoning he should become a valued member of the staff. Outfielder Walton Cruise, who was with the Cardinals once before, has returned a much improved ball player, though never destined, I think, for stardom. The other newcomers have not displayed very brilliant ability.

How do you think a team of this Year's Youngsters would do in the present race?

Infielders—Judge, Gedeon, Witt, Evans, Terry, Hornsby, Corhan, J. Smith.

Outfielders—Wilhoit, Compton, Gilhooly, Heilman.

Catchers—Clemons, Meyer.

Pitchers — Nehf, Dumont, Oeschger, Danforth, Harper, Markle, Nabors, Morrisette, C. Mitchell.

Pretty good, eh?