

fantastic

JULY

1957

Volume 6

Number 6

REG. U. S. PAT. OFF.

ZIFF-DAVIS PUBLISHING COMPANY
William B. Ziff (1898-1953) Founder
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New York 17, New York

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Anything can happen at Yonkers Stadium; you've been there of course, so you know. Old Dacey is a pretty clever manager, and of course you know that too. But were you there the day Dacey rang in a new pitcher? A "hairy country boy" who could pitch with both arms and both feet. Well, that was—

THE DAY BASEBALL DIED

By JIM COOPER



REMEMBER, you historians, when you write your treatises on the death of baseball, that Stanislaus Dacey would never admit that Jim Pan-Zee was anything but human.

You'll never get Dacey to admit, either, that Edgar Pack was anything other than, "A good pitcher. Best man I ever saw on the mound."

This is important in your studies of why baseball died.

It is equally important that you know the story of Arthur J. Thaukool, for the death of baseball was, in the main,

Thaukool's own responsibility.

Baseball, you must know, was almost human. It was emotional. It existed of itself alone. It pulsated. It lived.

But what actually made it almost human was its heart. The heart of baseball was the baseball fan and Arthur J. Thaukool was the typical fan who woke in the morning thinking baseball, worked with it as if it were a wife and dreamed of it.

Thaukool *was* baseball. When he lost his faith, as the records of the major league disbandment hearings will reveal, baseball died.

Said Thaukool indignantly: "I never want to see the game again. I never want to hear of it. I want to purge my mind of baseball, of my storehouse of statistics and remembrances. I've had it." With those words, baseball's heart stopped beating and so—as the board of team owners decided—baseball was done.

Historians, this is being written because the disbandment hearings left out some of the details. You may profit by reading further—

As Stanislaus Dacey and Lefty Smith approached the 18th tee of the Pasadena Golf and Country Club, Smith fell to the ground like someone had heaved a beanball at him.

Someone had. It came from the direction of the hedgerow shutting off the 18th tee from the 17th green.

Turning as he fell, loyal Lefty Smith saw with immense relief that the duster had missed old Dacey.

"Great heavens, Chief. Did you see the curve on that ball?" Lefty cried.

Gazing after the rolling missile, Dacey said calmly, "That was no ball. That was a hedge apple. But it had one hell of a curve on it, I'll admit."

Dacey, his legs bent like

parentheses, his head lowered, his hands clutching his driver, moved like a pugnacious landing craft toward the hedgerow. Lefty Smith watched from his vantage point on the ground.

"Lookout Chief, here it comes again," he called in warning.

Dacey heard too late. The hedge apple sailed straight for his bent snoot. Suddenly, no further than two bat lengths away, the apple screwed downward, leveled off and burned past the old man through the heart of the strike zone.

Wiley old Dacey grinned and sprinted toward the hedge. He pulled up at the sound of a warning voice. "If you don't drop that club, he'll heave another one and you're so close you may get hit. His curve doesn't break that quick."

Dacey stopped and peered at the thick hedge. Out stepped a man in a pith helmet, khaki shorts and khaki shirt opened at the neck. He held a length of rope in his hands with a loop at one end.

He grinned at old Dacey. "I'm trying to rope him out of the hedge, the scoundrel. He thinks that's a gun in your hands. He's been gun shy ever since Africa and that's why

he chunks those hedge apples at you."

"He's got a daisy of a curve," Dacey grunted.

"Yeah," the hunter said. "It exasperates him. Can't hit a thing. It's even trickier with his left paw."

"Paw?"

"Yeah. He's a chimp." The man extended a hand for Dacey to shake. "I'm Brad Hunter. Big game importer for zoos. I'm training the chimp for San Diego."

Squinting upward, Dacey made out a hairy figure. It swung from the highest fork, clutching it with hands and feet—or four paws. The chimp chattered insults upon them.

"That's my ornery chimp," Hunter said.

Old Dacey, manager of the New York Yonkers world champion baseball team, turned to Lefty Smith, his chief pitching scout and former thirty-game winner.

"Lefty," said Dacey, "that ain't no chimp."

"It ain't?"

"Of course not," Dacey said as Hunter listened in bewilderment, "that up there is a holdout rookie. A little rough, perhaps, and hairy around the ears I'll admit. Maybe he's reluctant because he can't decide between college

and pro baseball. But we'll sign him, Lefty. Who cares about San Diego or the whole Pacific Coast League?"

Lefty Smith stared at the high fork in the hedge. "Yeah, Chief," he said, his eyes blinking and his head nodding slowly, "what is this feller, a lefty or a righty?"

Arthur J. Thaukool, daytime cheese plant worker in Milwaukee, turned to the sports page of the *Journal* and snapped it flat before him. Mrs. Thaukool stood behind him at the stove stirring a cheese soufflé.

Although the New York Yonkers management knew nothing of it, Arthur was their number one fan. He hated the Milwaukee Bruins. He passionately despised the Brooklyn Duckers.

"Well now by Gad," Thaukool said menacingly between his teeth. "We'll show those Duckers now."

"Of course we will," his wife said absently.

Thaukool felt a hurt, almost as much by her disinterest as by the jibes delivered his way by his neighbors and fellow workers. It was their special delight to taunt Thaukool. Their theme went like this: (1) Sure, Thaukool was the

world's number one Yonkers fan; (2) So what, being a Yonkers fan was certainly the easiest job in the world because they always won the pennant and the series. It took no effort to be faithful to a winner. (3) Only an idiot would shower his adoration on the New York Yonkers when he lived in Milwaukee; (4) And worst of all, fan or not, Arthur J. Thaukool had never seen the Yonkers play in his life.

But he loved them. His heart beat for them.

"We'll show the Yonkers and the rest of them this time," Thaukool said through gritted teeth. "To think, this new rookie, this Jim Pan-Zee old Dacey has just signed can throw them with either arm. Either arm, Myrtle! Get it? A forty game winner."

Thaukool shoved the picture of the new rookie under Myrtle's nose.

She said, "His sideburns run down to his collarbone."

"He's a farm boy," Thaukool said. "A bit rough, Dacey says, but he'll smooth out. Learned to pitch throwing hedge apples."

"He needs a shave—all over," Myrtle observed.

Thaukool went back to his paper, thinking somewhat intellectually about this particu-

lar fortune of the Yonkers and feeling sorry for Myrtle who couldn't seem to appreciate it.

Everyone knows that the Duckers, like the Yonkers, start figuring how to win the series before the season even opens, and while the news of the ambidextrous pitcher was of high interest to the American Leaguers, it was just as interesting to the National League Duckers. As a matter of fact, the Duckers were alarmed.

"Of course it's a monkey," Manager Alsop stormed at his attorney. "You've got the rules in front of you. You've got a hundred law books behind you there. Now find something that says monkeys can't play baseball."

"It's up to the commissioner," the lawyer said wearily. "It's in his hands. I'd advise you to win the pennant first, then worry about this new Yonkers rookie."

Stanislaus Dacey stormed in his office while Lefty Smith looked on. "I've had more trouble with that monkey than Noah had with—"

"I thought you said it was no monkey, Dacey? A rookie—Jim Pan-Zee. A little hairy around—"

"I said *rookie*," Dacey

growled, turning on him. "If it hadn't been for the Gilet Razor Blade outfit doing a television ad on him using one of their razors I'd never have convinced the commissioner. What does it matter what he looks like? Why, I'd sign a couple dozen more if I could get them. I'd replace that smart Alec team out there," he said waving toward the windows overlooking Yonkers Stadium. "Opening day and those bums refuse to room in the same hotel with Pan-Zee and eat at the same table."

"He has better manners than they do," Smith said. "He shows them up."

"That's only part of the trouble. Hunter, his trainer, is trying to get out of his contract, but I've got him sewed solid. He's jealous."

"Because Pan-Zee's getting all the headlines, Boss?"

"No. Because the Pan-Zee boy stole Hunter's girl friend."

Lefty Smith put an arm across Dacey's shoulders. "You feel okay, Boss?"

Dacey turned away. His shoulders drooped as if in defeat. "All right, Lefty, I'll level with you," the old man said. "Sure, he looks and acts like a monkey. A dumb monkey at that. And I don't

blame our boys for being sore about it. He gets more money than most of them. After all, Pan-Zee didn't even play in the minors. He came up the lucky way."

The Yonkers manager strolled to the window and looked out over the diamond. "I didn't mean it that way when I said Pan-Zee stole his trainer's girl friend. You know dames. She stole him. She's a show girl, Flossy Molloy. She saw an easy way to lay her hands on a buck so she took over. She spends most of Pan-Zee's salary and won't pay any attention to the trainer and he's jealous. Everyone is jealous."

The manager's thirty-game winner came to stand beside him at the window. "Let's you and me give up," Lefty said. "Let's don't fight it. Monkeys. Monkeys, Dacey, in baseball! Let's go back to Pasadena."

Dacey turned to face him with tears in his eyes. He said, gently, "He isn't a monkey, I said. But forget that. Just one more season, Lefty. Think of it. A forty-game winner!"

Having a forty-game winner, however, even with a pitcher who could throw with either wing, proved to re-

quire more than putting a questionable chimp on the mound.

Jim Pan-Zee won his first five games handily. Every ball he pitched was thrown directly at the batter's head, yet invariably its spin would take control, just before bashing the terrified batsman, and shoot the ball downward through the strike zone. It worked better for the Yonkers if Pan-Zee pitched right handed to right handed batters and left handed to left handers. That way, the spin and the drop went just right.

American League opponents caught on quickly. They'd put in left handers on the days the Pan-Zee boy was pitching right handed and vice versa.

But smart old Stanislaus Dacey beat them again. He made the catcher, Berra Cuda, cozy up to Pan-Zee. They became such good friends that the pitcher would do anything Cuda told him to do.

So if Pan-Zee was pitching right handed and they put in a left handed batter, Cuda would step to the mound and switch the glove on his pal, taking it off the left and putting it on the right. Then, Pan-Zee would have to throw left handed.

Hunter trained Pan-Zee to bat, but he was horrible. Dacey was concerned. "I can't understand it," he told the sports writers. "He's got exactly the same stance as Cuda, but he can't hit a thing."

Then there was the incident of the bananas.

Pan-Zee was asked to endorse banana eating by the American Banana Importers, Inc., which his trainer happily had him do. Through the endorsement, American League coaches and managers were given an idea.

Two days after Pan-Zee won his tenth game, Dacey sent him to the mound against the Clevelands. Cleveland Coach Al Gonzales told his boys in the dugout: "Don't you slobs worry none about it. Just go in there the first time at bat and stall around. I've taken care of everything."

Gonzales had purchased the boxes along the third base line and when Pan-Zee had pitched a couple of strikes, the spectators in the Gonzales boxes started waving bunches of bananas. Pan-Zee loved bananas. He caught their gleaming yellow out of the corner of his eye and immediately scampered off the

mound and into the nearest box.

The umpire gave Pan-Zee five minutes to return to the mound. He refused and sat in the box munching bananas until Trainer Hunter could be summoned to the park from the nearest bar where he had been drowning his sorrows over Miss Flossy Molloy.

Dacey was wild. He fined Hunter five hundred dollars. He ordered him to break Pan-Zee of the banana habit and he further ordered him to stand in front of the dug-out throughout each game to catch Pan-Zee if he again made an unscheduled departure from the mound.

Hunter agreed. But relations between the trainer and Pan-Zee were strained at best. The pitcher was making a monkey of Hunter.

As the season wore on, Pan-Zee's popularity grew. Fans threw a Pan-Zee day in Yonkers Stadium and presented their hero with a Cadillac. He and Miss Flossy Molloy rode off the field with the young lady driving and Pan-Zee hamming it up for the crowd while sitting on the lowered top in the back seat.

It was a great day for the Yonkers and for Stanislaus Dacey. He had a thirty-nine game winner; he had the

pennant in the bag; and with Pan-Zee, he'd beat the powerful Duckers in the series.

The gods had been kind. Then the following day, tragedy struck. The nemesis of all pitchers hit.

If there was grief, if there was despair at Yonkers Stadium, it was as nothing compared to the atmosphere in a certain home in Milwaukee.

There, Arthur J. Thaukool was a wreck. He could not work. He could not eat the cheese his wife prepared for him. It was a long time before Myrtle could bring him to speak. Finally, she broke the barrier and Thaukool's troubles poured out in a torrent of words.

"Myrtle, it's stark tragedy. Horrible. Here we had a thirty-nine game winner in this boy Pan-Zee. We had old Dacey pledged to go on leading the Yonkers next year if he got a forty-game winner. We had the series in our pocket. Now we are done. We'll not get a forty-game winner. We'll lose the series. We'll lose old Dacey!"

"What happened?" she asked worriedly. "Did the monkey go back to the trees?"

Thaukool glared at his wife. "Myrtle! No one has ever definitely established

that the lad is a monkey. Please!"

"Well, what happened?" she asked patiently.

"Jim Pan-Zee has a sore arm," Thaukool replied wildly. "It's his right arm. He has to use his left arm all the time now and they're putting up nothing but right handers against him. His curve doesn't work right. It goes behind the batter." His voice rose. "What happened, you ask? Merely the world's greatest tragedy. Nothing could be worse!"

Myrtle dished up some macaroni and cheese. "Eat this," she said with unusual tenderness. "How did his arm get sore?"

"Closed his Cadillac door on it I understand," Thaukool told her. He took a bite of the food.

Heartened at his eating, Myrtle pursued the subject. "I think I understand," she said. "He has to have both arms working right in order to pitch, because of the left and right handed batting business?"

Thaukool nodded.

"I hate to suggest this," she went on. "It seems to be touchy with you. But this boy of yours, have you ever noticed that he doesn't wear shoes?"

"So he's a little rough," Thaukool challenged.

"Have you noticed his feet? I've seen pictures," she said.

"So they're a little hairy."

"Yes," she said. "And so they're exact duplicates of his hands. Thumbs and all. Tell them to have him pitch with his feet."

Dacey paced his office waiting for Brad Hunter, the trainer. He came in, somewhat bleary-eyed, and Dacey pounced on him.

"The boy pitcher. Where is he?"

"In his cage. I'm boarding him at the zoo."

"The zoo?" Dacey seemed horrified. "A Yonkers player in the zoo! Look, Hunter, here's the point. Can he pitch with those feet of his?"

"Seems I can remember him heaving things with his feet, but I'm not sure. Want me to try him?"

Dacey motioned to Lefty Smith. "Let's go to the zoo."

"Boss, you're a genius," Lefty said. "Pure."

Dacey smiled. He was thinking of an eighty-game winner next year.

And now the confident Duckers were worried. The Yonkers won the last five games of the season with Pan-Zee going the distance

each time. His left foot curve was particularly brutal. With it, he won a no-hitter.

Manager Alsop tried nearly everything. He had gone to the Supreme Court in his efforts to have Pan-Zee legally declared a monkey. But they must have all been Yonkers fans. With dismay, Alsop heard their denial to accept the case. They refused on the ground that such a decision might prove discriminatory.

So Alsop reverted to the common weakness of all men and monkeys, for that matter. He sent for Miss Flossy Molloy.

"For one thousand bucks can you bring Pan-Zee's trainer to me?" he demanded.

She could.

To Hunter, the trainer, Alsop said, "You beat the American League managers on their banana gimmick. For ten thousand bucks will you come to work for me?"

"What do you want?"

"I want that kid Pan-Zee retired from baseball. I don't care how you do it."

"That," Hunter grinned, "would be a pleasure."

"How did you cure him of chasing after bananas?"

"I made him afraid of them."

"Why does he pitch?"

"Because he hates the bat. He thinks it's a gun."

"Maybe," Alsop said. "But why doesn't he pitch at bananas? We've tried him on that and all he does is ignore them."

"Let's talk for fifteen thousand dollars," Hunter said.

"Talk."

"The kid's reactions are always the same because that is the way he is trained. He doesn't seem to have emotional shadings. His reactions don't change because he apparently doesn't think. I said Pan-Zee is afraid of bananas. He is. I trained him that way. He ignores them. I said he hates bats. He does. He thinks they are guns. He attacks them. What do you want me to do for fifteen thousand dollars?"

"Make him afraid of bats," Alsop said.

"I will," Hunter vowed, "and then maybe I can give you some help with another idea I have." Right now he had his job cut out for him.

Arthur J. Thaukool raced into the kitchen with the letter in his hand.

"I did it, Myrtle! I brought honor not only to the house of Thaukool but to the whole city of Milwaukee. Now," he said through clenched teeth,

"now let them laugh at the Yonkers."

"What did you do?" she asked.

"Just like I told you," he said. "The lad should pitch with his feet."

"So you did."

"Myrtle, let that cheese stew go and listen to this letter," he said. "Dear Mr. Thaukool. So and so and so. Now get this, Myrtle. It says while we had previously been working on the solution you suggested, we want to thank you for your interest. Fans make the game. Please accept these tickets to the world series as our appreciation. And," Thaukool said grandly, "it's signed Stanislaus Dacey. Dacey!"

"I know that you are deserving," she said.

The cheese packers at the factory gave Thaukool a farewell beer party. The neighborhood families crowded into his house for dinner that night. A caravan of cars accompanied him to the boat which would take him to Chicago and two of his neighbors carried a banner advising any watchers that "The World's Greatest Yonkers Fan" was on his way to the series.

Thaukool made a short

speech. He was choked up. He did, however, say that he was accepting the honor not for himself but for all of them. "I'm looking forward to coming in contact with as many Yonkers players as possible," he said, "and I will give them your blessings on a successful series."

The day the series opened brought more thrills to Thaukool than he expected.

Lefty Smith called him at his hotel. It happened that a prankster friend of Thaukool's had telephoned the *New York Herald-Tribune's* sports department and tipped them off that Thaukool was the man who gave Dacey the idea of the secret weapon usage of Pan-Zee's other two appendages. Reporters met Thaukool at his train and asked for a story.

"You'd better clear it with Dacey first," Thaukool told them in a cagey display of protocol. "Don't want to do anything that might upset the Yonkers' strategy."

Dacey told the reporters to go climb a tree when they tried to clear it with him. And he told Lefty Smith to keep an eye on this Thaukool character. Thus, Arthur J. Thaukool, the world's greatest Yonkers fan, was invited to luncheon at the exclusive

Yonkers club. Afterward, he was taken to the dressing-room to meet the players.

He shook hands with Cuda and gave him a friendly punch on the shoulder. "Catch 'em in there, Cuda boy," said Thaukool. To first baseman Corky Corbett, he advised, "Keep that old glove up there, boy," and he told Lord, "Chin up there, boy. Even though we won't have to use you we still like to have you around." He gave him a hearty tap.

The greatest thrill was kept to the last. Thaukool was taken to Pan-Zee's bench. When the fan extended a hand to grasp at least one of Pan-Zee's four magic pitching hands, the boy bared his teeth and made out as if to take a bite. Thaukool hastily withdrew his hand, but chuckled good naturedly. "Saving the old arm, eh? That's thinking, Pan-Zee boy. Go in there and burn 'em boy."

Pan-Zee sneered and busied himself with something or other that seemed to be buried among his chest hairs.

Thaukool was escorted to a first-base box where he sat with five other Yonkers fans. "We win in four, boys," he told them jubilantly and he was well received because these, too, happened to be of

the world's greatest Yonkers fans variety.

The Duckers were at bat. Also seemed confident. The Yonkers took the field. Pan-Zee went hopping to the mound under the watchful eye of Trainer Hunter and the Yonkers fans went wild. Dacey stood by the dugout, grinding a fist into a palm.

Pan-Zee was calm, relaxed. His arms hung limply at his side. He grasped the ball in his right foot and on his left was his glove.

A menacing Ducker approached the plate and Cuda crouched behind, calling for the ball. The batter waved his stick threateningly. But Pan-Zee ignored him.

The umpire called for Pan-Zee to play ball and still Pan-Zee was unmoved. The Yonkers fans began to shift uneasily. Cat calls came from Duckers fans. Dacey edged toward the foul line.

The umpire yelled again and Cuda motioned for the ball. But Pan-Zee stood as before, arms limp, ball grasped in his right foot, glove on the left foot.

Corky Corbett, at first base, captain of the team, yelled at the pitcher. "You stupid ape, throw the ball."

"Throw it, boy," urged

Thaukool, somewhat worried.

Cuda pleaded with his roommate. "Toss it, pal."

Corky Corbett yelled again and waved his huge, first baseman's mitt.

In doing so, he caught Pan-Zee's eye and the boy's small brain remembered a night of horror—the night just ended.

He had undergone new training from Hunter. That bat wasn't a gun at all. It was something that tapped a lad on his nose. Pan-Zee was afraid of it. He ignored it now.

That big mitt on Corky Corbett's fist over there—Pan-Zee remembered it. What a contraption it was, under the genius of Hunter. It hung over Pan-Zee's head, just out of reach last night. It buzzed irritatingly. Pan-Zee leaped for it. It jumped out of his reach. Pan-Zee settled down. The glove came down over his head. It buzzed. Then it jumped away. Hour after hour after hour. He hated it.

Suddenly Pan-Zee whirled. He cocked his right foot and burned the ball at Corky Corbett. Corbett ducked, just as the ball paused before its downward curve, and the

head of Corbett cracked like a bat.

They carried Corbett away and Beanpole Benson was substituted. Benson waved the glove and yelled, "Pitch it, you tree climber."

Pan-Zee threw the pill at Beanpole. Benson ducked successfully and suddenly decided to quit baseball. He raced for the stands and made his exit by way of Thaukool's box. Pan-Zee took after him. Benson brushed by Thaukool and raced up the steps of the stadium. Pan-Zee followed, screeching as he leaped into the box. Thaukool tried to stop him. "Steady, old boy," he said. "Cool there. To the field! So what's a first baseman?"

By this time, old Dacey, Lefty Smith and the field of Yonkers players and all the substitutes were converging on the box. They climbed the railing and walked over Thaukool, then raced up the steps after the boy Pan-Zee. Thaukool did come, as he had hoped, in contact with as many Yonkers players as possible.

Duckers fans cheered. Yonkers fans booed and there was no question that they were booing old Dacey.

The banter continued as the fans refused to leave the

field. It seemed as if they were waiting for the Yonkers to return so they could present their opinions in person.

The din was terrible, but through it all—casting all the jibes, the ridicule and torment aside—one fan alone was staunch and loyal.

Said Arthur J. Thaukool, heartily and full of confidence:

"It's all right, boys. The Yonkers know what they're doing. Why look, here comes old Dacey and the gang back on the field now."

"Boys, I tell you it's all right. I've got inside information. You can't fool old Dacey, you know. I happen to be in on the secret that he sold Pan-Zee just an hour before lunch. Sold him to the Clevelands, by Gad, that's who he sold them to. Dacey always could outsmart them!"

The word spread through the stadium and suddenly the fans calmed down. Then they began snickering at the trick old Dacey had pulled on the Clevelands selling them a has-been pitcher and soon the Yonkers Stadium was reverberating with loud guffaws. Dacey did it again!

"Play ball," the umpire cried, and play ball they began to do. Dacey put in Tar-

box and he burned the Duckers to cinders that inning.

Yonkers fans were festive. That is, until their boys came to bat and the Duckers took to the field. It was then that Manager Alsop of the Duckers motioned to the bull pen for a new pitcher.

He had the fans guessing this day, for when Alsop motioned with his right hand, everyone knew he was calling for a right hander. When he waved with his left, he was calling for a southpaw. This time, Alsop put his palm to his nose and then waved downward.

The field announcer was rattling on, "Oh, yes," he said. "The new pitcher for the Duckers is Edgar Pack. Now let's look at the record."

There followed a silence that lasts today in deserted, weed-grown Yonkers Stadium.

For out of the bull pen lumbered Edgar Pack. He was erect and walking slowly on his hind legs. His long trunk, swaying as he came to the mound, dipped into the dirt, snorted a couple of times and caught the ball handily as Catcher Rodriguez tossed it his way.

And that was the end of baseball.

THE END