

# How I Lost the World's Series

The Lack of Condition, Resulting Largely from Overwork, Which Made it Impossible for Me to Realize My Ambition

By GROVER CLEVELAND ALEXANDER



The most recent photograph of Grover Cleveland Alexander

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"They were backing me to win the series, and as we didn't win, I suppose I lost," said Alexander in explanation of the historic defeat of the Philly Club. It was certainly a frank assumption of responsibility, for Alexander really pitched great ball. But he was not as good as expected, and in the following sketch he explains why.

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**T**HE World's Series was a disappointment to me, a disappointment no less than I had looked forward for five years to the time when I might be lucky enough to take part in its all important games. It was a disappointment not so much for the result which went against us and seemingly by a wide margin (for in baseball one team must always lose, since both cannot be alike victors). But I am speaking now not of the showing of the boys who did very well indeed and who contested every inch of the way. I am speaking of my own individual showing, which certainly was not what I hoped it might be.

I have never yet given alibis and I am not going to begin now. But at this time, when the series is already history, and when no one will receive any advantage or disadvantage from what I am going to say, I will give a little ex-

planation of how, in my own mind, the series went against me and prevented me from making the record I had hoped to make.

It was on Labor Day that we played an important series with Brooklyn. That club was right at our heels and Moran and the players felt, with good reason, that a great deal depended upon that one series. As it afterwards developed they were wrong and the series, although it went against us most disastrously, cut no share in the final result. But that is a different story.

When we went into those games we confidently expected to take the series. I believe no one on the team even considered that we might not win a single contest; but that is exactly what happened. I was chosen to pitch the morning game. Moran depended a great deal upon winning that game. If I won he would have one game on ice and could

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### ALEXANDER EXPLAINS

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pause to take breath on the other two. At best he expected to take at least one of those remaining games, which would give him the series. At worst, if he lost both, he would have won one out of three, and Brooklyn would have cut down our lead but a single game on their own grounds.

I was matched with Cheney, but lately acquired from the Cubs. They scored a run off me in the first inning. After that the game settled down into one of those contests where neither side will budge an inch. Cheney, while wild, as is natural with spit ball pitchers, was

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### ALEXANDER EXPLAINS

I have a bad habit of getting a blister on my middle finger. I had a blister on that finger Labor Day and I unconsciously tried to humor it.

In doing so, I no doubt brought the muscles of my shoulder into play in a peculiar manner, so that in pitching a fast ball I strained my shoulder.

I did not tell Moran or any of the boys that I had wrenched my shoulder for a long time afterwards. I knew they had enough to worry about and did not want them to think that I was liable to fail them in the home stretch.

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invincible. We made not a single hit off his delivery. In the seventh, as I remember it, however, he strained himself and was obliged to leave the box. It was then that our boys fell on the opposition and drove in three runs.

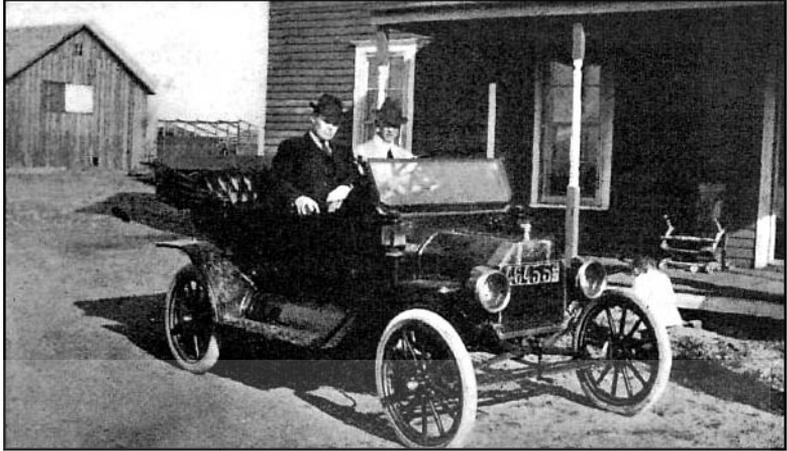
We began the eighth with a two-run lead. Moran felt that the game was won. I hoped it was myself when Daubert went out on the first ball pitched. But then something happened. I have never been able to understand it, but in some way I strained my shoulder and the muscles in my back. I have the bad habit of getting a blister on my middle finger from throwing the ball. I remember I had a blister on that finger Labor Day and it bothered me considerably. The ballplayer doesn't pay much attention to minor injuries, but try as he will a twirler can hardly get the same results from his pitching hand when his fingers are decidedly sore that he can when they are in perfect trim. I know that I unconsciously tried to humor that blistered finger and in doing so no doubt brought the muscles of my shoulder into play in an unusual manner, so that in pitching a fast ball to the next man up I strained my shoulder. I immediately felt it and I couldn't seem to control the ball so well. When I put forth all my strength and tried to get the ball over the plate it would go outside. When I cut down a little on the stuff I was serving up the Brooklyn batters would hit me.

I remember that I overheard a loud voiced rooter in the stand when that inning began. The Brooklyn crowd seemed discouraged when we piled up those three runs. This particular rooter yelled out: "Never mind, boys. Go at Alexander; he's human like the rest of us."

He was certainly right. I felt human enough when they started to pound me around the lot. And I felt extremely human when at the end of that inning they had scored five runs off my delivery and snatched away a game that I had considered as good as won.

It was a bitter blow to Moran, and when the third defeat of the series ended in the accident to Killifer things looked all the more gloomy for Philadelphia. It bothered me considerably, too. Killifer had been my catcher and battery mates learn to know each other's peculiarities

and work together effectively. I thought Killifer's loss would be a more serious blow than it was, however, for Burns caught a fine game throughout the rest of the season, and during the series. And he deserves a world of credit for the great showing he made and the way he arose to the difficult occasion when it presented itself.



Alexander and his partner, Mr. Rogers, in the auto he recently gave his father. In the background is the Alexander home in St. Paul, Nebraska

I did not tell Moran, or any of the boys, that I had wrenched my shoulder during that Labor Day game for a long time after. I knew they had enough to worry about and did not want them to think that I was likely to fail them in the home stretch just when every game counted the most. But I did not feel right at any time the rest of the season. And although I pitched a fortunate one-hit game against the Braves, which clinched the pennant, as the world's series drew near I began to fret a little about my condition.

It has never been my disposition to worry about things, but if there was one time in my whole career when I wanted to be in my best form it was during those games. I would willingly have given my share of the receipts to have been able to pitch my team mates to a championship of the world, which is my answer to the oft-repeated suggestion that the ballplayer thinks only of the money there is in the game.

The papers, unconsciously no doubt, added to the burdens of my position. Many pitchers can work in great form when nothing in particular is at stake, who crumple badly in a pinch. I do not believe I have ever faltered when I was asked to carry a heavy load, but it is human nature to feel responsibilities and to be weighted down by them to some extent. The papers spoke of Christy

Mathewson and what he did in the famous series of 1905. They said he won the series single-handed, and some of my friends were good enough to predict equal success for me.

It is a fine thing to have friends who think well of your work, but I may say the responsibility of pitching in a world's series is enough in itself without the added responsibility of having almost impossible expectations centered on your work.

They said I was nervous during the first game, and I guess I was. They hit me pretty hard, but that didn't worry me particularly. There was a time when I was younger when I used to burn up all my stuff on every ball pitched, but the pitcher grows wiser as he grows older. The fact that Boston was hitting me didn't worry me much so long as I was able to keep the hits well scattered. What worried me most was the fact that our boys didn't seem to be able to hit Shore as much as the Red Sox were hitting me. At that, they hit me when the hits counted in but a single inning, and scored but one run. However, I must admit in fairness that Shore had very hard luck and that the breaks went badly against him.

The pitcher knows when he is not right, and it is a very disconcerting experience to find yourself, at the critical moment you have been thinking about for months, facing a pennant-winning

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team with the world's championship at stake, where every eye is watching you, and to know in your own mind that you are not in your best form, not in a position to realize what is expected of you. That thought came to me with overwhelming force in the first contest, and I had to fight against it all through the series. Perhaps I allowed too much for it. As I look back upon the series now I can criticise myself at times because I was too careful, too exact, too conscientious of myself. When I have been at

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### ALEXANDER EXPLAINS

It is fine to have friends who think well of your work, but there is enough responsibility in pitching in a world's series without having impossible expectations centered on your work.

They say I was nervous during the first game, and I guess I was.

It is a very disconcerting experience to find yourself at the critical moment, when every eye is on you, and know that you are not in your best form.

A pitcher in a world's series has none of the assurance he may have during the season. In the short series he has to do whatever he is going to do now or not at all. If a slip occurs, it is too late to change it.

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my best I have been able to get the ball to break as I want it to, instinctively, with little effort. And I could get my fast ball to sweep across the plate just where I told it to go. The pitcher can always work best when he has to use the least thought and care. The more he tries to supplement tired muscles or aching joints by mental effort he begins to lose the edge he may have had on the opposition. I tried to foresee every contingency, to guard against every accident, because I was not right. Had I been in such form as I have had at other times I would have given those things scarcely a second thought. I would have pitched the best I could and trusted to the ability of my own fielders and the difficulty of the opposing batter to hit what I was offering him. Any pitcher will understand my meaning, though perhaps I do not explain it so that it is very intelligible to the man in the stands.

Again, the pitcher in a world's series game has none of the assurance that he may have during the season. In the short series he has to do whatever he is going to do now or not at all. If a slip occurs it is too late to change it. He has one or two, or at the most three, chances to deliver, and if he fails it is too late. During the season if he loses a game or two successive games it doesn't matter so much. He feels that he will have time later on to redeem himself and comforts himself with the thought that the best of them can't win all the time.

My second game, and the game that was destined to be my last, I had hoped I might feel in perfect shape. I did pitch better than I had done in my first meeting, but unfortunately, from my standpoint, Leonard was pitching even better. I have been criticised, and will no doubt be criticised for a long time, in sending a strike over to Lewis in that ninth inning. The critics said, I remember, that I should have known better than to take a chance on Lewis, but should have passed him and taken a chance on Gardner. Now it is easy enough to say what ought to have been done after the affair is finished, but at the time I did what seemed to me like the reasonable thing to do. Lewis, to be sure, had done well so far in the series, but that was precisely a reason



Alexander playing golf in California while on an all-star tour

for assuming that he would not continue to do equally well for the balance. Then, too, Lewis was not a player who was a stranger to me, as a good many of them seemed to think. I had met him in no less than twelve or fourteen games in a previous all-star tour, and during all those contests he had made exactly two hits off my delivery. I had faced Lewis in the box and seen him strike out four times in a single game. If there was a player in the world that I should have felt confident in facing by past experience, that man was Lewis. Furthermore, Gardner, in my mind, was a dangerous man in a pinch. Of the two I preferred to take a chance on Lewis, under the circumstances. And I lost. Had I passed Lewis and had Gardner hit me safely, as I was afraid he might do, no doubt I would have been blamed for not taking a chance on Lewis. But the ballplayer becomes accustomed very early in his career to the second guess which the press writers always have on the player. It is an unbeatable system.

I have no desire to take anything away from the reputation of Lewis. He played a wonderful game. But while I had great respect for Lewis as a player I did not know until after the series, any more than did anyone else, that he would

be the bright star of the whole event. Every series has had its star, and generally the star was some player from whom the best was not expected. One year it was Rohe, another Rossman, another Baker. Now it is Lewis. But I repeat I didn't know that he was going to be the hero of the series when I pitched to him in the ninth inning of that game at Boston. Besides, even if I had known, I don't know that it would have made any difference to me. Even stars don't always play consistently. Luderus was the star of our team, and yet he struck out three times in that same game.

A great deal has been written about the final game of the series. I was slated to pitch and in fact intended to pitch up till the last moment. But when I started to warm up I knew at once that my arm was not right, and told Moran so. He figured that since I was not right it would be poor policy to pitch me when all the chances were against my making good. In addition he figured that since the game was played on the home grounds, and the boys all fairly on their toes and desperate to win, he ought to pull out the game on general principles.

Then the chances were that I would be in shape to pitch on the following day,

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### ALEXANDER EXPLAINS

In the second game the critics said I should have known better than to take a chance on Lewis. Lewis was not a player who was a stranger to me. I had met him in no less than twelve or fourteen games during an all-star tour and he had made exactly two hits off me. I had faced Lewis in the box and seen him strike out four times.

If there was a player in the world that I should have felt confident in facing on past experiences, that man was Lewis.

Every series has its star. I didn't know Lewis was to be the star of 1915.

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and he hoped if so that I might win and thus give him a great chance at the series and the championship.

And it looked, up till the eighth, and even till the ninth inning, that he would make good on his predictions. And then came Lewis again with a home-run drive into the bleachers, and Hooper, who gave the final knockout wallop with his second home run of the game, which won the contest in the ninth.

How the game would have gone had I pitched I know no more than anyone else. I had one experience in working when I was not right at Brooklyn on Labor Day, and they scored five runs off me in a single inning. I might have got through the contest with better fortune

than Mayer and Rixey enjoyed, but it is only speculation where my guess is as good as, and no better than, the next man's. We were defeated by a great club, but every game was close, so close that the least little change in the schedule of events would have turned the tide in our favor. Such is baseball, however—a game of uncertainties. And we none of us have any license to complain. But I shall always think of the world's series of 1915 as a peculiar personal disappointment in that I was unable, through lack of condition, to live up to the expectations of my friends.

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How the final game would have gone had I pitched I know no more than does anyone else. I might have got through the contest with better fortune than Mayer or Rixey, but it is only speculation where my opinion is no better than the next man's.

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