

The Chalmers Award

By Dan Olson

“I am glad that something besides medals and trophies is offered for the championship in batting. I think the offer of a Chalmers “30” is simply great and I hope to be lucky enough to own a new Chalmers next fall.” The preceding statement was said by baseball great Ty Cobb back in 1910. His wishful thinking was directed towards the prize of a new Chalmers automobile that was given to the batting average leader in each league in 1910.

That year, in the American League, Ty Cobb, of the Detroit Tigers, and Nap Lajoie, of the Cleveland Naps (now known as the Indians), came to the final day of the season tied for the lead. The Saint Louis team, playing against the popular Lajoie and his team played their infield back, allowing Lajoie to beat out seven bunt singles in a doubleheader, giving him the title. To avoid controversy, Chalmers awarded both players a new car. Interestingly, at the time, Cobb already owned a Chalmers automobile.

In 1911, Chalmers decided that the batting average was too narrow of a focus for their award and decided the most valuable player (MVP) for both the American and National Leagues would receive the Chalmers Award. The decision for being an MVP was made by a committee of baseball writers. This lasted through 1914. By 1915, there were rumors of possible cheating. Also, the Chalmers Company decided that a player could not win more than once. These factors, plus the loss of interest by the public caused the demise of the award.

Pictured is the Chalmers that was awarded to the National League’s MVP of 1912, Larry Doyle, shown in the vehicle, a second baseman for the New York Giants. To earn his award, he had a career high batting average of .330 and had 90 runs batted in. The picture is from his great-nephew James Doyle.

Larry Doyle winner of the 1912 Chalmers Award

