



Mac Ginley
Catches
Mice
by
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IT ain't always the slugger that wins the games; and it ain't always the greatest pitcher that twirls his team to victory; and it ain't always the star infielder who shoots a double-play in the critical part of the game who deserves the praise that the papers insist on giving.

I mean that it is something more than that. It takes brains and strategy to win from the men who are signed up to the big leagues to-day. That's the reason why MacGinley manages the Mammoths now. He ain't always been a manager you know. Time was when Mac played third and was the best in the business. And it ain't so long ago, either—only three years.

Do you want to know how he got to pilot the greatest team in the National? I was playing with him then, too, so I know a few things that ain't public property.

We was going down to the training camp that year when first I saw the start of it. I was just breaking in then, and I had my eyes and ears wide open.

Old Hampden was one of them expense-saving bugs, and we was training with the Birds. Two teams on the same lot, so's we'd split on the rent.

Jim Donoghy was the manager of the Birds then. And a more uppish man you never laid eyes to. Big Jim could play ball, and he knew it. So did his men, for Jim never tired of telling them all about it.

Well, Caplan, who was our manager then, had a pretty good bunch of rookies down, and it looked like the Birds and us would be fighting it out for the pennant that year. And it was Caplan's last year in the big tent, too, and he was anxious to win the flag. He had saved his money, and he wanted to invest in a business while he yet had some feelings left. We all knew it—we was all sorry, for Caplan was a great fellow—and we made up our minds that if it was possible to win the pennant we would do it.

But there was no one had the faintest idea then that MacGinley, our star third-baseman, had set his heart on being our next manager. Not that we wouldn't have pulled strong for him, but just that we never thought of the little pepper-box as a manager. That just shows the kind of brains Mac has got.

I broke in that trip, mainly because old Jenkins was slipping fast, and because my

arm was young, and my eye bright. The Mammoths needed a short-stop, and I fitted in to perfection. With Mac alongside of me, and coaching me for all he was worth, I couldn't help it.

Then, after Caplan whipped us into some sort of shape, we played the usual three games with the Birds. We had done it for the past three years, and there was a great deal of good-natured rivalry among us.

And it was then that I saw the start of MacGinley's career as a manager.

Big Jim Donoghy, besides being so uppish that his neck was stiff, took a fiendish delight in pulling stuff on the vets. And principally did he like to operate on MacGinley.

It was during the first game of this pre-season series that he made Mac the laughing stock of the whole camp.

We went into the sixth inning at a tie, and Mac first up, bunted for an infield single.

As he crossed the bag, and teetered around Donoghy's station, he kept up a constant chatter designed to rattle the rookie pitcher in the box.

"Come on—come on," he yelled, "throw it over to this big stiff, he'll smear it all up. Throw it low, so's he'll have to bend his neck!"

Donoghy sneered.

"Lay off that stuff, MacGinley," he bit off.

Mac grinned tantalizingly. "Listen to him, boys. Thinks he's managing two teams. Why, you big stiff, you can't hardly manage one."

We gave Donoghy the laugh at that one, and even some of his own players cracked their faces a bit. Then, as Mac kept it up, Donoghy walks to his pitcher, and chinned. Mac howled.

And then Donoghy pulled it. With Mac

taking a big lead off the bag, Donoghy signaled and Jones, the rookie pitcher, whirled about, throwing the ball. Mac looked once. Then as he saw Donoghy leap up into the air, he started for second. It looked like a sure wild throw, all right. Then there was a yell.

Donoghy had made the leap intentionally—but the throw was perfect! With an easy motion he heaved it to Stone at second, and Mac was tagged standing up. He stood and for once he lost his usual poise.

At first Donoghy was howling like a schoolboy.

"Look at him," he bawled, "look at him. He says he don't need a manager! Haha—he needs a nurse! I guess I put it over on you then, Mac. Just because I jumped ain't no sign that the ball is a wild pitch. Oh, Mac, who needs the manager?"

The rest of the gang took up the call; they deviled poor Mac like nobody ever was bawled out. Mac's face became white, and I could see his eyes snap. We lost that game three to two, and it so happened that if Mac hadn't been caught by Donoghy's trick of making believe that the ball was a wild pitch, we would have won.

That night, as we crawled into bed, I tried to console with Mac.

"Don't let it worry you, Mac," I soothed. "That big stiff just pulled it that's all—forget it! Go get him!"

And Mac smiled for once that day. I guess he must have laughed because a bushier like me, just breaking in, had crust enough to tell him that.

But if we thought that Mac was going to bear any hard feelings toward Donoghy, we was wrong. The next day, more than half of us nearly had a duck fit, when at morning practice, Mac hung around Donoghy, and played to his vanity like he was the smallest of things living in the

camp.

And more than half of us were of the opinion that Mac was beginning to get yellow! Think of sucking around a guy like Donoghy just because he pulled the laugh on you! It was like in school-days, when the bully made the gang laugh at you, and you try to toady to him so's he won't do it no more! Remember?

The next day it rained hard, and for two following days it poured. Then it was that Mac and Donoghy hung together—or rather, Mac shadowed Donoghy like he was a detective on a bank robber's trail. We couldn't understand it. Even though I didn't say nothing, and pretended to Mac that I still thought he was the greatest ever, I got to feeling underneath that he was growing yellow in his old days.

Then on the third day, when it cleared up, but was too wet to think of playing, Donoghy and Mac came into the lobby dressed for a fishing trip on the river.

"I know where there's a great lot of pike, Jim," purred Mac to the big fellow, "and we'll get 'em."

"Huh," returned Jim, in that patronizing manner of his, "I guess you don't know so much. Don't forget that a high ball don't mean a stolen base!"

It wasn't what he said, as the way he said it that made my blood boil. And as we watched Mac's face, darned if he didn't smile a sickly sort of smile, and say:

"I guess you're right, Jim. Come on!"

And I imagine over half of us right then felt our opinion of Johnny MacGinley sink fifty points!

All during the remaining week of the camp it was the same. We managed to win one of the three games, and it was Mac who did it with a single, but that didn't soothe us much. What we had to stand from Big Jim Donoghy was more than enough, and it was all on account of

MacGinley. If he only had had backbone enough, he could have called the big stiff, and let us have peace.

They went fishing twice more that week, and then we started to break camp.

I guess most of us was darn glad to get away from Donoghy and his laughing hyenas because they was getting our goats. Even Caplan was beginning to see that murder was growing in our hearts.

We left at ten o'clock on Sunday night, and who should come down to the train but Donoghy. You can guess what he was there for. The way he roasted Mac was pitiful, and the little third-baseman took it all, with a sickly grin. I was glad when the thick smoke drifted back, and shut him out of sight. It looked like a bad season for us, for if ever there was a guy to egg the bleachers on to pester a fellow, it was Big Jim Donoghy! And I could see what was coming! And to think that Mac, ordinarily as scrappy as a game-cock, took all of it, without fighting back! That's what we on the Mammoths couldn't understand!

I guess you remember how the first part of the season went. We was lucky not to play the Birds until the last series with our eastern rivals, or else half of us rookies would have broken down under the criticism. It didn't take Big Jim long to tell the whole story to the newspaper men, and they laughed long and loud as they wrote about it to their public. Before you could say "safe," all the fans in the United States knew about how Big Jim Donoghy put it over on Johnny MacGinley.

No matter where we played, the bleachers yelled long and loud at Mac. It got so that they went a little further, and started to bawling us out for playing on the same team with a "bone-head!"

And then we played the Birds on their home grounds. I'll never forget them games. From the time that old Klein yelled

“play” until the last man was put out in the fourth game, the bleachers kept reminding Mac how Big Jim—their Big Jim—had put it over on him.

We lost all four of those games. You can't doubt it. They trimmed us so proper that Caplan got three more white hairs. And it was Mac who kicked away two of the games. Once he got caught on the hidden ball trick by Jim himself, and the next game he dropped a little pop-up in the ninth. It was sickening. There was no doubt of it, in our minds, Mac was losing his nerve. When a fellow loses his nerve in baseball, he might as well pack up his little grip, and move off, for if there is any game in the world where pure grit is a necessary adjunct to being a great player, baseball is it.

Well, we played worse and worse, and along in July we were a bad fifth, with the Birds leading by about ten full games. It looked mighty like Caplan was going to retire with a bad taste in his mouth, and not a man on the team but wasn't sorry for him. If only Mac hadn't made that foolish move, we would have been out there tearing the league wide open, and one of the whitest managers would retire at the end of the season with a happy smile. But it looked bad for us, and the boys were getting peevish.

It seemed that every series that we played with the Birds was a nightmare. Even when we opened with them at the Polo Grounds, they managed to break even with us, and we should have won all four games. So, at the beginning of August we was eight full games behind them, and only two months left to make our great leap toward first place.

All this time Mac was digging alone, playing his usual steady game, just as long as we didn't play the Birds.

Then, we developed some of the team

play that made us justly famous, and tore off seven straight wins. It sent us along like an express train, and at the end of August we was snapping at the heels of the Birds, only three full games behind, and going strong.

Say, were those boys happy? You could see Caplan beginning to get his smile back, and everyone of us was plugging like a good fellow.

“Keep it up, boys,” old Whitey Caplan would say to us, as we ran out of our dug-out for each game. “Just this year, you know!” And we would go out strong in our confidence, and satisfied that what we were doing was for the whitest fellow in the game. And strange to say, Mac was beginning to regain some of the feeling of the boys.

Then, one night, while we was making a long jump to Cincinnati, we met up with the Birds, who was making the jump to St. Louis. They was going on the same train, and what they didn't say to poor Mac was a caution. He took it all with that silly grin on his lined features, but never made a come-back.

Big Jim and him got into a game of poker with a couple of other of the boys, and the manager of the Birds rubbed it into Mac like he was a dunce. Whatever hand Mac held he played wrong, and I guess he must have lost about fifteen bucks before Caplan sounded taps, and we ducked to our berths.

Owing to the fact that two ball teams was traveling on the same train, there wasn't much room, and I found myself chucked into a lower with Mac. You can guess my feelings. For the past four months, I had done nothing but get bawled out because I played alongside of him, and to say that I felt like snapping at him, would be but telling the truth.

I turned my back to him, as he got

undressed, and closed my eyes tight, so that he would think I was asleep. But, squinting at him, I was surprised to see that he was actually smiling, and the smile was one of happiness! It was the first time he had done it for three months at least. As he crawled in, he whispered soft:

“Happy!”

The boys had nicknamed me that.

I grunted, making believe that I was falling asleep.

He laid his hand on my shoulder and I turned around.

“Happy,” he smiled down at me “Listen, lad, I got it! You have been the only fellow who has not laid into me since that big bum pulled something on me! But Happy, *I got it!* Lad, shake me hand. I tried long to discover it—but I got it now! Play your head off for the rest of the season, lad, and watch old Mac. Try to cheer the fellows up, but don’t say anything about me! For, lad, just as sure as God made little apples, we are going to win that pennant!”

And with a little sigh of contentment, he slapped the light into the wall, and laid down. And I could feel some of the confidence that he had put into his speech. What he had got I couldn’t say, but he had chosen me as a father confessor, and I felt somehow that I had been unduly honored that night. I fell to sleep wondering what it was that Mac had got, but the mystery did not solve itself.

The next day we opened at Cincy, and the way we tore through those Red Legs was sad to see. It didn’t take the boys a minute to see that the man we had on third was the Mac of old—crashing, roaring Mac, the greatest third-baseman of them all!

Twice more we rolled through our opponents for a series. The Cubs and Pirates seemed to fall like reeds before a cyclone when we struck them. Like an

arrow we headed to first place, and when we started back to the Polo Grounds for the last series with the Birds, we were but half a game behind them, and going so fast that we sounded like a rumbling, crashing express train!

Was we happy? Was Caplan smiling? Was we planning how we was going to spend our world series money? I ask you. Why we was so full of pep, that I thought somebody would have had sense enough to bring boxes so’s they could sweep it up, and sell what we spilled!

Right out there, roaring his head off, playing with a dash and spirit that thrilled even the cold-heartedest of spectators, was MacGinley—Johnny Mac, the cleverest third-baseman in the business! Could you blame us for counting our world series money?

We opened that last series before a gang that would have made a peach of an army for defense if they was all soldiers. The way they yelled put the Niagara Falls to shame. When we came out for our practise, they raised the roof of the grandstand with their noise.

But when we started the first game, we played without MacGinley! He never showed up! Caplan raved, and tore his hair. But Mac never came. Comiskey, a recruit, filled in, and he did as good as he could, which wasn’t much. That afternoon, when the final score came in, it was seen that the Mammoths was on the wrong end by five to zero.

The result was depressing to say the least. It wasn’t the losing so much, as it was the way Big Jim Donoghy rubbed it into us. He had us raving before the fourth inning was over. We was ready to fight. And there was not a man on the team who couldn’t have skinned MacGinley alive, and hung the skin on the top flag-pole of the Polo Grounds.

A game and a half they was ahead of us, and if we wanted to win the pennant, we had to take the remaining games! Could you imagine anything worse?

That night Mac came into our room, with a great smile on his shrewd face. He had a package in his hand.

“Lad, I told you we was going to win the pennant, didn’t I?”

“Where was you to-day?” I snarled, smarting from the plaguing I had received from Big Jim Donoghy. “Are you quittin’?”

The instant I said it, I was sorry. There was a flash in the blue eyes, and Mac stiffened.

“I’ll forgive you, lad,” he said quietly. “I guess it looked like it. But you’ll see; tomorrow you’ll see!”

He laid the package on the table, looked at it a while, glanced at me, then tore the paper off. It was a mouse-trap!

“For the love of Mike!” I gasped, “what the hell is the matter with you? Are you going crazy?”

He smiled and shook his head.

“I seen mice in this room last night,” he retorted, “and I want to catch a couple of them.”

I turned over with a snort and closed my eyes. I could hear Mac moving about placing his trap, and whistling. Then I fell asleep.

The next morning he was up before me, and I couldn’t see the mouse-trap around. We was out to take a little drill—for Caplan never gave up hope. There was a possibility of us winning those remaining three games, and he was game to the core.

In the afternoon, there was a bigger crowd than ever out. They panned us unmercifully.

We gritted our teeth, and waited for the gong to sound. Just before it rang, Mac came from the clubhouse. The bleachers

booed and hissed loudly. He carried a little package, and set it in the corner of the bench.

Well, that game was a hummer. Straight into the seventh we went, with no score. Then, in the eighth, Mac laid down one of his bunts, and beat the throw by a head first slide. When he rose, he limped a bit, and called time. I assisted him across the diamond, and to the bench. He pretended to take off his shoe, and slipped the little package into his shirt.

Then he limped back, and took his place on first. I could see determination written in his eyes. I was coaching.

Big Jim Donoghy started to ride him. He called him everything on the calendar, and some things that weren’t. But Mac only smiled. He took a little lead. Donoghy yelled at him.

Then Mac edged off, bending over. Like a flash Donoghy yelled to his pitcher.

Mac bent forward still further. His hand went to his shirt, and came out. The throw was low, just as Donoghy called and knew it would come, so’s he could tag Mac as he slid back.

Then, along the ground scampered two little mice. They hurtled toward the big first-baseman manager as he bent forward and over.

The ball came fast. There was a yell of anguish. A big body went into the air, and the ball hurried past, going to the wall.

Around the diamond streaked a figure as if the furies were after him. Past second he went, and to third. In the coacher’s box Caplan urged Mac to spin for the plate. Murray in right had retrieved the ball. He was the best thrower in the league.

His arm went back. Mac was going like the wind. We yelled like Indians. It was the big chance, the break of the game.

Mac hit the dirt hard. The ump waved his hand down in a long sweep. The

bleachers rose in a body, and roared. We had scored.

Mac picked himself up. There was a hard look on his face. Straight to the coacher's box at first he went, with the fanatics throwing hats and canes into the air.

Standing on first Big Jim Donoghy had a wild look in his eye.

Mac took his station without a word. The mice had disappeared, frightened at the noise, into the stands.

"You big bum," shouted Mac to the big manager. "Play ball! What are you waiting for? Get in the game! Come on, umps!"

Big Jim Donoghy was boiling over. He walked over to Mac, threatening the little figure.

"You—you—" A string of curses fell on the air.

And then he crumpled up, as Mac replied.

"Afraid of mice, eh, Jim?" he asked sweetly. "Come on, get in the game!"

You know the rest. Six times we scored in that memorable inning. And when we ran to the clubhouse that night we were jubilant. The next games were worse. There was no holding us. We waded through the Birds like they were canvas-back ducks well-done.

And Big Jim was surely finished. Mac haunted the coacher's box. He kept up a string of talk that would have done credit to a vaudeville actor.

That's the story. Brains and strategy did it. Do you know why Mac didn't say nothing, but hung around Big Jim Donoghy? To find out just what he found out. He is a bull-dog, is Mac—and that's why he's our manager now! Think of a big guy like Donoghy being afraid of mice! Well, we all got some vulnerable spot, and that was his. But, it took a brainy fellow like MacGinley to find it out! Even the elephant ain't got no love for a mouse, and Donoghy is the nearest thing to a human elephant I ever saw!