

Spectator Charles McCabe, Esquire Organized baseball - that is, the idealistic businessmen who pursue the buck and, too frequently pass it - is not content that the game shall be The National Pastime between the months of April and They want year-round action. To keep baseball going when it ain't, like now, they have debauched one of the more likeable fringe benefits of the game -the Hot Stove League. The Hot Stove league is a conversational club. in the direct line of the Cheshire Cheese on Fleet Street, where Dr. Johnson got off his nifties. It is, however, both larger and more selective.

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By CLAY R. POLLAN

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Most male Americans over the age of three belong to it, and only one subject is talked about: Baseball, between seasons. The Hot Stove League is fun, what with spec ulation about how Willie Mays' married life, or lack

of it, affected his play last year, whether maybe Russ Hodges will be traded to the Mets, which Giant drinks the most martinis, and suchlike cultural subjects. But Organized Baseball cannot leave well enough

alone. A nice, genteel country-store tradition is taken over and corrupted with a lot of mimeographs and souped-up former sports writers.

These fellas develop out-of-season Large Issues. Presumably to protect the owners' capital investment in the glorious April-November season.

The current large issue is whether baseball will be replaced by football as the N. P. Two of the protagonists in this great phony de-bate are, predictably, the biggest exhibitionists in each

game. Geo. Preston Marshall, owner of an economically marginal District of Columbia football team, says "baseball is cooked as the National Pastime." Frank Lane, a loud-mouth baseball general manager now between engagements, says this claim is "ridiculous." A sports editor in Milwaukee -- where baseball

has gone from honeymoon to near-divorce in three years - says pro football will soon start its season in mid-August because we Americans are hopelessly enamored of head-knocking. "The highest type of struggle is physical combat," the guy says.

The president of the National League - the guy whipping the mimeograph jockeys — makes an ag-grieved rebuttal. Baseball is, too, the N. P., reaffirms president Warren Giles. As sports pages everywhere replate for street extras.

Pro football has been having an unquestioned boom since it left the arena of sport to become a part of show biz. I knew as a kid that a delicate bit of vers de societe does to a bawdy limerick. It is contrived, a bit phony and unquestionably entertaining. But football has about as much chance of replacing baseball as the N. P. as religion has.

+ One of the paradoxes of America is that with all its image of violence — the fastest draw in the kinder-garten and that sort of thing — our great sport is not a body contact bit, but a delicate and rather beautiful game of skill.

Football, in the form of soccer, is the most popu-lar game in the world but has never found great favor here. In my view the rise of pro football is a sign of national

will never become our N. P. I hope. As some one said the other day: When did you last hear somebody talking about football in June?

## **Penalties In Affect**

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Motor Vehicles, reminded motorists who failed to pay their 1962 annual registration fees before the penalty dead-line frest 30 days of delinquen-cy thereafter are lower than formerly, until March 8. Under Vehicle Code laws, penalties now in force on most registration and vehicle license fees amount to 10 per cent ton fees, trailer coach license fees, and weight fees on com-

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