¶A game Filipinos should play.

PESAPALLO—BASEBALL'S RIVAL

BASEBALL has become a father. The wayward son of cricket has grown up to acquire the benign dignity of the family man.

Its child is a vigorous but eccentric youngster named pesapallo. It makes its home in Finland, and in the grimly athletic air of that country it has grown until today it is played every year by some 100,000 Finns in organized leagues and watched by many times that number.

An American baseball fan goes to see his first game of pesapallo. The bat is long, anemic. The ball is yellow, cloth-covered. The glove looks like half a cantaloupe with webbed fingers stuck on the edges. The players wear sweat suits and track shoes. The bases are six feet wide and home plate is 20 feet wide—all the bases being mere semi-circles marked on the ground in white chalk. The calm, silent umpires dress in street clothes and signal their decisions modestly with a wave of a fan that has an "X" painted on one side. But the great surprise is the field itself. Though disturbingly familiar, it is strangely distorted and reduced for some reason or other to a 50-by-40 meter rectangle with an equilateral triangle at the bottom.

And now the game begins . . . but not without new shocks. The pitcher, for instance, walks not to the mound but to a point just five feet away from the batter on the right side of home plate. Here he stretches his gloved hand, palm down, in the general direction of batter's face, while the catcher—well, there isn't any catcher. Now, careful not to bring his right hand higher than his motionless left, the pitcher tosses the ball ten or 12 feet straight up in the air. Thud! The batter hits out a nastily bounding grounder past the shortstop. But hey, why doesn't he run? Well, he has decided he will not be able to beat out the second baseman's throw-in, and so he stands leaning on his bat, cheerfully awaiting another pitch. That's his privilege!

Luckily for our spectator's peace of mind, the batter is allowed only two such options. On the third

hit he must run whether he thinks he can get to first base or not. But all this is only a prelude to greater things. Our unfortunate fan must now stare, all but hypnotized, while a batter who has just rapped out a tasty Texas leaguer streaks down the third-base line, pulling up with a great screaming of brakes halfway between home plate and third, where kind caprice has located first base. Nightmarish as this scene is the first time you see it, it at least marks the end of the dizzying departures from true baseball, and if our man has been able to last this long, the rest will be easy. Once he has mastered the fact that second base is situated on the site of the American first base, that the American second base has gone on to a better world, and that third base clings to its old familiar position, he can enjoy watching the game.

Minor pertubations will crop up now and then, it is true. There is a lean sort of barber pole sticking up where the third-base coaching box ought to be, around which the runner must go on his way from third to home; there is an overgenerous rule which allows a man who has hit a triple to go on home unmolested; and a caught fly, instead of putting the hitter out, merely makes him lose his turn at bat. But for the most part the game will be normal baseball, and pretty good baseball at that.

But why all these fantastic variations? Because Lauri Pihkala deemed them necessary to adapt the game to Finnish conditions and to remove the defects unnoticed by the love-blinded American addict. This wiry, cheerful, and pungent-tongued Finn is the father of pesapallo. Before the World War he lived in the United States and spent much of his time studying baseball with the cold eye of a practical athlete. He wanted to introduce the game into Finland; he liked it because it was a sport everyone could play with little expense, and because it developed the whole body and trained muscles that could be used in many other sports. He felt, however, that the game as played in the "States" and Canada had traveled in the wrong direction for his purposes.

It had become, for one thing, far too much of an exclusive pitcher-batter duel, which was great for the spectators but hard on the players. During 90 per cent of the game, Mr. Pihkala noticed, half the players used no more muscles than were necessary to lift

them from their traditional stoop and jog them back to the bench. While this was going on, the pitcher solemnly and deliberately "burned out" his arm in a few years and, unless he was smarter than most, retired to a dignified old age as first-base coach for the Pumpkin Center Terriers.

Mr. Pihkala could not quite see the logic of all this, and he also looked with unfeigned horror on the epidemic of torn ligaments, sprained ankles, and spiked calves that resulted from the practice of sliding into bases. Swayed thus by both practical and humanitarian motives, he proceed to evolve the first two fundamental changes: (1) he moved the pitcher up to home plate and made him feed the ball to the batter gently, providing him with exercise by letting him take over the catcher's fielding duties; (2) he allowed the runners to overrun the bases as much as they pleased, and, by forbidding the runner to go back to a base once he left it on a hit-and-run, he made it unnecessary for the baseman to touch the runner, eliminating by these moves all the necessity for sliding.

The other changes in the game rose primarily from Finland's topographical knobbiness. Almost nowhere in that land is there a field large enough for a conventional ball park, and the cost of levelling such large plots would be prohibitive—pesapallo is still on an amateur footing only—so that Mr. Pihkala was forced to cut down the size of the field. The position of the bases grew out of this limitation. The ball had to be made rather dead, to keep it in the small park, and hence the batter, with five infielders all but stepping on his toes, could scarcely be asked to run all the way down to the American first base. Shortening the first-base line then made American second base too far from first, and so many dozens of combinations had to be tried out before the present satisfactory one was hit upon in 1922.

Pesapallo is a very fast, very brainy game. Baseball, it is true, makes plenty of use of clear, fast thinking, but pesapallo demands this and more. Batting in pesapallo, for example, has become much more than a matter of swing and pray; the mild pitching enables the batter to place his hits within a few feet of where he wants them, and the strategy of this placing is constantly influenced by the shifting positions of the base runners and the fielders. The

fielders, meanwhile, must be thinking one jump ahead of the batter, and figure out, chess fashion, just where he is going to hit.

Pesapallo's greater speed is demanded, of course, by the small size of the park, the crowded infield, and the short distance to first base, and when this speed is combined with good, foresighted strategy on the part of the batters and fielders, smart and dazzling play becomes almost a commonplace. For the spectator it is a slightly different dazzle, however, from that of baseball; to the sheer pleasure of watching clever fielding and heads-up base running is added the suspense of trying to guess what the batter is guessing about what the fielders are guessing about him. This terrific mental strain, unfortunately, produces a hush-hush atmosphere in the stands slightly reminiscent of that surrounding a chess match. Provided you do not need a yelling crowd to intensify your thrills for you, you can have a good, exciting afternoon at a pesapallo game.

You might infer from all this that the pitcher is out of the picture. Actually he has merely shifted his emphasis from his arm to his brain. Standing as he does at home plate, with the whole field spread out before him, he is in a natural position to coordinate the strategy and lend a helping hand to the boys out yonder, which enthusiastically he does with a running fire of comment that can be heard for five city blocks. The actual pitching, it is true, is pretty undramatic, as the ball must leave the pitcher's hand even with his shoulder, and be thrown so that it will land on a wooden plate two feet in diameter. This leaves, as you might guess, pitifully little scope for trickery. These changes in the pitcher's status mean that he is no longer the tender link on which the fate of the entire team depends, but the field general of a balanced group all of whose members bear an equal responsibility for success or failure.

Finns who learned to play ball in America, and have since gone back to the old country, report that once you get used to pesapallo's few eccentricities you like the game better than the American version. The only part of American baseball which they really confess to missing is the solid satisfaction that comes from pasting a well-pitched ball for a home run; Finnish batting, unfortunately, amounts to little more than hitting fungoes for fielding practice, but this minor

loss, the repatriates insist, is more than made up for by the benefits of the share-the-play system which are best symbolized by the rejuvenated right fielder. That normally graven image receives, in pesapallo, more fielding chances in one game than his American colleagues see in two weeks.

If further proof of pesapallo's basic soundness is needed, it can certainly be found in the rapidity of its rise and the firmness with which it is entrenched in Finland. It has in 20 years gained 100,000 players—35,000 of whom pay dues for the privilege of playing for clubs—in the face of endless opposition from the soccer and track associations and the sporting editors, who grumble that it takes potential stars away from the two sports with the greatest spectator interest. It is not only sponsored by schools, labor unions, Army camps, Civil Guard Associations, and kindred organizations, but also receives a substantial subsidy from a Government entranced by its widespread appeal and low cost. —*Robert Sellmer, condensed from The Rotarian.*

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HOT AIR—COURTESY

DID you ever hear tell of Marshal Foch in Detroit, which tale has to do with the "no courtesy" movement?

Well, the marshal was visiting that delectable spot in about 1921, when up came a member of the "no courtesy" league.

"You know, marshal," said the member, "you Frenchmen, with your flowing manners, do not impress me. It is all just so much hot air."

"Maybe," replied the marshal, "but perhaps you have noticed that pneumatic tires, though filled with nothing else but air, enable automobiles to pass over the bumps in the road with comparative ease. So, too, is it with life—good manners, though only possibly hot air, enable us to pass over the bumps of life without undue joltings." —*Viscount Castlerose in Sunday Express, London.*