

# Pinch Hits, "As Close As They Would Get"

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At the end of the day on Wednesday, April 12, 1916, Philadelphia Athletics manager Connie Mack has to be pleased with his team despite losing a taut 2-1 decision to the defending World Series champion Boston Red Sox in front of an estimated 5,000 fans.

The good news is that Philadelphia is only one game out of first place; the bad news is it was opening day and the one game differential will be the closest his team would be all season. Little did the 54-year-old Mack realize at the time that the one-run loss that took place in four-year-old Fenway Park would be the first of 117 for his once-proud Athletics who would finish the season with only 36 wins.

On the morning of the game, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* ran a headline that read:

*"Bush or Crowell to face Red Sox  
Macks Leave Town for Boston  
Feeling Confident of Victory  
Crane to Play Short"*

1916 Philadelphia Athletics



**Top Row** (L to R): Harry Weaver, Amos Strunk, Jimmy Walsh, Bill Stellbauer, Auldsworth, Rube Parnham, Bullet Joe Bush, Moxie Davis, Jack Richardson, Sam Crane, Nap Lajoie, Bill Morrisette, Weldon Wyckoff, Mike Murphy, Rube Bressler, Cap Crowell, Jack Nabors, Elmer Myers and Ira Thomas.

**Bottom Row** (L to R): Billy Meyer, Billy Evans, Bill Mellinger, Carl Ray, Val Pinich, Shag Thompson, Lew Malone, Wally Schang, McConnell, Whitey Witt, Charlie Pick, Stuffey McInnis, Rube Oldring and Tom Sheehan.

## Boston Red Sox vs. Philadelphia Athletics Fenway Park, Boston, Massachusetts April 12, 1916

Boston		ab	r	h	po	a	e
Hooper, rf	.....	3	0	1	3	0	0
Scott, ss	.....	2	0	0	1	2	0
Hoblitzell, 1b	.....	4	1	0	0	2	0
Walker, cf	.....	4	0	1	4	0	0
Shorten, lf	.....	4	0	1	0	0	0
Gardner, 3b	.....	3	0	1	1	1	0
Barry, 2b	.....	4	0	1	3	3	0
Thomas, c	.....	0	1	0	5	3	0
Ruth, p	.....	2	0	0	1	1	1
Foster, p	.....	0	0	0	0	1	0
<b>Total</b>	.....	<b>26</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>1</b>
Philadelphia		ab	r	h	po	a	e
Walsh, rf	.....	3	1	0	2	0	0
Strunk, cf	.....	4	0	0	1	0	0
Oldring, lf	.....	4	0	0	3	1	0
Lajoie, 2b	.....	4	0	1	4	2	0
McInnis, 1b	.....	4	0	2	4	1	1
Schang, c	.....	2	0	0	2	2	0
Meyers, c	.....	1	0	0	8	0	0
Pick, 3b	.....	2	0	1	4	1	1
Crane, ss	.....	2	0	0	0	1	0
Nabors, p	.....	1	0	0	0	2	0
Stellbauer,*	.....	1	0	0	0	0	0
Bush, p	.....	1	0	0	1	1	2
Witt,†	.....	1	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	.....	<b>30</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4</b>
Boston		0	0	0	1	0	-2
Philadelphia		0	0	0	0	0	1-1

Two-base hits, McInnis 2. Stolen bases, Pick, Thomas. Sacrifice hits, Crane, Thomas, Ruth, Scott. Sacrifice fly, Scott. Double play, Pick and McInnis. Left on bases, Philadelphia 5, Boston 8. First base on errors, Boston 3. First base on balls, off Nabors 3, off Bush 1, off Ruth 2. Hits, off Nabors 2 in 4 innings, off Bush 3 in 4 innings, off Ruth 4 in 8 1-3 innings, off Foster none in 2-8 inning. Struck out, by Bush 4, by Ruth 8. Umpires, Dineen and Nalla. Time, 1h 55m. \*Batted for Nabors in fifth. †Batted for Meyers in ninth.

The Athletics leave the North Philadelphia train station at 8:00 p.m., on Tuesday for New York where they made connections on the midnight special for Boston. However, neither (Joe) Bush or (Cap) Crowell will start on the mound while **Sam Crane**, the opening day shortstop, will only play two games for the Athletics before being sidelined with a charley horse. Six years later, Crane is convicted of two counts of second-degree murder in the deaths of a former girlfriend and a male acquaintance.

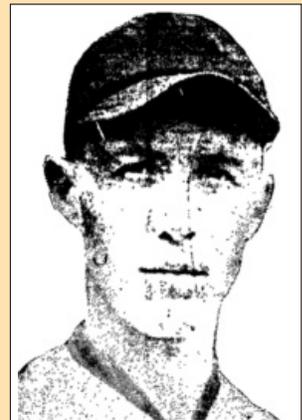
Before being sent to the International (AA) League's Baltimore Orioles on May 3, Crane loses his starting position to 20-year-old Bowdoin College graduate Whitey Whitt. Whitt will hit a respectable .245 and finish third in the American League with 15 triples, but commits a league-high 78 errors in 142 starts at shortstop.

Mack surprisingly selects lanky right hander Jack Nabors, 0-5 in 1915 with a 5.50 ERA, to be his opening day pitcher while the Red Sox send out southpaw sensation George Herman (Babe) Ruth, coming off an 18-win campaign the previous season.

Nabors, the old man on the staff at 28, proves surprisingly effective, holding the Red Sox scoreless through four innings on only two hits before he pitch hit for by Baylor University product Bill Stellbauer in the top of

## BUSH OR CROWELL TO FACE RED SOX

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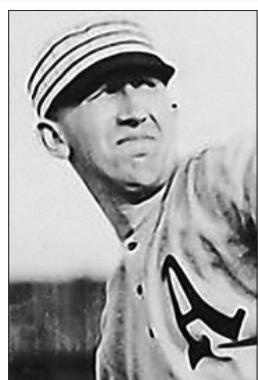


Sam Crane

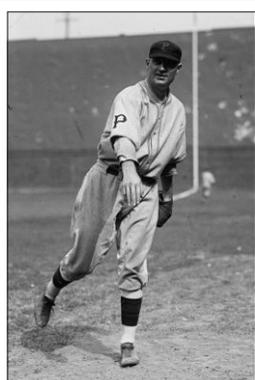
**"As Close As They Would Get" [2 of 3]:**



Bill Stellbauer



Elmer Myers



Tom Sheehan



**Jack Nabors**

Year	Team	W-L	ERA
1915	Philadelphia A's	0-5	5.50
1916	Philadelphia A's	1-20	3.47
1917	Philadelphia A's	0-0	3.00
Career Totals		1-25	3.87

On April 22, 10 days after Philadelphia's season opener, Nabors hurls a eight-hit 6-2 complete game win over visiting Boston, squaring his record at 1-1

on the year ... for the Montevallo, Alabama native, the win is the first, and last, of his major league career ... from his next start (April 28), a 7-6 loss to Washington Senators, to a 4-1 loss to the same Senators on September 28, Nabors proceeds to lose a major league-record 19 consecutive decisions.

Losing five games by one run, Nabors finishes the 1916 season 1-20, with 11 complete games and a respectable 3.47 ERA ... in 14 of his 30 starts, Philadelphia scores two or fewer runs ... in three major league seasons with the Athletics (1915-1917), Nabors is 1-25 with 13 complete games and a 3.87 ERA.

Three weeks after pitching a 14-inning no-hitter for the Newman Cowetas of Georgia-Alabama (D) League, Nabors is signed by Mack for what is believed to be the highest price ever paid for Class D minor league player.

Nabors faces only 40 batters en route to completing the no-hitter against the Talladega Tigers ... two batters reach first base, both on errors and one was later thrown out stealing.

Bedridden for the last three years of his life, Nabors passes away as a result of heart and respiratory failure on October 29, 1923, in Willton, Alabama, at the age of 35.

the fifth inning. Stellbauer, who hits a solid .271 in 25 games before being shipped out to Scranton in mid-June, strikes out in his major league debut. Nabors is relieved by Bullet Joe Bush who allows two unearned runs and absorbs the first of a American League-high 24 losses.

The Red Sox, limited to only five hits by Nabors and Bush, lay down four sacrifice bunts (including one by Ruth) and push across single runs in the sixth and seventh innings. The Athletics tally their lone run in the ninth inning on an RBI single by 41-year-old second baseman and future Hall of Famer Nap Lajoie.



Cap Crowell

The Athletics were American League champs in 1910, 1911, 1913 and 1914. After the 1914 season Connie Mack starts to sell off his star players to other teams because the team couldn't draw enough fans to keep them. One of the worst teams in major league history, Philadelphia's 117 losses is an American League record for 87 years until it is broken by the Detroit Tigers who drop 119 games in 2003.

Keyed by a pitching staff that allowed a full earned run more than any other team in the American League (3.92), the Athletics finish 54 1/2 games behind first place Boston and an incredible 40 games behind the seventh-place Washington Senators.

The Athletics were 11-14 in May, but only 3-19 in June and 2-28 in July and their longest win streak for the entire season is two games. The team's average age is 23.3 years.

Bush (15-24) and 22-year-old Elmer Myers (14-23) are the only A's pitchers to win more than two games. Nabors and Tom Sheehan finish 1-20 and 1-16, respectively.

Mack employs 20 different pitchers in 1916, after using an American League record 24 hurlers the year before. There were four 20-loss pitchers in the American League in 1916, and three of them are Philadelphia Athletics. In addition to Nabors, Bush and Myers, Washington Senators Hall of Famer Walter Johnson (25-20).

**May 19**

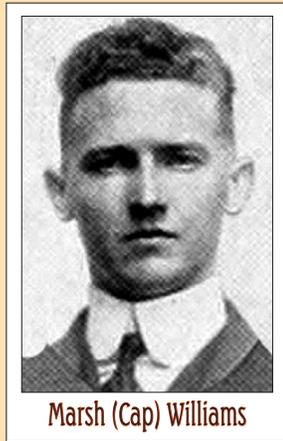
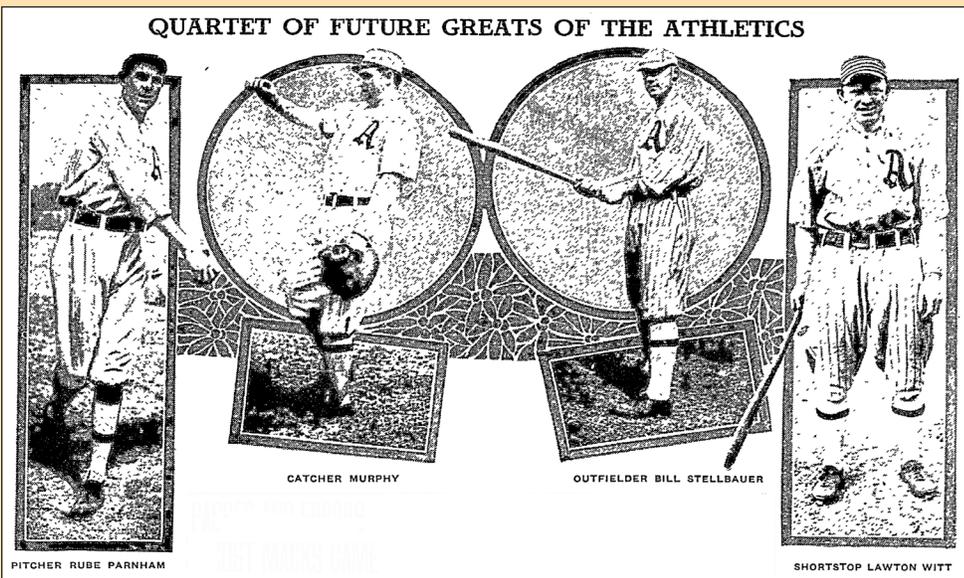
University of North Carolina product Shag Thompson is released to the Omaha Rourkes of the Western (A) League after going hitless in 17 at bats. Thompson will play another nine seasons in the minor leagues before retiring after hitting .293 with the Greensboro (N.C.) Patriots in 1925.

**"As Close As They Would Get" [3 of 3]:**

May 30  
 Minot (Cap) Crowell walks 11 batters, including six in the first inning, in a 7-2 loss to the New York Yankees. A product of Brown University, Crowell, expected to be one of the mainstays of a young pitching staff, goes 0-5 with a 4.99 ERA in his major league swan song before being released to Baltimore of the

International League in mid-June. Retiring from baseball following the 1916 season, Crowell returns to his alma mater and earns a degree of Master of Science and a Doctorate of Philosophy in Biology. Crowell enlists in the Army the day following America's declaration of War and is assigned to the 26th Engineers and takes part in the Battle of Saint-Mihiel in September 1918. In March, 1920, Crowell is named the head baseball coach at Middlebury College in Vermont.

June 24  
 Fresh off the campus of UMass-Amherst where he was a four-year starter and batted .500 his senior season, Lee King makes his major league debut in impressive style going 2-for-4 with a stolen base in a 3-2 loss to Boston. One of two Lee Kings to play in the National League in 1916, and the son of former major league pitcher Silver King (who won 45 games with the St. Louis Browns in 1888), the utility player will hit .188 with only three extra base hits in 144 at bats for the 1916 Mackmen.



July 1  
 Rube Oldring, a 12-year veteran with the Athletics and one of the team's more popular players, is hitting .247 with no home runs and 14 RBIs when he obtains his release saying he is retiring due to poor health. Two weeks later, a suddenly healthy Oldring, who originally retired at the end of the 1915 season, signs with the New York Yankees for the remainder of the season for a reported \$5,000.

July 7  
 Another one of Mack's college signees, **Marsh (Cap) Williams**, a right-handed pitcher out of the University of North Carolina, makes his major league debut hurling two scoreless innings in relief of Elmer Myers in a 9-2 loss to the Detroit Tigers. Those two innings

are the highlight of the season for the Faison, North Carolina, native. In his only major league season, Williams goes 0-6 with a 7.89 ERA, allowing 71 hits in 51 1/3 innings.

October 3  
 The Athletics close out the worst season in franchise history with a 5-3 and 7-5 wins over the American League champion Boston Red Sox in a doubleheader played at Braves Field, home of the National League's Boston Braves ... as they did during the 1915 Series, the Red Sox are scheduled to play their "home" World Series games at the larger Braves Field.

Final American League Standings  
 October 3, 1916

**HOW THEY STAND**

American League

	W.	L.	Pct
Boston	91	63	.591
Chicago	89	65	.578
Detroit	87	67	.565
St. Louis	79	75	.513
New York	78	74	.513
Washington	76	75	.503
Cleveland	77	77	.500
Philadelphia	36	117	.235