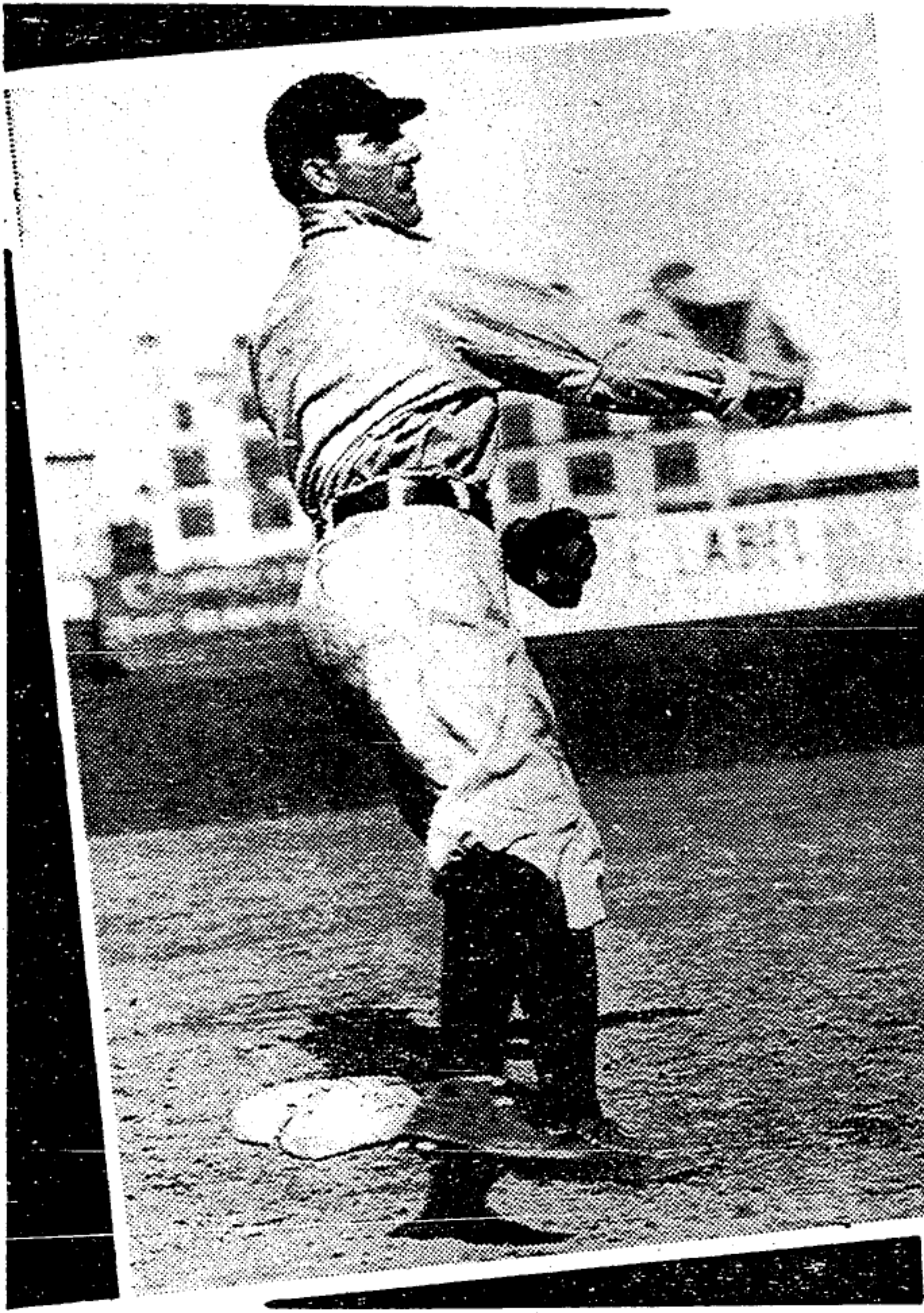


Lajoie Dies at 83; King of Second Basemen

Larruping Larry

As Cleveland Clouter and Keystoner



ONE OF GAME'S MOST graceful keystoners, Nap Lajoie was snapped in action as a Cleveland star.

IN 1912, Cleveland fans presented Lajoie a horseshoe containing silver dollars.

NAP, king of A. L. second basemen in the early years of the century, won three batting crowns.

Most Graceful of Players, Set A. L. Hit Mark of .422

21 Seasons in Majors, Mostly Played at Cleveland; Jumped From National League; Made Hall of Fame

By FREDERICK G. LIEB
DAYTONA BEACH, Fla.

The "Gliding Panther of Second Base," Napoleon (Larry) Lajoie, one of the greatest players of all time, died here on the morning of February 7, in Halifax Hospital. Lajoie, 83, was stricken with pneumonia in January and was believed to have recovered sufficiently to return home when he suffered his final relapse.

During the quarter century that he lived in retirement near here, in Holly Hill, Lajoie studiously avoided the limelight that was his due. The tall octogenarian seldom missed local Little League games, but he refused to be introduced to the public. Humble as always, he preferred to stand alone behind the left field fence, delighting in watching the youngsters play baseball, the game in which he carved an illustrious career.

With the possible exception of Charley Gehringer, the former Mechanical Man of the Detroit Tigers, King Larry, as he was affectionately called, was the most graceful man who ever played baseball.

No other player was in Lajoie's class for making the hard ones look easy. With his usual effortless grace, Lajoie fielded balls on which other infielders made flying, acrobatic stops. He fairly glided over the infield, had a rare knack of being in the right place at the right time, and made his plays without fuss or feathers.

16 Times Over .300

He also was one of the batting geniuses of baseball, hitting over .300 in 16 of his 21 major league seasons, reaching .422 in 1901, the top average in American League history. He won three American League batting crowns, and was the runner-up on a number of other occasions. Though he played on great teams with the old Philly Nationals of the last century and the early Cleveland Americans of the present one, he never was on a championship team until he served as playing-manager of Toronto (International) in 1917.

Lajoie's career was contemporaneous with that of Honus Wagner, and until Ty Cobb blossomed into stardom in 1907, the French Devil—as Clark Griffith called Lajoie—and the Flying Dutchman, were the great stars and No. 1 drawing cards of the rival leagues. Though Lajoie was a year younger, he

Frenchman, Miffed at Phils, 'Signed in Hurry' With A's

PHILADELPHIA, Pa.—A matter of only \$400 influenced Larry Lajoie to jump from the Phillies to the Athletics of the newly-formed American League in 1901.

Lajoie and Ed Delahanty, stars of the Phillies, each had signed for the then league salary limit of \$2,400 in 1900. However, under the table, the Phillies paid Delahanty an extra \$600. Lajoie also demanded more money, but the best he could get was \$200 and he rankled over the difference between his pay and that of Delahanty.

"Because I felt I had been cheated," he once said, "I determined to listen to any reasonable American League offer." When the offer was made by Frank Hough, a sports editor acting as an agent for Connie Mack, Lajoie was "astounded." "Hough offered me \$24,000 for four years," he said. "You can bet that I signed in a hurry."

reached the major leagues a year earlier, with the Phillies in 1896. Wagner joined the Louisville National League club in 1897. Larry wound up his major career with the Athletics in 1916, and Wagner his a year later, in 1917. Though Wagner had five more batting championships than Larry, the Frenchman outdid the Dutchman by ten points in lifetime average, .339 to .329. Lajoie's average would be still higher if he had

In the Twilight



Lajoie as 41-year-old star of Athletics in 1916.

not been beset with managerial worries during a crucial period in his career.

Lajoie was born of French-Canadian ancestry in Woonsocket, R. I., September 5, 1875. He grew into a handsome, black-haired chap; was six feet, one inch tall and as a player weighed 195 pounds. The name is pronounced Lazh-way, though during most of the time when Nap was playing ball, the fans decided that was too foreign, and called him Larry La-joy. He did bring joy to many fans.

From Cabby to Career

As a young man, he drove a horse-drawn cab in Woonsocket. With a high hat and other appropriate livery, the Frenchman waited outside the railroad depot for fares. In his early career, the big league writers dubbed him the "Woonsocket Cabby." However, Larry found time to play ball, won an early reputation as a hitter, and in 1895 he was an outfielder in the Fall River (Mass.) City League. Woonsocket and Fall River were adjoining towns.

In 1896, Larry was driving his hack in Woonsocket, when Charley Marston, who had just acquired the Fall River club in the New England League, came to town and signed the cabby to his first baseball contract, which was written on the back of an envelope. Larry

Statistical Story of Stellar Career

Year.	Club.	League.	G.	AB.	R.	H.	2B.	3B.	HR.	SB.	B.A.
1896	Fall River	N. Eng.	80	380	94	163	34	16	16	—	.429
1896	Philadelphia	Nat.	39	174	37	57	11	10	4	6	.323
1897	Philadelphia	Nat.	126	545	107	198	37	25	10	22	.363
1898	Philadelphia	Nat.	147	610	113	200	40	10	5	33	.328
1899	Philadelphia	Nat.	72	308	70	117	17	11	6	14	.379
1900	Philadel.	(a) Nat.	102	451	95	156	32	12	7	25	.346
1901	Philadelphia	Amer.	131	543	145	229	49	13	13	27	.422
1902	Phila.-Cleve.	Amer.	87	332	81	129	34	5	7	19	.369
1903	Cleveland	Amer.	126	438	90	173	40	11	7	22	.355
1904	Cleveland	Amer.	140	554	92	211	50	14	5	31	.381
1905	Cleveland	Amer.	65	249	29	82	13	2	2	11	.329
1906	Cleveland	Amer.	152	602	88	214	49	7	0	20	.355
1907	Cleveland	Amer.	137	509	53	152	32	6	2	24	.299
1908	Cleveland	Amer.	157	581	77	168	32	6	2	15	.289
1909	Cleveland	Amer.	128	469	56	152	33	7	1	13	.324
1910	Cleveland	Amer.	159	591	92	227	51	7	4	27	.384
1911	Cleveland	Amer.	90	315	36	115	20	1	2	13	.365
1912	Cleveland	Amer.	117	448	66	165	34	4	0	18	.368
1913	Cleveland	Amer.	137	465	66	156	25	2	1	17	.335
1914	Cleveland	Amer.	121	419	37	108	14	2	1	14	.258
1915	Philadel.	(b) Amer.	129	490	40	137	24	5	1	10	.280
1916	Philadelphia	Amer.	113	426	33	105	14	4	2	15	.246
1917	Toronto	Int.	151	581	83	221	39	4	5	4	.380
1918	Indianapolis	A. A.	78	291	39	82	12	2	2	10	.282

Major League Totals 2475 9589 1503 3251 651 164 82 396 339
(a) Jumped to Philadelphia A. L., but Philadelphia N. L. club obtained injunction against his playing for Athletics and he transferred to Cleveland in June, 1902.
(b) Contract assumed by Philadelphia Athletics, January, 1915.
*Led League.

was signed for \$100 a month as a catcher. However, he played largely in the outfield and hit .429 in 80 games up to August. Arthur Irwin then was manager of the Giants; he came up to Fall River to have a look at Nap, but didn't think he was worth the modest figure which Marston placed on Lajoie.

Fall River had another outfielder named Phil Geier, who caught the fancy of the Phillies, then one of the strong clubs of the National League. Paying a visit to Fall River, Billy Nash, the Philadelphia scout, was not particularly interested in Lajoie, but went up to get Geier. Marston finally agreed to throw in the Frenchman as an inducement, and got \$1,500 for the pair. Geier was just a journeyman outfielder, who lasted a few seasons. Lajoie became one of the immortals of baseball.

When Larry joined the Phillies, George Stallings, the manager, put the Woonsocket kid at first base; he hit .328 in 39 games. Billy Shettsline was Philly manager in 1897, and he shifted the Frenchman between first base and the outfield. In his first full year in the league, Lajoie hit .363. It wasn't until 1898 that Shettsline permanently assigned Lajoie to second base, where he soon won the title of "King Larry."

Lajoie hit .379 for the Phillies in 1899 and .346 in 1900, when the American League expanded to the East and Ban Johnson gave the Philadelphia franchise to Connie Mack. In his raids on the National League, Connie's first big haul was the Phillies' great second baseman, Lajoie, and two pitchers, Chick Fraser and Bill Bernard. Lajoie

Little League Honor Guard at Lajoie's Funeral Rites

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla.—Little League players in uniform formed a guard of honor when the casket of Napoleon Lajoie was carried from St. Paul's Catholic Church after a requiem high mass, February 9. Burial was in Cedar Hill Cemetery.

Lajoie was an honorary president of the Little League program here. About 100 friends attended the funeral. Grover Land, former Giants' catcher, was an honorary pallbearer. Floral pieces included a replica of a glove and a bat from Hall of Fame officials at Cooperstown, N. Y.

won the new major's first batting title with its peak average of .422.

After the 1901 season, Mack induced two other Phillie stars, Outfielder Elmer Flick and Pitcher Bill Duggeby, to jump to his team, but on the eve of the 1902 season the Pennsylvania Supreme Court reversed the finding of a lower court, upheld the reserve clause in the Philadelphia National contracts, and ordered Lajoie and the other jumpers back to that team.

However, only Fraser and Duggeby obeyed; Lajoie, Flick and Bernard went to the Cleveland Americans, but so long as the National-American war was on, it was necessary for the trio to forego

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 12, COL. 1)

Lajoie's 3,251 Hits Topped by Only 4 Others

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11)

Cleveland's games with the Athletics in Philadelphia, as the jumping players were liable to arrest once they entered Pennsylvania jurisdiction.

Cleveland took the great Philadelphia hitter and all-round player to its arms in 1902, and the coming of the great Larry, Flick and Bernard brought about a resurgence of baseball interest in the Lake City. So enthusiastic was Cleveland in acquiring the new league's greatest star that the team's nickname was changed from Blues to Naps in honor of Lajoie.

Halted by Injury

Lajoie, with .369, missed the batting championship in 1902, when Ed Delahanty finished on top, but Larry recaptured it in 1903 and 1904. He also had the highest average in 1905, but a broken leg limited his play to 65 games. The entire season was a tough one for King Larry. At the start of the year, he had become playing manager of the Cleveland club, succeeding Bill Armour, and by midseason his team was making a runaway of the race. Then an unprecedented series of injuries, starting with Lajoie's broken leg, wrecked the club and the Naps limped home in fifth place.

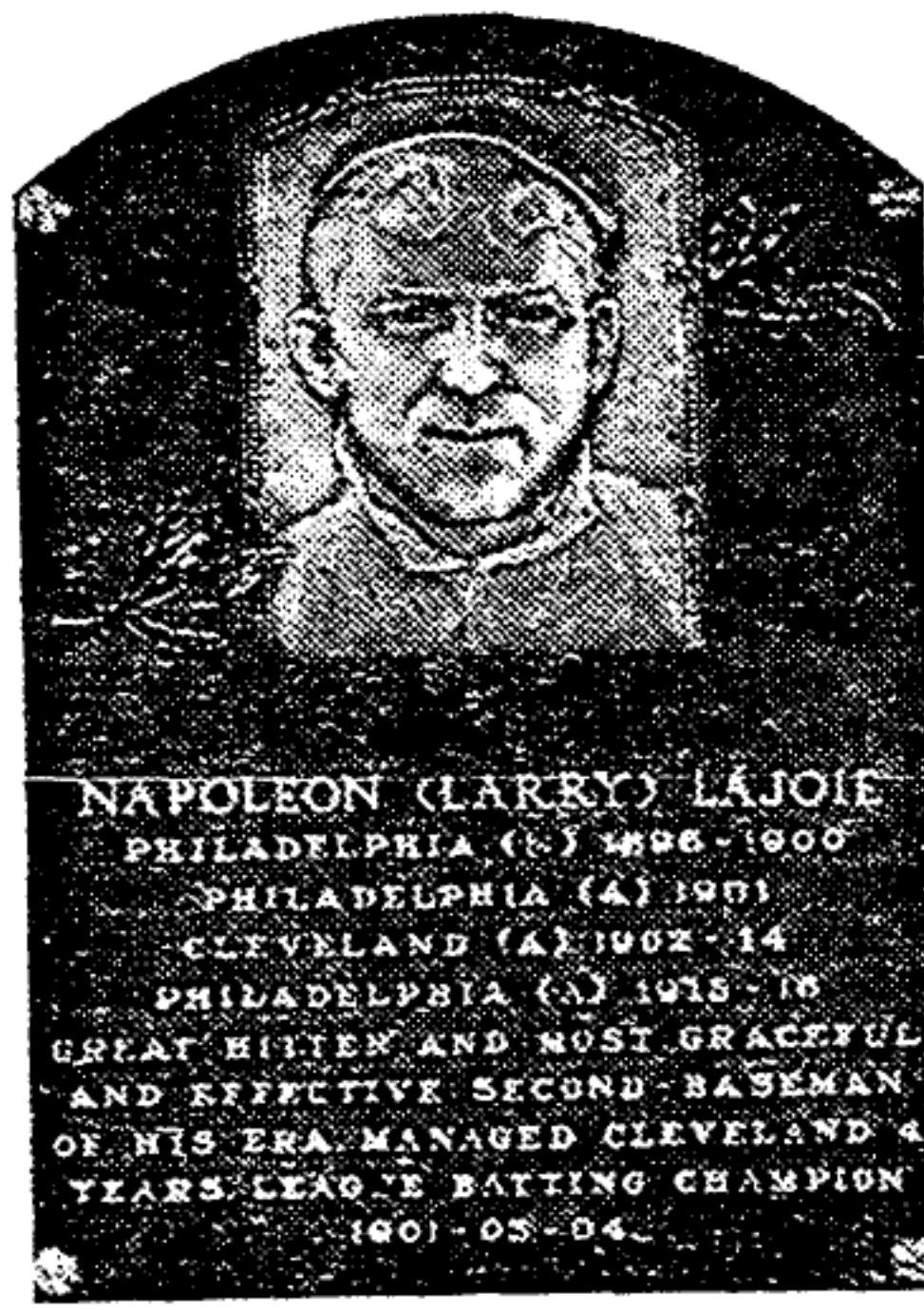
After Lajoie led a fourth-place Cleveland club in 1906 and a third-placer in 1907, his great managerial disappointment came in 1908 when he missed the pennant by half a game. Inability to beat Washington was costly to Lajoie's 1908 Naps, but the club lost a history-making heartbreaker to Bill Dinneen of the Browns on next-to-last day of the season. If Lajoie's team had won its last three games, including a double-header, it could have won the pennant, regardless of what the other two contenders, Detroit and Chicago, did in their remaining games. Dinneen's 3 to 1 victory over Glenn Liebhardt, October 5, 1908, was the unhappiest game in King Larry's career. It eliminated the Naps and put the outcome of the race up to the final day, when Detroit defeated the White Sox. The Tigers nosed out Cleveland by four points for the flag. It was the closest Cleveland club came to a pennant until the 1920 Indians won under Tris Speaker. In the middle of the 1909 season, Lajoie turned over the managerial reins to Jim McGuire.

Dropped Manager's Role

Managerial burdens had made themselves felt in Lajoie's batting average. In 1907, the King slipped under .300 for the first time, hitting .299, and in the tough race of 1908, he fell to .289. However, as soon as he gave up his manager job in 1909, his average sprouted again and he finished with .324. By 1910, he was old King Larry once more, hitting .384. In that year, the Chalmers Automobile Co. offered a car to the players winning the major league batting championships. Lajoie and Cobb ran neck and neck up to the last day of the American League season, when Lajoie closed with eight hits, six of them safe bunts, in as many times at bat in the final double-header in St. Louis.

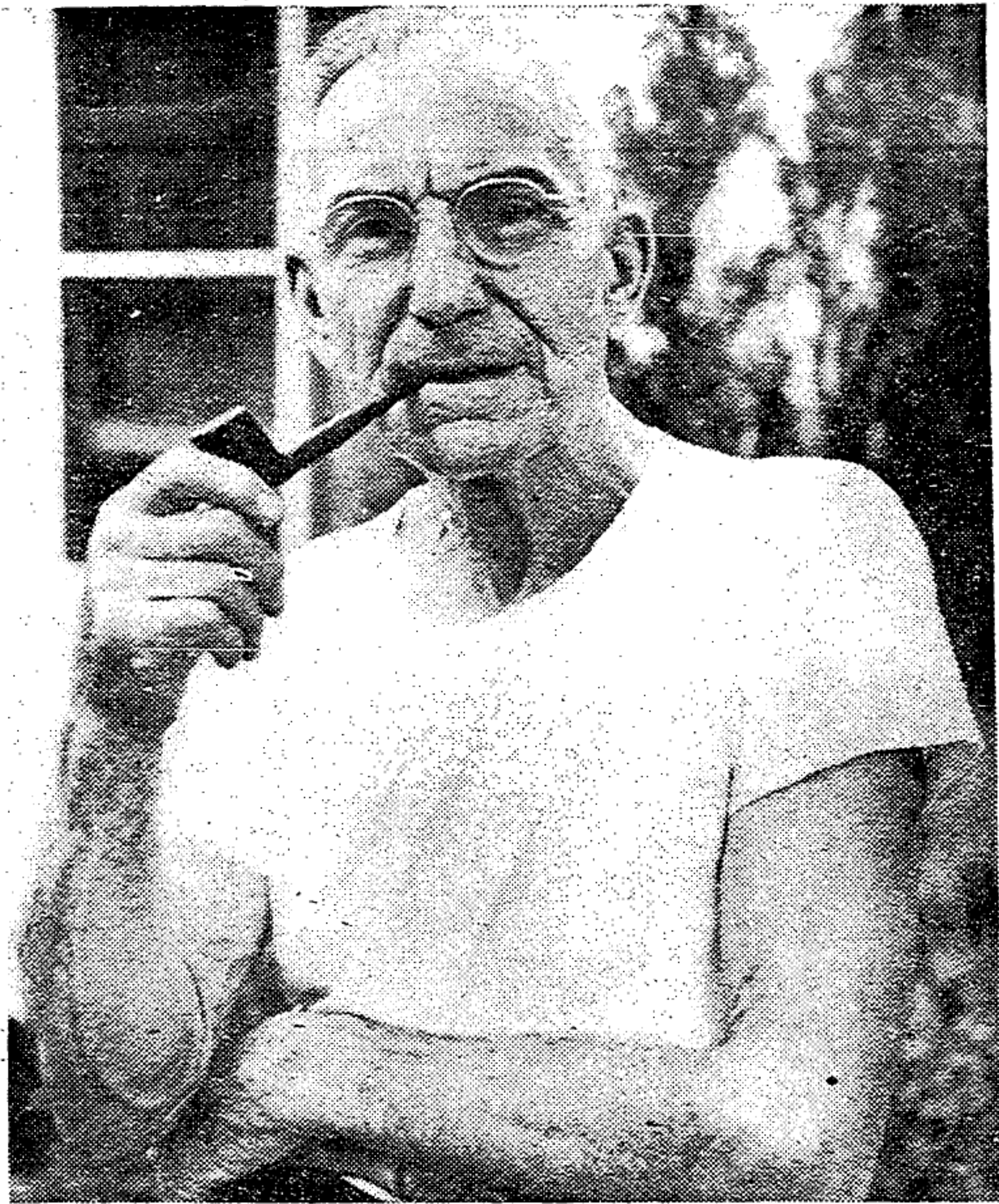
Manager O'Connor of the Browns had Johnny Corriden, then a rookie third baseman, now a scout for the Los An-

Feats of Champion



LAJOIE'S PLAQUE listing his accomplishments in Cooperstown Hall of Fame.

Resting in Sunset Glow of Life



CALMLY PUFFING on his pipe, Naps Lajoie enjoyed the last years of his life in Holly Hill, Fla., far from Big Time scene.

geles Dodgers, play far back on the outfield grass for Lajoie. It resulted in an inquiry by Ban Johnson, the league president, and O'Connor later was dismissed.

Despite Lajoie's terrific finish, he lost the title to Cobb by a fraction of a point. The automobile company gave both Ty and Nap a car.

After hitting .335 for the 1913 Indians, Larry dropped to .258 in 1914, and it looked like the beginning of the end. Connie Mack at that time started the break-up of his famous club, and sold Eddie Collins to the White Sox for \$50,000. So he procured his 1901 second baseman, Lajoie, from the Indians to plug the gap, and Larry's last two seasons were with the Athletics. He hit .280 in 1915 and .246 in 1916. In his last American League game, he helped Joe Bush win a no-hit game with a triple.

The Frenchman finished his major league career with 3,251 hits, a total exceeded by only four other players in history—Cobb, Tris Speaker, Wagner and Eddie Collins.

While Lajoie no longer could bat .300 in the majors, he won one more batting title after going to the Toronto Maple Leafs as playing manager in 1917. Lajoie, by this time 42, led the International League in hitting with a tidy average of .380 and played in 151 of his team's 156 games.

His hitting and all-round play were vital factors in Toronto winning the pennant over Providence by eight points, the only time Larry was on a champion.

Balked at Brooklyn

The Toronto club then sold Lajoie's contract to Brooklyn for \$3,000. Larry balked at the transaction. He finally was permitted to sign with Indianapolis as playing manager. The league suspended because of the war in midseason and Lajoie announced his definite retirement from baseball in December, 1918.

He took a part-time job selling truck tires and interested himself in golf. Though he never became the kind of golfer that he was a ball player, Lajoie played in the low 80s, and hit a terrific ball. He wore glasses, but had that same easy grace on the golf course.

While Lajoie never made big money, compared with the pay of present-day stars, he invested his baseball earnings wisely and lived comfortably in the years when he no longer could "ride" a baseball.

He had a winter home at Lake Worth, Fla., and a summer home at Mentor-on-the-Lake, O.

He did not attend many ball games after closing his eventful career. He was among the second batch of players elected to the Hall of Fame, and was among the immortals who were present when the National Baseball Museum was dedicated at Cooperstown, N. Y., during baseball's centennial celebration in 1939.

Lajoie's wife, Myrtle, died at Daytona Beach, November 3, 1954.

The Sporting News Saved Lajoie Mark of .422

PHILADELPHIA, Pa.

Although Napoleon Lajoie now is credited with the highest batting average in the history of the American League, .422 in 1901, the Hall of Fame second baseman for years was the victim of a typographical error that resulted in the reduction of his mark to .405. THE SPORTING NEWS, recognizing the statistical research of a Philadelphia fan, John C. Tattersall, restored Lajoie's official average to .422 in 1954.

The Reach Guide covering the 1901 season listed Lajoie with 543 times at bat and 220 hits for .422. The Spalding Guide for the same year did not give his at-bats and hits, but also published the average as .422. For the next 15 years, all record books carried the lofty mark for Lajoie, but in the winter of 1916, an inquisitive statistician rechecked the arithmetic and found that 220 hits in 543 times at bat figured out as .405 instead of .422.

On the assumption that there had been a mistake in division, rather than an error in printing in the original guide, the statistician arbitrarily cut Lajoie's average to .405 in listing the yearly batting leaders in the 1917 record books. This resulted in Ty Cobb taking over as the A. L. record-holder on his 1911 mark of .420, a figure subsequently tied by George Sisler in 1922.

Larry Did Not Protest

A self-effacing man, Lajoie did not complain when the change was made. A present-day player would bellow if he were deprived of a single base-hit, but Lajoie quietly accepted what he later called "a mixup in my batting average."

It remained that way until 1953 when THE SPORTING NEWS carried a story on Lajoie and mentioned the switch in the figures. Tattersall's curiosity was aroused. The official records for 1901 had been destroyed, but Tattersall checked the daily box scores published in the Boston Record and the Philadelphia Inquirer, Public Ledger and Press. He emerged triumphantly with proof that Lajoie had indeed collected 229 hits in the 1901 season and that his .422 average was correct.

THE SPORTING NEWS, which had started the ball rolling, confirmed Tattersall's figures, finding that in its issue of October 26, 1901, Lajoie had been credited with 229 hits in the final A. L. averages. As corroborating evidence, the Chicago Tribune of October 21, 1901, also had listed Lajoie for 229 hits. Accordingly, in the Official Baseball Guide for 1954, THE SPORTING NEWS took the lead in restoring the .422 average to the Hall of Famer.

Only one modern-day player, a National leaguer, has exceeded Lajoie's mark. Rogers Hornsby of the Cardinals accomplished the feat when he batted .424 in 1924.

Lajoie's Bunt Hits in Duel With Cobb Touched Off Furor

Browns' Pilot Fired After Larry Laid Ball Down for Six Safeties on Last Day of Season in 1910

By OSCAR KAHAN

ST. LOUIS, Mo.

Napoleon (Larry) Lajoie, who died at Daytona Beach, Fla., February 7, figured in the unforgettable "bunting scandal" on the last day of the 1910 season, when he collected eight hits in eight official trips in a double-header with the Browns in the Frenchman's battle with Ty Cobb for the American League's batting championship.

THE SPORTING NEWS of October 13, 1910, carried this headline over the story:

SOMETHING ROTTEN
Lajoie's Batting Last Sunday Under Suspicion

Investigation Urged of Browns' Pitching and Fielding

The Chalmers Automobile Co. had offered cars to the batting leaders of the two major leagues. Sherry Magee of the Phillies won easily in the National League but, in the A. L., Cobb and Lajoie were wrapped in a nip-and-tuck race.

Lajoie, affable and easy-going, was well-liked, and it was known that many players, even a number of Cobb's teammates on the Tigers, were pulling for the Cleveland second baseman to win the title and the automobile. Detroit ended the season in Chicago, while Cleveland played in St. Louis.

Cobb collected four hits in seven trips in the first two days of the Tigers' series with the White Sox, October 6-7, and then did not play on October 8. Lajoie had only one hit in four times at bat against the Browns that day.

Ty Thought He Had Title All Wrapped Up

Apparently feeling he had won the championship, Cobb also did not play on October 9, the last day of the season. In St. Louis, the Cleveland team, then called the Naps in Lajoie's honor, was scheduled for a double-header with the Browns.

Jack O'Connor, former catcher, was the manager of the Browns, owned by Robert Lee Hedges. Harry Howell, former pitcher, was a scout with the club. John (Red) Corriden, a rookie from Omaha, was stationed at third base for the Browns.

At O'Connor's instructions, Corriden played deep, practically on the outfield grass, whenever Lajoie came to bat in the twin-bill. Reportedly, O'Connor told the rookie, "He'll tear your head off with line drives."

Lajoie hit a triple and infield single, but on six other trips beat out bunts down the third base line. Although not a particularly fast runner and slowed down even more after 15 seasons in the majors, Lajoie was too smart a player not to take advantage of the fact that Corriden was back on the infield.

THE SPORTING NEWS pulled no punches in describing the situation in its October 13, 1910, issue. It said: "An exceeding posthumous odor prevails hereabouts as a leftover of the series with Cleveland, the particular feature of which was the number of hits secured by Lajoie."

'Grave Suspicions' Concerning Larry's Hits

The story added that Larry's eight hits were "a pleasing performance, if obtained honestly, but the 'if' stands out prominently. This St. Louis thing gives rise to the gravest suspicions entertained for many a season."

There was an uproar among Cobb fans all over the country. Frank J. Navin, president of the Tigers, charged that Ty had been the victim of "a raw deal." Unofficial batting averages compiled by various newspapers showed that Lajoie had edged Cobb for the title by one to three points. Only THE SPORTING NEWS differed. It reported that "an alleged discrepancy had been discovered which, if so, would make the final figures read as follows: Cobb .3845, Lajoie .38411."

Ban Johnson, president of the American League, ordered an investigation of the circumstances surrounding Lajoie's safe bunts and summoned O'Connor, Howell, Corriden and other players. The inquiry disclosed that the official scorer at St. Louis had received an anonymous note offering him a suit of clothes if he would give Lajoie the benefit of the doubt on any close plays.

In addition to his eight hits in eight official trips, Lajoie batted a ninth time in the double-header and was credited with a sacrifice on a bunt which Corriden fumbled for an error. Jack Graney, who was on third base, scored on the play. Johnson's investigation brought out that Howell had visited the press box and had attempted to influence the scorer to give Lajoie a ninth hit.

O'Connor, Howell Released; Corriden Absolved

Johnson found no evidence of dishonesty, but obviously acting under orders, President Hedges of the Browns released O'Connor and Howell. Corriden was absolved of any complicity in the affair, since as a rookie player with the club, he had merely followed his manager's instructions on where to play Lajoie. However, he was sent back to the minors in 1911. He later returned to the majors with the Tigers and the Cubs and now is a scout for the Dodgers.

Hedges said, "I have not found the slightest evidence of crookedness. Yet because there has been so much public talk and so much criticism in the newspapers, I have decided to dispense with the services of O'Connor as manager or player and Howell as scout or otherwise."

"I positively will not permit anything to occur at my park, even though error of judgment alone, that would allow the finger of suspicion to be pointed at anyone connected with the Browns in any capacity."

When the official American League batting averages were announced, they showed that THE SPORTING NEWS was right in naming Cobb as the winner. Despite Lajoie's bunting splurge, Cobb won the championship after all with a figure of .3848 to .3841 for Lajoie.

During the earlier controversy, when it appeared that Lajoie had won the title, a drive was started to buy an automobile for Cobb, too. The Hamilton-Brown Shoe Co. of St. Louis started the campaign with an offer of \$250. However, the Chalmers company came up with a happy solution. It awarded cars to both Cobb and Lajoie.

O'Connor, who had a contract with the Browns for 1911, sued the club and collected \$5,000 in salary. He came back to the game as manager of the St. Louis Federal League team in 1913. Howell became an umpire in the minors.