

Fifty-Four Years of Baseball in Canada

The Great Base-Runners of Ontario in the Days of Old

By JOHN M. COPELAND



Bob Emslie, Umpire National League, Makes His Home in St. Thomas, Ont.

AN admiring mother, on beholding her awkward son parading for the first time with his kilted regiment, indulgently exclaimed to brither Jock, "Aye, lad, look! Sandy is the only one in step." On the contrary, freckled-faced Sandy was sadly out of harmony with the prevailing movement, but few, indeed, of the boys and men of our rising generation in Canada are far out of step with the march of America's baseball cohorts. Almost to a man they know the players and what they are accomplishing these spring days to focus attention on a really ancient, yet up-to-the-minute, fascinating sport. And though baseball was not born in Canada, surely fifty-four years of Canadian baseball entitle it to be regarded as more or less of a national pastime.

Spheroid brainstorm, or "baseballitis," a distemper caused by an insectivorous parasite, and prevalent in all parts of the country in this era, is by no means a new discovery of Doctor Diagnosis. The susceptibility of the vocal apparatus to the infection in summer, which in severe cases in males is accompanied by waving arms and near convulsions, was recognized fifty years ago. So general was the contagion among the struggling ten thousand baseball fans assembled at Guelph, Canada, July 1st, 1874, when they beheld Boston's Red Sox and the famous A. G. Spalding trim their idolized Maple Leafs, that symptoms of this disorder did not disappear until the first snow fall. On the day before, as well, the Bostonians had encompassed the downfall of the pets and, thus encouraged, the bean-eaters set sail for home, and in 1875 won every game played on their home grounds. Grim, indeed, were the reflections of Mr. George Sleeman, six times Mayor of Guelph, brewer, crack shot, and manager of the Royalists; but not for long, as sweet satisfaction came presently to this all-wool, yard-wide baseball enthusiast.

HE it was who recognized in a large way the infant pastime's possibilities. Though first introduced in 1860, at Woodstock, Ontario, the home of the lusty James "Tip" O'Neil, who was Comiskey's heaviest hitter on the St. Louis Browns, and given a premiere by Alfred S. Feast, at Guelph, in 1861, Mr. Sleeman was the original Canadian promoter of this erstwhile sport of Egypt and the Netherlands. He won for Guelph from Woodstock, Hamilton, Flamborough, Dundas and London; at London, in September, 1869, \$50 in gold at the Provincial Exhibition, and later a solid silver ball made of forty Mexican silver or "adobe" dollars, emblematic of the Canadian championship.

This honour the Leafs held, purloining every game played during two seasons. The interest grew so



The Celebrated Maple Leafs of Guelph, Ont., Semi-professional Champions of America in 1874. Most of the Players Were Native-born Canadians, but Some were Bought from United States Teams at Much Less Fancy Salaries Than Are Paid Nowadays. The Names of the Players Were: Top Row: R. Emery, W. Sunley, W. Jones, — Keerle. Bottom Row: H. Myers, T. Smith, Geo. Sleeman (Promoter), Six Times Mayor of Guelph; W. Smith, H. Spence, Chas. Maddock.



Second in renown to the great Maple Leafs were the Tecumsehs, of London, Ont., Champions of Canada, 1876, and International Champions, 1877. Top row: Joe Hornung, Tom Brown, Tom Gillean, Buckle Ledwith. Bottom row: Mike Dinnen, Fred Goldsmith, George Latham, Phil Powers and Billy Hunter.

keen that the Maple Leafs organized an excursion from Guelph to Woodstock, at one dollar per capita. Five hundred sympathizers and a brass band went along.

The new game flourished, in the face of peevish cricketers. Watertown, N.Y., inaugurated a semi-professional baseball tournament for the American championship in July, 1874, when part of the state population, and the whole town, shut up shop to take in the series. The Maple Leafs were drawn to lock horns with the Ku Klux, of Oneida, Nassaus, from New Jersey, and Eastons, representing Easton, Pa. The Haymakers, of Troy, and Atlantics, of New York, were also in this series.

The Canadian delegates scored thirteen runs in three games, dividing a tie on Saturday on account of rain; earning second place and \$300 on Monday; substituting for the runner-up position the championship on Tuesday together with \$500. On that occasion Billy Smith, pitcher, was awarded first prize, ten dollars, for the longest throw of base ball, some say 125 yards, and others 133 yards.

Homebound, the boys featured in games at Kingston, Belleville, Cobourg, Newcastle, and Bowmanville. They were defeated in 1875 at Watertown, N.Y., by the Live Oaks, of Lynn, Mass.; score, 6—3.

THE Guelph brewer financed an international trip in July, 1886, and it is a coincidence that the same Al. Buckenberger, who managed the Rochester Hustlers in later years, was commissioned by him to pilot the team that eventful summer. When Mr. Buckenberger harks back to the time the victorious Maple Leafs decisively won forty-one away-from-home games out of a possible forty-two, he must be prone to the invidious comparisons paragraphers talk about.

The Maple Leafs included native players and several from the United States, the roster reading: J. Purvis and A. Dillon, c.; H. Zell, p.; F. Miller, 1b.; J. Hewer, 2b.; D. Mulholland, 3b.; F. Shielbeck, s.s.; Charlie Campeau, W. George, B. Stevens and O. Williams, o.f. It is not drawing the long bow in narrative to declare that this great team swept all before them, as the right-hand tallies in the appended, incomplete list, shows:

Opponent.	Runs.	Maple Leafs. Runs.
Hamilton	2	25
Brantford	3	23
Stratford	5	22
Seaforth		8
London	2	17



Adrian C. Anson, of Chicago, one of the great players in the '70's, had many cronies on the London and Guelph teams.

The Tecumsehs, of London, Canada, beat them for the first time in 1876, but no club was strong enough to wrest from them the silver-mounted rosewood bat put up for competition by their management.

In those days boiling out at hot springs was not in style, and liniment artists were not carried on tour. Bare hands were "au fait," while the amputated kid glove of Her Ladyship was "de rigueur," and did duty in place of the various padded sofa cushions now apparently essential. The distance between pitcher and catcher was shorter than now, and the knee-high, underhand throw the only style permitted. They say that between '77 and '90 the great "Silver" Flint caught 833 games without chest protector or glove. Some chroniclers aver, however, that Charles Maddock, at Guelph, resorted to the use of a piece of rubber between his teeth when backstopping to relieve the tension at moments of extreme strain. Despite the absence of artificial armament, injuries were less frequent than now. C. P. McDonald says:

"Why, I recall the days when we Played ball just like it ought to be; The first mild day of spring we'd go To some big lot and stage the show. No gloves in them days—just the hand That nature gave us—no grand stand; No hold-outs, contracts, legal scraps, No magnate owned the old-time chaps."