

"This article mentions Hardy," said one of the reporters. "He's known to be very friendly with Ben Daly, and that may have given rise—"

Catterson exploded with a mighty roar.

"Something will give you a rise in about three seconds!" he said. "It will be this number thirteen boot of mine! Now, get out of here!"

Naturally that young man, in a two-column article, pointed out that Catterson flew into a rage when questioned about the statement from his own town. The Hardy incident drew a subhead, and his friendship with Daly was mentioned.

It was an angry team which trotted out for warming-up practice before the last game of the season. Catterson had been reading the riot act to his men.

"What if there ain't a word of truth in it? I know it, and you know it, but if these fellows beat us by a big score this afternoon, we'll never hear the last of it. Let's dig in and show 'em some baseball!"

When it came time to choose the pitchers, Catterson picked Thomas, a tall left-hander with slow, puzzling curves. Ben Daly chose Callahan as the one best bet. The game opened with the Blue Sox keyed up to the breaking strain and the Reds sullen and defiant.

Callahan whipped over a lightning-fast strike on Moles, the first man to face him; a great roar went up from twenty thousand rooters, and eighteen men settled down to the final contest.

Inning after inning slipped by without a score. Thomas, flapping about in his loose-jointed, ungainly fashion, kept dropping his slow twisters across the plate, and the heavy-hitting Sox flubbed them along the ground or popped them into the air. Hardly a ball was hit to the outfield. Thomas had "something on the ball," and, for that matter, so had Jaggs Callahan, who was pitching for his life and the post-season money thrown in. In the fourth inning, after Hardy had doubled to centre, Jaggs fanned two men, retiring the side amid thunders of applause.

The last of the seventh saw the twenty thousand on their feet, "pulling for luck." The luck came, but to the wrong team, for Parrish, of the Sox, slammed a line drive into a lightning double play.

The end of the eighth found players and spectators keyed up to a savage pitch. The Sox were fighting for a pennant and everything which goes with one; the Reds were fighting for their reputations. During the last of the eighth Jaggs abused his teammates like pickpockets.

"What have I got to do for you stiffies?" he growled. "Here I go out and hold these tramps down to three hits for eight innings, and you won't stake me to a single ace! Give me one run and I'll win this game!"

To the end of the eighth inning there had not been an error on either side. Suddenly there came the "break," that strange madness which attacks the best ball players at times and spreads like a contagion until the whole team is involved. There was no warning. Jaggs, pitching like a fury, retired two men, and Moles, known as a dangerous man on the bases, dropped a pretty bunt along the third-base line, catching the infielders asleep.

Callahan started the trouble. He should have been satisfied to let Moles reach first base, but when the big pitcher saw that the third baseman was not even moving on the play, he raced forward, scooped the ball, and, almost without looking, hurled it across the diamond.

Moles would have beaten a perfect throw; Callahan threw the ball ten feet over the first baseman's head into right field. Moles, rounding the bag like a ghost, scuttled along to second. The Blue Sox right fielder came tearing in, the ball struck the tips of his gloved fingers, and bounded out of his hand, falling ten feet behind him.

Moles, signaled by the coacher on third, crossed second like a rocket, and was almost at third base when the right fielder straightened up and whipped the ball in the general direction of the home plate. He had caught the contagion, and, as the catcher ran back for the wild throw, Moles let out the last link

in his stocky little legs, and slid over the plate just as the catcher whipped the ball savagely to Callahan.

Hardy on the bench found himself repeating:

"We didn't do it! They beat themselves! They beat themselves!"

Catterson was cursing in a whole-hearted fashion; all along the Red bench there was no sign of exultation. High and clear over the muttering in the stands rose the joyful whoop of a lone Red roter:

"There goes your old pennant! How do you like it?"

A loyal home fan reached over and mashed the offending one's hat down over his eyes, and he lapsed into sudden silence, chuckling to himself and muttering now and then under his breath. It was no time for loud hilarity.

Callahan raved; the first baseman threw his glove on the ground, and jumped on it, and the right fielder walked around in little circles, making motions with his throwing arm. Ben Daly alone remained calm. The Blue Sox got the last man on a pop fly, and in dead silence the teams changed sides for the last of the ninth.

Hardy, trotting to his position in the outfield, passed within ten feet of Ben

Daly. The manager was walking slowly toward the bench, his cap in his hand, and it seemed to Hardy that the man had suddenly grown gray and old. There were deep lines in his face, and all the spring had gone out of his step. Hardy wanted to speak to him, but could think of nothing to say, and so wisely held his tongue. It was the boy's first glimpse of a real baseball tragedy, and it hurt him to think that this thing had to happen to a man who had been his friend. He was conscious of a thankfulness that he had had no hand in the play.

In the coacher's box a blue-stockinged warrior was yelling that the game was still young.

"It's not over yet!" he shouted. "Not over yet!" There was no reassuring bellow from the grand stand where the fans were sitting huddled together, still stunned by the magnitude of the calamity that had overtaken them.

Thomas ambled out to the box to face "Budge" Tipton, put in to hit for Callahan. Jaggs could have done no worse. Budge swung at two slow ones, and then popped up a weak foul to the catcher. Harrison, the next man up, took a strike, and then dropped the ball neatly over the third baseman's head

for a single. The fans in the stands suddenly came to life with a sharp cheer. They screamed madly when the Red catcher crooked the next ball and Harrison slid to second. Like a flash the temper of the great sullen crowd changed. It began to roar for blood. Thomas tried to fast inshoot on Kennedy, and Kennedy spun around and took the ball between the shoulder blades. The umpire gave him the benefit of the doubt, and Kennedy jogged down to first base, so much elated that he forgot to limp.

Higher and higher rose the yells from the stands. Thomas' luck was deserting him at last. Turn about was fair play. Gilson, the Red catcher, walked into the diamond and handed the ball to Thomas. The pitcher went back into the box, and discovered that his shoe needed tying. The Blue Sox rooters interpreted all these signs, and yelled to the umpire to make the Reds quit stalling and play ball.

Ben Daly stood at the plate, wagging a short, heavy bat in narrowing circles. Twice he gripped his war club between his knees, patted his hands in the dust, and wiped them upon the front of his shirt. Thomas knew all about Ben

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