

Sport Psychology

BY J. B. M. CLARK

THE workings of the mind in the realm of sport sometimes bring about curious results, and a wrong psychological attitude is often half the battle. If an individual player gets imbued with the notion that he can always beat a certain other player, the idea will go a long way towards helping him do it. It is the same thing with teams. A right frame of mind is essential.

Sometimes the fact that "ignorance is bliss" saves the situation. I remember seeing a suburban cricket team in Scotland playing a match against a scratch eleven from one of the big Glasgow clubs. The visiting team was understood to be a sort of nondescript and third-rate gathering, and on this understanding the local batsmen made quite a good showing. Unknown to the home players, however, the visitors had brought along the crack bowler of the city club, an English professional, and perhaps the best bowler in Scotland at that time. So long as the local men were in ignorance of this man's identity all went well. They played his bowling quite confidently and he met with no particular success. But presently the news leaked out that this was the great so-and-so. Almost immediately a collapse ensued, and presently the wickets were going down like ninepins.

The "hoodoo" or "jinx" is another form of the same thing, and most students of sport know how frequently players are upset by trifles. As a class American ball players are possibly more susceptible to "jinxes" than any other body of professional players in the world. Although the jinx is what the late Christy Mathewson called "the child of superstition," it does not seem to be a question of education, for, according to Matty, college men fall the hardest for jinxes. A jinx is something that brings bad luck to a player, and all ball players have lucky and unlucky omens. In his interesting book *Pitching in a Pinch* Matty devotes a whole chapter to the jinx, which, he says, can "make a bad pitcher out of a good one and a blind batter out of a three hundred hitter."

LUCK, Matty says, is a combination of confidence and getting the breaks. Ball players get no breaks without confidence in themselves, and lucky omens inspire this confidence while unlucky signs take it away. "Red" Ames, once of the Giants, although a great pitcher, was almost invariably unlucky and began to be spoken of in the newspapers as the "hoodoo" pitcher and the "man who could not win." Then one day

when in Boston there came to him through the post a necktie and a four-leaf clover, presents from an actress. The four-leaf clover had to be worn on both uniform and street clothes, and the necktie, a very vivid one, worn with street clothes and hidden in the uniform. Ames followed instructions faithfully and started to win. He did not lose a game the whole trip, and kept on wearing the necktie till it was worn to a frazzle.

THE different things that affect different ball players are wonderful and without end. Some will never sleep in "lower 13 berth;" others will sleep in nothing else. "Give me a stateroom for luck," says John McGraw. Matty himself confesses that he never would warm up with the third baseman between innings or while the catcher was getting on his mask. He would, he said, rather freeze to death than warm up in this way. Another man never likes to hear anyone hum on the bench, while still another believes in a favorite seat. Cross-eyed people are anathema to nearly all of them.

The bats must be laid out in a neat row before the bench. If they happen to get crossed there is sure to be trouble. The Philadelphia Athletics, however, throw the bats wildly into the air to change the luck and let them lie around in confusion. A hunchback is regarded by ball players as the best luck in the world. If a man can just touch the hump before going to the plate he is sure to get a hit. The Phillies for several seasons carried a hunchback boy

with them on all their trips, and voted him a half share of the prize money after one world's series. They claimed he won two world's pennants for them.

To pass a load of empty barrels on the way to the ball ground is a sure sign of base hits, and Mathewson relates an amusing tale of how John McGraw broke up a batting slump of the Giants by such means. The batting of the team had fallen to pieces. One day a player came into the clubhouse all smiles. He had just seen a load of empty barrels, he said, and was going to make hits. He made them, getting four out of a possible five. The next day three or four more players saw the barrels and came in smiling. And they, too, went in and made hits, and the first win for a week was registered. One day two of the players in comparing notes about the barrels discovered that they were drawn by the same team of horses — one sorrel and one white. "Sure they were," said McGraw. "I hired that load of empty barrels by the week to drive around and meet you fellows on the way to the park, and you don't think I can afford to have them change horses every day, do you?"

WITHOUT confidence the best player is nothing. With it he can work miracles. It may seem strange that it should connect itself with empty barrels or hunchbacks, but the reason is something very old, something lying deep within the emotional nature. A wise manager does not laugh at it; he tries to turn it to account.

Hell's Shootin'

EDITED BY CHARLES WOOD

A veteran's narrative of a thrilling but unrecorded battle during the Boxer Rebellion, when American Marines faced the greatest numerical odds in their history

"HOLD fire to three hundred yards!" The order passed down the line from man to man.

I snapped back the sight on my Lee-Enfield, for three hundred yards was battle range, open sight, and wormed a little deeper into the shallow shell each man for himself had scraped out of the ancient, time-hardened soil of China.

The steel rails of the Tongku-Tientsin Railroad, together with the slight elevation of its roadbed, offered an additional though meagre protection. I rested my rifle on the rail, and in the lull, which for some strange reason preceded the attack, peered over it at the landscape of which we were an almost invisible part.

We were in open formation, five yards apart, with our front extending fully a quarter of a mile; however, only a glint of steel here and there along the line was all that could be seen of 131 men of the United States Marine Corps.

But what I could see of the enemy was more than enough. At the break

of dawn the whole panorama, from left to right, had come alive with the color and movement of men. Only in our rear, where stretched the broad marshes of the Pei-Ho River still flooded by the spring rains, did the landscape retain its natural drab monotony.

THROUGHOUT the night a circle of fires had gleamed upon the distant hills, and from a small walled village about half a mile to our left we had been constantly threatened by attack. Now, in the light of day, over five thousand fanatics, vowed to exterminate the "Foreign devils," were hemming us in.

They were members of the "I Ho Ch'uan" Society, the "Fists of the Patriotic Union," or, as they were usually called, "Boxers."

What the Boxers lacked in the way of arms and equipment, they made up in valor, inspired by religious and mystical patriotism, and the belief that they were invulnerable to the bullets of foreign devils. For the most part they were armed with antiquated firearms (among them a