



The Lesson of Wally Pipp *By Joe Stein, President*



Several days ago, a long-time client told me she felt tired from sleeping poorly two nights in a row. In addition, a cold was coming on. Uncertain about her ability to train, she asked if I could modify her exercise program for the day to accommodate her being under the weather. I explained that it is better to exercise at a lower level of intensity than not to train at all. “How differently things could have turned out if Wally Pipp had made the same decision,” I said. Being the start of baseball season, I thought this was a good analogy, as baseball lore is replete with life lessons. Her uncertain look inspired me to retell the tale of Wally Pipp, the most important baseball player you never heard of.

Born Walter Clement Pipp in 1893, Wally became the NY Yankees everyday first baseman in 1915. Pipp was a wonderful fielder, a career leader for fielding percentages (.992) and putouts at first base. In addition, he was a great slugger, having twice led the American League in home runs. More important than hitting homers was his ability to drive in runs: for six years he had 90 or more RBIs. In 1923 he had 108, and in 1924 he had 114...all before the days of steroids, designated hitters, domed stadiums and \$20 million salaries.

Then on June 2, 1925, the wheels of his career went off the tracks. Pipp asked Yankee’s manager Miller Huggins if he could sit out the game because he had a headache. By the way, in his day Huggins was a fine player who later became the manager that turned the Yankees into the dynasty they are to this day. In his wisdom as the Yankees skipper, he told rookie Lou Gehrig to fill in for Pipp. Pipp never played for the Yankees again. He was traded to the Reds and retired two years later. Gehrig’s record 2,130 consecutive games played over 14 years stood until Cal Ripken, Jr broke it in 1995. Both Gehrig and Huggins are in the Baseball Hall of Fame while Pipp is relegated to a Trivial Pursuit query.

What would have happened if Pipp had swallowed an aspirin ran fewer laps, taken fewer pitches in batting practice and decided to gut it out on that fateful summer day? Would things have turned out differently? Would Yankee Stadium be the House That Pipp Built? We will never know.

Would *you* get more out of life if you had more energy? Would you be better prepared for life’s curve balls if you had more stamina and strength? Unfortunately, most of us do not have the option of taking ourselves out of the game and asking the manager to have a pinch hitter take the kids to the dentist or have someone come off the bench to go to work for us.

Team, tomorrow we begin a tough series on the road. Our opponents are cagey. Lethargy is on first; Complacency is on second and Lack of Confidence is pitching. These guys are tough but predictable. We can beat them with our team: nobody can turn a double play like Self Efficacy and Experience. Confidence will be hitting lead-off and Commitment will be our starting pitcher. If things get tough, we can always bring in Resiliency from the bullpen to close the game. Be sure to get a good night's sleep, and be ready to play. This is one game you can't afford to miss.

Joe Stein, B.S., M.B.A., is a certified personal trainer, weight management and lifestyle consultant and owner of Renaissance Fitness & Wellness. Call 732.345.5151 or e-mail Joe@RenaissanceFitness.com with questions or to receive a complimentary fitness consultation and session.