The host Cardinals were battling the heavily favored Boston Red Sox in the seventh game of the 1946 World Series. It was a long, long way from home – way too cautious with him, holding him at third. Gonzalez. He said that Gonzalez had been complained to third-base coach Mike Gonzalez. He said that Gonzalez had been too cautious with him, holding him at third on plays in which Slaughter believed he could have scored. Manager Dyer finally made a deal with Slaughter, saying, "If it happens again and you think you can make it, run on your own. I'll back you up."

Somewhere in his taking his first few steps away from first base, Slaughter declared “this” was one of those times. When Walker’s hit touched down in the outfield, Slaughter never hesitated. He didn’t let up when center fielder Leon Calherson fielded the ball. And he didn’t break stride when Calherson threw it back to shortstop Pesky. Pesky expected to take the throw from Calherson and run it back into the infield. With his back to the play, he paused momentarily before running to check Slaughter’s progress. When he saw that Slaughter had not stopped running, he was forced to reset himself after a moment’s relaxation and try to make a play for the runner.

Historians are divided in describing what transpired as Slaughter approached third base. Former Sporting News editor Lowell Reidenbaugh wrote that Gonzalez, the coach, “gestured wildly” for Slaughter to hold at third. Others, such as J. Roy Stockton of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, reported that Gonzalez was eagerly beckoning Slaughter home. Films that survive of the game show Gonzalez in position as if to hold up the approaching baserunner, but then flapping his arms in a downward motion as if to shoo the runner home. By any account, Slaughter had not stopped running. And Pesky admitted to being caught flat-footed by Slaughter’s temerity.

“When Walker hit the ball I didn’t think Slaughter would dare take more than two bases,” Pesky told The Sporting News. “Not even after ‘Cathy’ fumbled the ball all the way, I guess I was dumbstruck. He had six or eight steps on me. I just couldn’t make myself throw quickly enough, and when I finally did get rid of it, I knew I couldn’t hit him with a 22.”

Pesky’s late throw had little on it, and it pulled catcher Roy Partee far up the third-base line. Slaughter did home easily, with shortstop Marty Marion there to greet him with hopeful body English.

Walker went to second base on the play and was credited with a double. But some observers insist that what Walker hit was a single. He was given a two-bagger, they say, in a bow to disbelief. Who had ever heard of a runner scoring from first base on a single to center field? So, the Cardinals held a 4-3 lead. But the Red Sox threatened in the top of the ninth when Rudy York and Doerr led off the inning with successive singles. After a force play and pop-out left runners at first and third, the game ended only after a bang-bang play at second base. A ground ball rolled dangerously up the right arm of second baseman Red Schoendienst, who recovered just in time to get the ball to Marion at second for a force out. Without the force, York’s pinch-runner, Paul Campbell, would have scored the tying run from third.

But the Cardinals were world champions. Harry Brecheen was the winning pitcher, making him the victor in three of the four Cardinals triumphs. “Never have I seen a more tense game with so much at stake than this one,” said baseball commissioner Happy Chandler. To Slaughter he exclaimed, “You are a credit to your team and to baseball. I’ve never seen anyone play harder than you do.”

Slaughter, who was back in baseball in 1946 after serving three years in the military, batted .300 that year and led the National League with 130 runs batted in. Along with Stan Musial, he played in every inning of every game.

As a team, the Cardinals, like Slaughter, had run too hard in the 1946 season to stop for anything. They fought the Brooklyn Dodgers to a first-place tie in the standings through 154 games, then swept two straight from them in an unprecedented best-of-three playoff for the NL pennant. The Redbirds’ victory in the World Series was a humiliation to a powerful Boston club that had won the American League pennant by a margin of 12 games. Battling master Ted Williams was especially ineffective for the Red Sox. The Cardinals employed a defense known as “the Williams shift,” in which five of the seven infielders and outfielders were positioned to the right side of the diamond. And in seven games, Williams managed only five hits – all singles.

— Thomas B. Baker