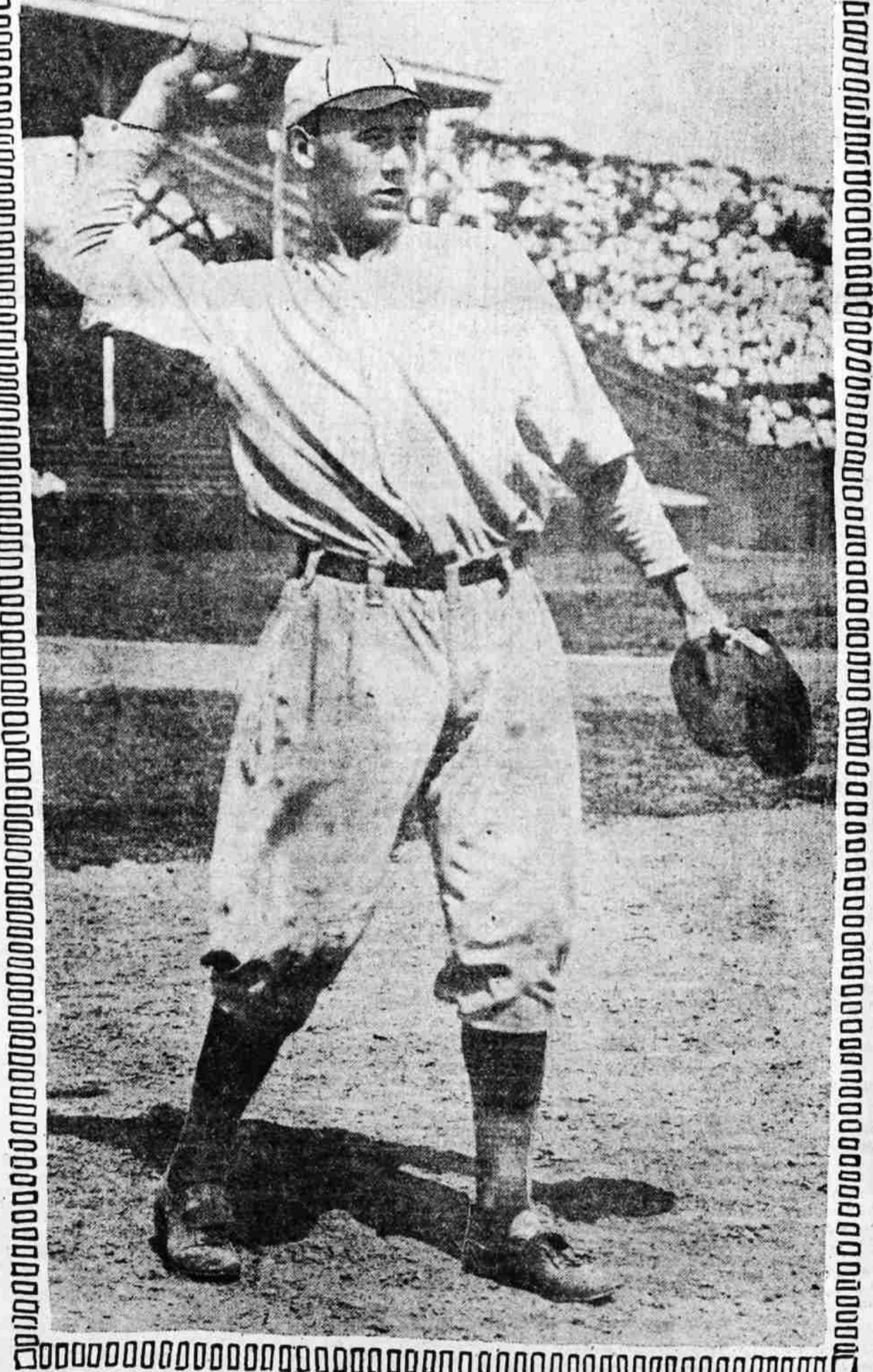


Magazine Feature Section

TWO OF GREATEST CATCHERS IN BASEBALL DEVELOPED THIS YEAR



RAY SCHALK



FRANK SNYDER

It often has been said that there never was a world's championship team without a star catcher.

Those who said this were, and are, of the opinion that a catcher contributes much to the defensive strength of a ball club—as much as any other player on the team.

When Bowerman, McGuire, Sockalexis, Criger and other back-stopping masters disappeared from the major leagues and were relegated to the minors or to their farms, etc.; the cognoscenti said there never would be more catchers like them. Which was a foolish thing to say for the whole history of athletics shows that each succeeding generation becomes more proficient in every line.

Less than five years from the time of the disappearance of the four catchers mentioned above there have appeared in the major leagues two young gentlemen who are said by competent critics to be as capable catchers as ever have been seen in baseball and one of them is said to be the greatest catcher of all-time. The two catchers are Ray Schalk of the Chicago White Sox, and Frank Snyder of the St. Louis Cardinals.

METHODS DIFFER.

In the American league they say Schalk is the greatest catcher that ever lived, while in the National league they swear by Snyder. Of the two, Schalk is probably a trifle the better catcher, as he is more versatile, yet it is a close race.

It is peculiar that these two men who share the premiership in catching do almost everything in a diametrical opposed manner. To begin with, Snyder is a tall and rangy chap, an upstanding two-fisted fellow who will fight at the drop of the hat and who could well take care of himself under any circumstances.

Schalk, on the other hand, is a mite of a fellow. In fact, he did not come to the majors as soon as he might have because of his stature. His boyish face and form made experienced scouts say that he never could break through the barrier of recruitment in the majors.

Yet the diminutive catcher has made his size a point in his favor. He throws nearer the ground than a taller receiver, he is twice as active in fielding bunts out in front of the plate as the ordinary back-stop and he can run bases far in advance of what is generally expected from a catcher.

A BEAU IDEAL.

Schalk has made himself the beau ideal of American league catchers, at least, if not of all the catchers of the country. While he weighs 135 pounds only, he is so tremendously active around the plate that it never has been of any particular difficulty for him to touch the fleetest and roughest of base runners out at the pan.

With shin-guards and protectors so large they appear to almost smother him, Schalk coolly awaits the sliding base runner and he rides

in on top of them much as Bobby Wallace used to do down at second base when he was considered the most adept at touching a base runner of any man in the business.

Schalk is not a slugging hitter, but he is the type of hitter that always is dangerous for he hits any kind of pitching and he is not what is known as a straight-away hitter—which is to say he hits in a "groove" as the ball players say. While he favors left field with his hits as do most, good right handed slickers, Schalk will dump and beat out as many bunts during a season as the next one or on the hit-and-run he will turn and whistle a single into right field with all the finesse of Eddie Foster, the best hit-and-run man in America.

The White Sox receiver is an excellent thrower and using a snap throw from a sitting position, somewhat like Jimmy Archer, he will worry any base runner to get a base upon him providing the pitcher does his part in holding the man on.

GREAT ON FOULS.

At catching fouls, another important detail of back-stopping, Schalk is excellent. He has the speed to get to foul balls that other catchers could not reach and once the ball hits his mitt it does not bound out.

Considering his all around ability there probably isn't nor never was as great a catcher as Ray Schalk. Now that he has had several years' experience in the majors he will do as much as the next one to win the pennant for Comiskey in 1916 if the

White Sox win it and it looks now as though they are to be the favorites when the bell rings.

Frank Snyder of the St. Louis Cardinals is said to be the most remarkable thrower who ever tossed out a speeding base runner. Snyder's throw to second almost has the speed of a Johnsonian fast ball and yet it is as light as a feather and easy to handle. Snyder does not throw from a crouching position. He rises to his full height and with a tremendous down-sweep of his arm sails the ball on a low line to the bag.

It has been said of this wonderful thrower that he "throws 'em out even after they have started to slide." This means that Snyder's pitcher may let the base runner get such a lead toward second that the runner is almost there before Snyder begins to throw and yet he nails them.

In addition to his throwing and back-stopping ability Snyder is also a great hitter. He pushed Daubert and Doyle out of the National league lead for awhile toward the end of the summer and for a time it looked as though he might lead the National league in hitting, but a late-season slump precluded this.

ALL KINDS OF PITCHING.

Snyder, too, hits all kinds of pitching and he hits it viciously. Lacking the speed of Schalk to beat out bunts Snyder trusts to tearing the ball through the infield. In a double-header at New York in August he made nine singles, all of

them low and on a line to left field.

Snyder is sure of those foul balls which he can reach, but he lacks the pedal ability of Schalk in going after the "hump-backed liners."

Snyder is a better thrower than Schalk because he is a much stronger thrower though a no smarter one. He is a better straight-away hitter than Schalk, but he is, after all, a straight-away hitter as contrasted with Schalk's versatile sticking and in the long run the batter who "crosses" the opposition with a bunt or some other tactical strategy is of more value in the pinch than the straight-away gentleman.

Schalk is a far better base runner than Snyder because of his better speed. He also is a quicker thinking catcher and can divine and break up an opponent's attack better than Snyder. For this reason the palm must be awarded the Chicago boy in spite of the mechanical greatness of the St. Louis catcher.

HIS IMPORTANCE.

A catcher is an important individual on any club. He inspires the pitcher, steadies him and pulls him through many a bad hole. He is the only man whom all the other players are facing and consequently it devolves upon him to render most of

the defensive signals and there are many in these days of breaking up attack.

Roger Bresnahan was among the greatest of all catchers because of his wonderful mechanical ability combined with his daring initiative and aggressiveness. Even now when an old player in point of service and years Bresnahan demonstrated that fiery zeal that once made him a terror throughout the league by leading the base runners of the National league for almost half the season—and he a manager and playing in only about one-half of the games at that.