

# Chapman Finds Eye on Ty's Lost Tips

## Sam Digs Up Old Letters Useful to Him as Rookie

Instructions, Misplaced by Outfielder When He Entered Navy, Now Serve as Refresher Course in Training; Represent Masterly Advice on Hitting

By ART MORROW

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. Good news in the Athletics' camp is the hitting of Left Fielder Sam Chapman, the jut-jawed former football star who in 1938 leaped from the University of California campus to the big league diamond.

Sam not only has been riding the ball hard and far in batting practice, but he has been punishing rival pitchers at a cruel clip, hitting .407 in the first six games—indicating a complete return to his prewar form, an official average of .322 for 1941.

Responsible for the comeback are two letters Sam received nine years ago from one of the greatest hitters of them all—Ty Cobb.

Chapman came across the letters during the winter while ransacking an old trunk in his Tiburon, Calif., home, and pored over the documents for hours. He still consults them frequently, for to him they have served as a refresher course in how to bat. To thousands of others, young players and old, they would come as a veritable encyclopedia of batting lore from a master who was 12 times the American League champion in the art.

How Chapman originally came into possession of the letters is almost a story in itself. Out of a clear sky in 1938 he received an

### Ty One of Few Stars Able to Instruct Others—Mack

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla.—Connie Mack considers Ty Cobb a good instructor and approves of Sam Chapman's trying to improve his hitting through the Georgia Peach's correspondence course.

"Few great hitters possess the ability to pass on their skill," Mack says. "They know how themselves, but can't teach others, maybe because they do not completely understand exactly what they do and why they do it."

"But I have always believed that Ty not only knew what he was doing, but also was one of the very few great hitters capable of instructing others."

to help you, and they are sincere, but different minds sometimes muddle things. Relative to batting, listen to no one except Mr. Mack or whomever he delegates to advise you. Get out early and get some extra hitting practice, etc.

"Now, Sam, I am taking the liberty to tell you a few points. Try them out in practice and I believe you will profit, for I do believe I have learned some batting fundamentals in the years I have been in baseball.

1. DON'T GRIP YOUR BAT AT THE VERY END; leave, say, an inch or two. ALSO, LEAVE AT LEAST AN INCH OR MORE SPACE BETWEEN YOUR HANDS; that gives you balance and control of bat, and also keeps hands from interfering with each other during the swing.

"2. Take position at plate, especially against righthand pitchers. BACK OF PLATE, and against a man with a real curve, YOU CAN STAY ON BACK LINE OF BATTING BOX. Now try to hit to right-center. I don't mean you should place the ball in any one spot, but start now practicing to hit your righthanders to the opposite field. An inside ball from a righthand pitcher you will naturally pull, say, to left-center.

"3. DON'T SLUG AT FULL SPEED; LEARN TO MEET THEM FIRMLY, and you will be surprised at the results.

"4. Now, to hit as I ask, to right-center or center. YOU STAND AWAY FROM PLATE the distance you can see with mind's eye that you can hit the ball that curves on inside corner, to cen-

## Passes Along Pointers on Punching



THE ONE AND ONLY TY COBB, ONE OF THE GAME'S IMMORTALS

### Sam Another Big Leaguer Who Started in Legion Ball

Sam Chapman is another major leaguer who can thank the American Legion and its junior baseball program for getting him started on a diamond career.

Born at Tiburon, Calif., a small town at the base of Mt. Tamalpais, April 11, 1916, Sam received his grammar school education there. He went to high school in Mill Valley and it was there that the local Legion post saw to it that he was given a place on its junior team.

Chapman was an infielder in Legion ball, and at California U., but switched to the outfield late in his college course.

HANDER: DON'T PULL. Use same stance I have given you, and when he throws you his curve, knock him down with it or you will naturally pull it, as the ball is breaking in to you. BUT AGAINST A LEFTHANDER OF FAIR SPEED: Move up in the box, also closer to plate, and PULL THIS STYLE OF PITCHING.

"Now, Sam, some of the points I have outlined may seem uncomfortable at first, but you practice them and stick to it. I predict you will start hitting line drives and be much pleased right from the start. Watch the good hitters and see where their arms, hands and feet are. All this gives freedom of swing and power.

"Get before a mirror, stand and hold your hands and elbow as I have told you and see how you look. Also drop your left elbow below your hands and your right elbow to your side, and you will feel you cannot hit.

"This letter is long and poorly prepared. I have just dashed it off with-

out any form or polish. But drop me a line when you can and let me know your reactions as to batting results. . . .

"Sincerely,

"TY COBB."

Well, sir, Chapman practiced what Cobb preached, and for the next two months he hardly had to write to tell Cobb of his reactions. The averages spoke for him.

"I had never met Ty at the time," Sam says, "but I found a lot of helpful hints in what he had written me." Lines penciled in where certain points have been capitalized bear mute testimony as to how well Chapman studied the document, and within a month he was among baseball's Big Six.

### Second Lesson

But then the lessons began to blur, and the rookie slumped again. Came another letter from Cobb, this one dated August 19:

"Dear Sam: I hope you will pardon my writing you, and any suggestion is merely my interest in your work. You have over a considerable period proven you can hit, and from .358 or .350 on down to present average shows something besides a lack of hitting ability.

"Now, too much hitting can be bad. When you are meeting the ball good, one after another, stop.

"Don't take strikes. Ask Mr. Mack to let you hit the first good one for awhile. You may unconsciously be using a system of taking a first strike and other teams know that. Never let them figure you out. Cross them up. Always keep in an aggressive state of mind.

"One other very important thing: Don't guess what the next ball will be.

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Sam Chapman

from the A's. and as soon as the college season was over, he

stayed to join the club.

"I remember the day he arrived," says Coach Earle Brucker. "He picked us up in Cleveland, and he didn't have a very good

high school and college, Chapman never had played anywhere except at

stop, but Connie Mack took one look at his solid 190 pounds, spread over

feet one inch, and told him he would play center field. This formula, incidentally, was by no means new

with a manager who converted Rube Bristow from an infielder, switched

Collins from shortstop to the outfield to second base and once had

mie Foxx covering third with Jimmie Dykes on first!

It was a wise change to make," says Chapman now, in appraising the shift

converted him from a college pitcher to a major league outfielder.

at the time I was plenty confused, and I had no business even being

where I was, anyway."

A long procession of bad days followed that inauspicious debut in Cleveland, and one day as the trip neared

end, Chapman struck out five times in a game at Yankee Stadium. Mack

looked at Brucker, sadly shook his head and muttered: "The big town's

### The First Course

At last they reached Philadelphia. Here Chapman found a letter waiting for him. It was dated May 18, postmarked Menlo Park, Calif., and at the top of the first sheet was the inscription: Trust R. Cobb.

To Sam's surprise, he read:

Dear Sam: I tried to get you before you left, but I failed to reach you by phone. . . .

I feel responsible, in a way, for your coming with Mr. Mack, as I recommended you to him. This explains my interest

in my wanting to see you; also, what I am going to tell you.

You will be bothered for awhile by

stands and shadows, also sun fields and backgrounds when batting. GET OUTS OF FIELDING PRACTICE WITH

GLASSES, and you will be okay in a short time. You are with the best