

# THE FIGHTING PETTICOAT

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THE first strategic move of Miss Suzanne Godfrey Arnold as new owner and president of the Graylegs Ball Club may not have aided materially the cause of woman's rights, but it landed her photograph in every metropolitan daily. It also made the players, the butt of many a sporting page joke and furnished the paragraphers with ample material for the time being—and promise of much more.

Miss Arnold was a fan. Being a fan, she understood just enough about the game to be an enthusiast. Had she known more, she might not have been a fan.

Old Silver King Barrett, the veteran magnate and uncle of the young woman, must have had an inkling of these fan-like symptoms, for in his will he left a personal note to his niece aside from the material bequests.

"In the event you should desire to operate this ball club yourself," he wrote, "I instruct you to retain Jack Martin as manager for at least two years, and that John Gilligan, commonly known as 'Red,' be kept on the pay roll permanently. His good humored pranks will draw much money to the gate; besides, his mother was the lifelong friend of your aunt and myself."

The publication of old Silver King's will, as expected, brought numerous offers of purchase, prospective magnates springing up all over the country. They figured that the franchise could be bought for about \$200,000, despite the fact that it had earned half that much in a single season. No woman, they reasoned, could or would attempt to run a ball club, and would rather have the cash. But that is where Miss Arnold fooled them. The Graylegs, she announced, were not on the market.

"Yes, I'm going to run this ball club," she said to Jack Martin, "and I am going to retain you as manager."

Jack tried to hide his disappointment from the pretty young woman. He had nursed notions of becoming a magnate himself. Before the flowers had withered on Silver King's grave a party of baseball financiers had offered to give Jack a block of stock in a company they were to organize, provided that he could persuade the lone heir to sell. It looked dubious.

"I hope we make money, of course," Miss Arnold said to the manager after she had smothered his delicately put suggestions about the sale of the club; "but one object I shall have in operating this ball club will be to prove some of my pet theories about the game. I can sell it at any time."

Martin looked at the handsomely gowned young woman inquiringly.

"Do you remember the time Landis, the catcher of the Seagulls, failed to touch our player—Evans, I believe it was—at the plate, and then chased him to the bench, touched him, and the umpire called him

MISS ARNOLD'S uncle certainly had the right hunch when he specified that "Red" Gilligan be retained as a star attraction for the Graylegs.

out?" she asked, warming up to a discussion of her theories.

"You bet," Jack replied. "I was put off the field for kicking when the umpire claimed there was no rule preventing the catcher from following up a runner as far as he liked so long as the runner had not touched the plate."

"That's exactly what I'm getting at," said Miss Arnold, smiling. "I intend to show that all the game is not covered by rules. Won't that be interesting? You see, I'm a regular fan, Mr. Martin."

"Yes, I see," replied Jack. But he didn't. All he saw was trouble—spelled with a capital T.

It came sooner than he expected.

For several days "Red" Gilligan had not been able to get a hit. The newspapers offered the opinion that he was slipping back; that he "had hit the old toboggan"; that his punch was gone. At frequent intervals the fans clamored for a substitute hitter.

"Every pitcher in the league knows his weakness," one scribe wrote, "and is pitching to it with deadly regularity."

Miss Arnold, reading that in her home the next day, was impressed. Rapidly developing in her mind a plan to outwit the oracles of the game, she went to the park early for a conference with the manager. On the way out she stopped at a theatrical wigmaker's shop and purchased a false mustache, a Van Dyke beard and a wig.

"Mr. Martin," said the young woman magnate to the manager, "it's about time Gilligan took a brace."

"Quite true," admitted Martin. "But you must remember he has been playing ball a long time. All of us slide in time."

"The papers say the pitchers know his weakness—and are playing on it."

"Yes, they always get a fellow's goat sooner or later," said Martin.

Miss Arnold smiled enigmatically. "Supposing the pitchers didn't recognize Gilligan when he stepped to the plate—what then?" she asked.

Martin scratched his head, perplexed.

"You got me," he finally conceded. "I don't quite get your meaning. How are you going to keep anyone from knowing him. 'Red' is the best known ball player in the country."

"Call him over here and I'll explain," said Miss Arnold.

Martin beckoned to Gilligan, who came to the box, smiling broadly and gallantly doffing his cap.

"Mr. Gilligan," began Miss Arnold. "I have a theory which, if it works out, will enable you to hit the ball, today at least."

"Red's" smile broadened into a grin.

"Theoretical hits don't count for much on the score card, miss," he said. "But I ain't passing up any chances to come back. Tell me the scheme."

"They say the pitchers all know your weakness."

"I guess that's right," agreed Gilligan.

"Now, Mr. Gilligan, if

they didn't know you, naturally they wouldn't know your weakness, would they?" she argued logically, at the same time fumbling in her lap for a parcel.

"Red" Gilligan's face wore a puzzled look.

Miss Arnold unwrapped the false hair and whiskers, dangling them in "Red's" face. In her eyes there was a challenge.

"Are you game?" she inquired.

Manager Martin's jaw dropped as Gilligan burst into a fit of laughter.

"But don't you know that ball players are not supposed to wear whiskers?" asked Martin.

"You can't show me anything in the rules that prohibits a player from wearing whiskers if he wants to," argued Miss Arnold. "This is my scheme. Won't you please let me work it?"

"They'll put him off the field," Martin informed her.

"Yes, and if they do I'll protest the game! Will you do it?" she added, turning to Gilligan.

"Bet your life I will," he answered, covering his face with a broad hand to hide a smile. "We'll fool 'em!"

The game was about to begin as Gilligan took the false whiskers and ran under the stand. A born funmaker, "Red" was aching for the chance to "start something."

The first Graylegs batter got a base on balls and the next advanced him with a sacrifice. Then a ripple of laughter started near the Graylegs' bench, and in a moment had spread all through the stands. By the time Gilligan neared the plate it was one vast howl.

"Who is the doc?" yelled a fan. Others picked it up.

"How are you, sawbones?" chirped a boy in the front row.

"Where'd you get old Hlacs?" another demanded of Manager Martin. "He needs a shave!"

But not a smile broke the placid surface of Gilligan's face as he strode to the plate and deliberately tapped the end of his bat on the rubber. Over on the Graylegs' bench the players were tossing up their bats and raising a general commotion.

"Take those curtains off!" demanded the umpire of Gilligan. "What do you think this is, a burlesque show?"

"They're mine, ain't they?" argued the batter. "Whoever told you I couldn't grow 'em?"

From the box Miss Arnold waved her hand encouragingly, indicating that Gilligan should stand his ground.

"Take them off or I'll put you off the field," reiterated the umpire.

"There's no rule forcing a ball player to shave," was Gilligan's answer, as he faced the pitcher.

Before the argument could proceed further the pitcher, hearing no call of "time," turned loose the ball. It came over the plate, squarely in Gilligan's groove, and he swung viciously, driving the ball into deep center for two

bases. The first runner scored and Gilligan reached second after a daring slide, in which half the Van Dyke beard disappeared in the dust.

"Get back to your base!" the umpire ordered the man who had scored. "I hadn't called 'play.'"

"No, and you hadn't ordered play suspended," announced Manager Martin, running to the plate. "You didn't call 'time' and you know it!"

"Get back to the bench!" snapped the official. "You're out of the game!" he yelled to Gilligan. "Get another batter up here!"

The Graylegs did not win that game—lost by one run—but the crowd had a laugh that more than made up for the defeat so far as they were concerned.

"It is perfectly all right," Miss Arnold, not the least perturbed, said to Martin when the last man was out and the crowd had started home. "We'll protest the game. If we hadn't lost that run they wouldn't have beaten us."

The players, in the meantime, still laughing, had run to the clubhouse, where they found Gilligan trying to patch up the torn whiskers.

"Don't throw 'em away," one of them suggested; "hang 'em up for luck."

The whiskers were suspended from a nail near the clubhouse mirror, a monument to the strategy of a woman magnate, and became such a familiar sight that in a month or so they were unnoticed. Just the same, Miss Arnold filed her protest, and despite the soundness of her technical argument as to the laxity of the rules, lost.

"While there isn't a rule specifically covering the wearing of whiskers," admitted the president of the league, "we've got to be governed by custom. We could not permit a thing that would reflect upon the dignity of the sport."

"All right," Miss Arnold acquiesced, "but if you don't enlarge the rules and make them plainer, I'll have some other protests before the season is over," she added defiantly.

The newspaper sport writers and paragraphers reveled in the incident and its far-reaching possibilities for fun. Jack Martin probably was the only man in the league who did not appreciate the joke. All around the circuit the fans addressed him as "whiskers," and out of town papers always referred to him as the petticoat manager.

The increase of Jack's grouch furnished an excellent opportunity for the proposed stock company to further its plans. The promoters appealed to Martin frequently.

"They are making a fool out of you," one of the baseball financiers suggested at a night conference, "and if you don't get this woman to sell you'll be made a boob of and lose your grip on the game."

"She won't sell, and that's all there is to it," said Jack. "I'm just as sore as you are, but what's a fellow to do when he's under contract? I can't quit."



"Mr. President," she said, "your note would have been unnecessary had you read the afternoon papers."

