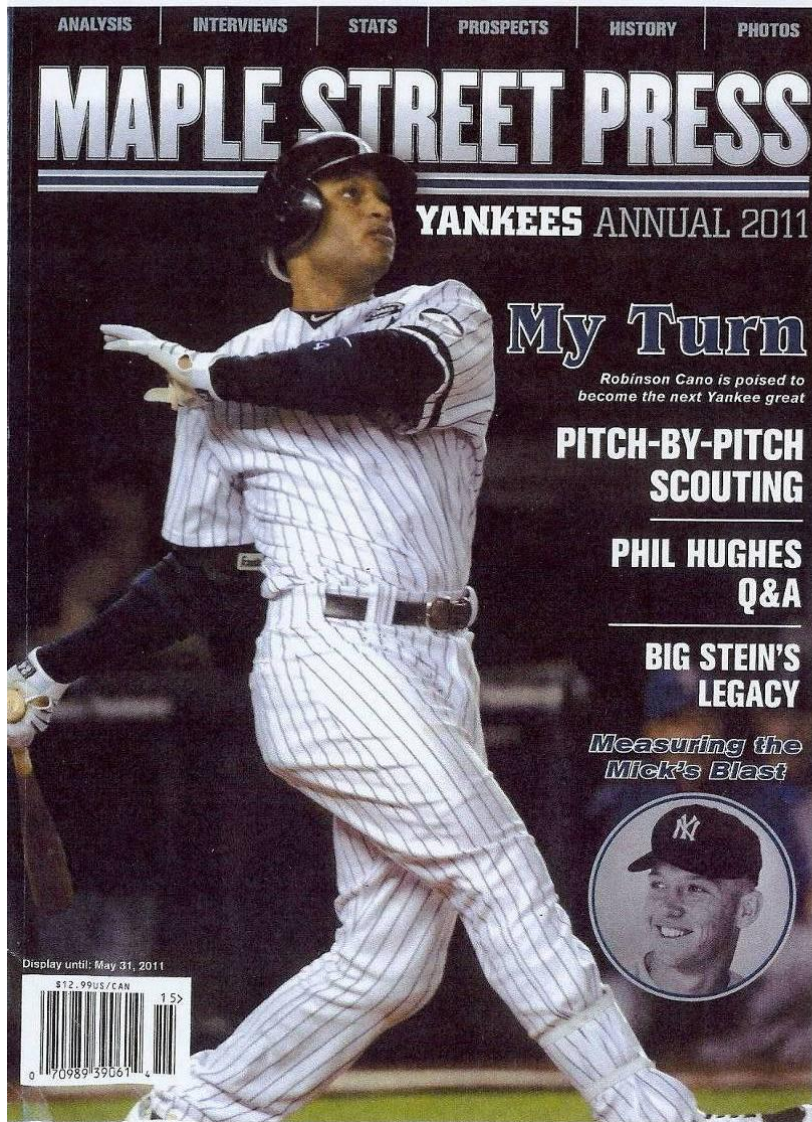


Cover of Steve's article in Maple Street



# THE GREATEST GAME EVER PLAYED

Seizing the 1921 pennant

by Lyle Spatz and Steve Steinberg

*The race for the 1921 pennant was one of the most thrilling in New York Yankees history, and was the most captivating for the team since 1904. It all boiled down to four games against the Cleveland Indians at the finish line of the season, chronicled in this excerpt from the book 1921: The Yankees, the Giants, and the Battle for Baseball Supremacy in New York by Lyle Spatz and Steve Steinberg. (Reprinted by permission of the University of Nebraska Press.)*

**T**he four-game showdown at the Polo Grounds would start with the Yankees leading by a winning percentage of a mere .002. Uncertainty hung in the air. "There is no telling from one inning to the next just what a Yankee pitcher will do these days," wrote Harry Schumacher on the eve of the series.<sup>1</sup> He went on to predict that the team with the stronger—or the "less inferior"—pitching would win the series. The *Cleveland Plain Dealer* admitted it did not know who would win the American League pennant. But the paper did know that the Indians would fight until the last out of the series. "The Indians are a team which never quits. They do not know how."<sup>2</sup>

They would have to know how to win without their leader on the playing field. The Tribe announced that Tris Speaker probably would not play in New York. The Yankees would be without Frank Baker; his mother had died on Thursday. This came on top of the deaths of his wife a year before and his mother-in-law earlier in the year.

A World Series-like atmosphere permeated this series. The Yankee office was besieged for tickets, but the reserved seats were sold out early in the week. About 20,000 grandstand and bleacher tickets would go on sale before each game on a first-come, first-served basis.

A crowd estimated at between 32,000 and 36,000 fans turned out for the first game on Friday, September 23.

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