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RICE

THERE seems to be a wide diver-gence of opinion as to whether the rabid fanatic is entitled to boo a good ball player on an off day and feed him the Old Bronx Cheer in his time of trouble. As you may know, there are two sides to every argument, the same as a plank. Usually both are just as wooden, leading nowhere, but in this case the argument at hand is a big part of baseball.

Booing a visiting or hostile play-er is another matter. This is often a tribute to the

damage said play-er has slipped to

the home club. The argument we are taking up here concerns the ethical side in riding the home athlete when he is in the process of cavort-

ing on the soapy Honus chute, otherwise known as a slump. Wagner

The fan's argument is that as long as he pays his entrance fee and the game is offering him no particular thrill for the money invested, he has a perfect right to pick up his enjoyment and entertainment over another route, which is letting the erring or futile ball player know just what the fan thinks about him.

The fan has a good case here as long as he doesn't move into per-sonal invective, involving the play-er's ancestry and his present family, which often happens. The only half-way shock I ever picked up over a booing incident occurred many vector ace when pittshurch many years ago when Pittsburgh fans started riding Honus Wagner.

Wagner was then in his 41st year. He had been an outstanding star for over 20 seasons. He had given millions as many thrills as any ball player had ever displayed up to the reign of Babe Ruth, the alltime thrill king. His brilliant work at short with his bushel-basket hands, his great base running, his tremendous hitting through two decades seemed to be quite enough to allow for a few lapses in his fad-

Home and Visiting Boos

But the theme song of the base-ball crowd is: "It isn't what you used to be — it's what you are today." Just what the Flying Dutchman thought of the vocal raspber-ries thrown his way no one ever will know. But I've figured ever since that if a home crowd could boo Wagner, no one else should be

Ball players tell me they have no feeling about being booed in hos-tile hamlets. I know John McGraw relished the dislike he deliberately built up in Chicago, St. Louis and other office aurous from New York other cities away from New York. I've heard Matty booed in New York — but not McGraw, although

he may have been. The swiftest and most effective reaction to booing from a rival crowd came from Cobb years ago. Ray Chapman, Cleveland short-stop, had just been killed by Carl Mays in a Yankee game. Cobb had been quoted in an interview de-nouncing Mays. Cobb denied the interview with considerable fervor. The next day, appearing with the Tigers against the Yankees, Ty took a terrific vocal lathering from some 35,000 Yankee fans. "It's no fun," Cobb told me that night, "to be booed, hissed and cursed by \$5,000 American elitication of the state of the st 35,000 American citizens."

But in place of curling up or growing sour, Cobb stepped out that day and got four hits, stole two or three bases, scored several runs and broke up the ball game. The answer is that the big erowd was cheering him in his last time up.

Showing Up the Mob

This seems to be the best answer. The best reply to a boo or a vocal cataclysm of hate and derision is to show up the maudlin mob of goat-getters. You rarely hear them booing a fellow who is making good. No ball player ever took the terrific vocal riding Babe Ruth ab-sorbed in the Yankee-Cub world series years ago when he came to bat against Jack Boot in Chicago. Packed stands howled and yelled and called Babe names they wouldn't print in the press of purgatory. Tre Babe applied even vilar epithets, me against 45,000, as he pointed to the center field flag pele. That was the most famous home run Babe ever hit in his collection of more than 700.

"All I know about it," the Babe told me later, "is that ball was kinder egg-shaped or flattened out after they found it."

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Problem of 1947

We have been talking recently with a number of managers not club owners or ball players, about the 1947 baseball season. One of the smartest told me this-with the amazing increase in attend-ance, with the aftermath of the Mexican league and the union arrival, ball players for 1947 are go-ing to demand big pay increases.

"A good many of these deserve such increases," the manager said.

approve another wage raise for lumber workers. His reply in effect "Knots to you!"