

# SABR

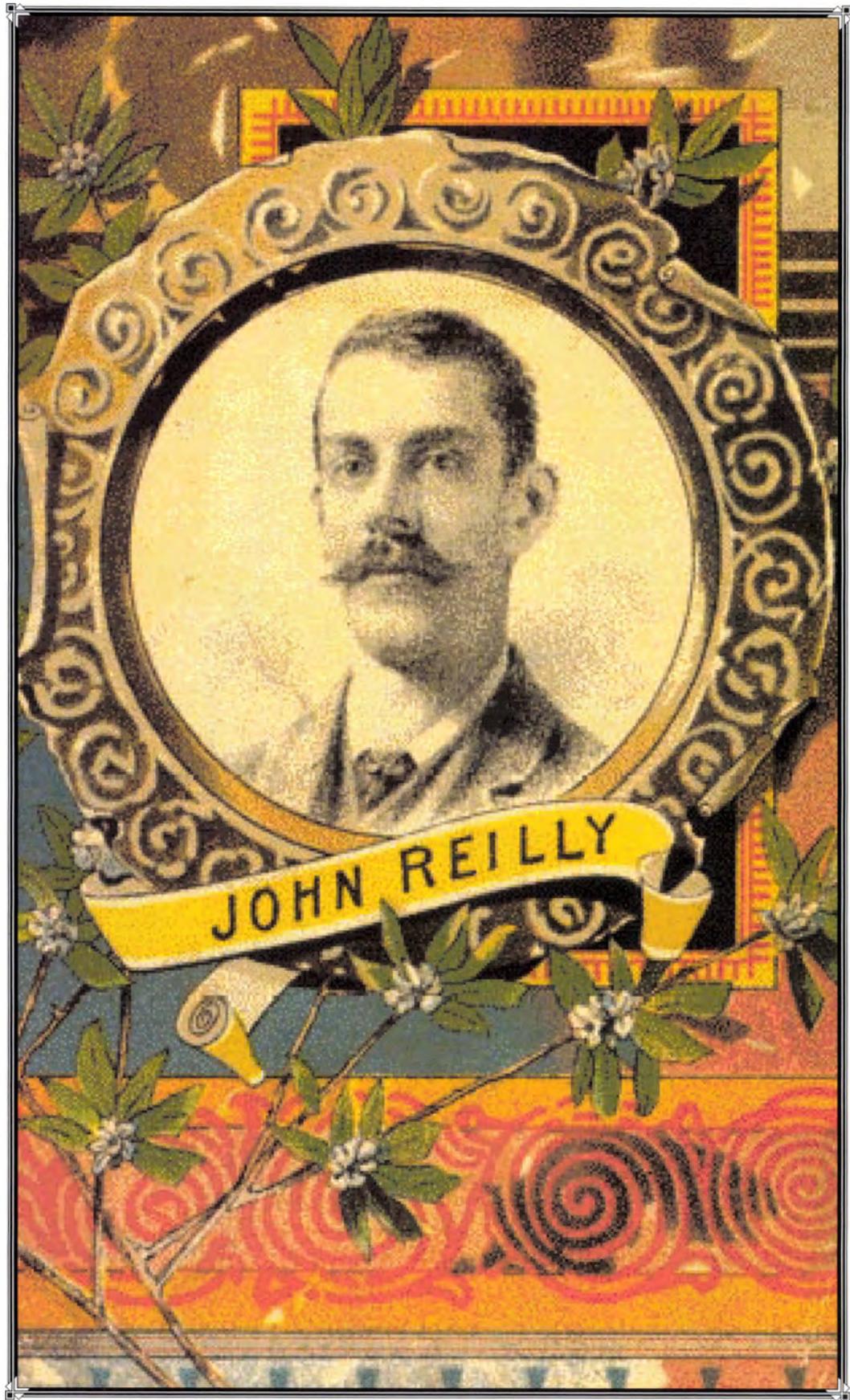
NATIONAL  
CONVENTION

2004



CINCINNATI, OHIO





John Good Reilly was born in Cincinnati in 1858 and died in Cincinnati in 1937. From 1883 to 1891 he was the stalwart first baseman of the Cincinnati Reds in the major league American Association. He was known as Long John for his six-foot-three inch frame and his ability to hit home runs. In 1888 he led the league in home runs, runs batted in, and was near the top in doubles, triples, hits, and batting average. He was a worthy subject of this Reds scorecard cover. *Cincinnati Reds Museum and Hall of Fame.*

# BASEBALL IN THE BUCKEYE STATE

## Contents

Introduction		2
<b>The Reds- Nineteenth Century</b>		
A Cincy Legend, A Narrative of Bumpus Jones' Baseball Career	<i>Chris Rainey</i>	3
Major League Baseball in Hamilton, Ohio	<i>Charlie Bevis</i>	8
Brewery Jack Taylor: Big Talent, Big Problem	<i>Peter J. Mancuso, Jr.</i>	10
<b>The Reds in 1919</b>		
Sallee Day, 1919	<i>Paul and Eric Sallee</i>	14
A Shadow in the Night...The Graying of the White: Edd Roush and the 1919 World Series	<i>Susan Dellinger</i>	16
A Minor Mystery from the 1919 World Series	<i>Gene Carney</i>	22
<b>The Reds Front Office</b>		
Cincinnati's King of Diamonds—Garry Herrmann	<i>Kevin Grace</i>	25
Sidney Weil, Owner of the Cincinnati Reds, 1929-1933	from his personal memoir	29
<b>Redland /Crosley Field Era</b>		
Cincinnati Basehit	<i>Norman Macht</i>	33
Bad Breaks: Mickey Heath of the 1931 Reds	<i>Robert W. Bigelow</i>	35
A Grand Gathering: Cincinnati's First "Old-Timers" Day	<i>Mark Stang</i>	37
Characteristics and Characters: Remembering Crosley Field	<i>Francis Kinlaw</i>	39
Why the Reds Won the 1940 World Series	<i>Leo Bradley</i>	41
An Interview with Lloyd Merriman	<i>Jim Sargent</i>	45
Jim Greengrass: Rookie Thunder	<i>Bill Ballew</i>	50
The Reds are on the Radio	<i>John Snyder</i>	53
<b>Baseball in Ohio</b>		
A Common Thread: Black Baseball in Redland	<i>Paul Debono</i>	57
History of Dayton Baseball	<i>Jack Carlson</i>	63
America's Best Amateur Baseball Team: The Midland Redskins	<i>Lonnie Wheeler</i>	66
Buckeye Bush League: The Ohio State League, 1936-1941	<i>James P. Holl</i>	69
Against All Odds: Even polio could not stop Emory Ray Moyer	<i>Mark Stang</i>	75
<b>Remembering Honored Cincinnati SABR members</b>		
Opening Day for Christmas (Bob Littlejohn)	<i>David Cantaneo</i>	77
Gems from Cincinnati's Historian (Bill Hugo)	from his published research	79

Editors: Mark Stang  
Dick Miller  
Design and Layout: Ryan Asher  
Convention Chairman: Rich Gibson/Lee Allen/Waite Hoyt Chapter  
Sponsor and Printer: Sports Publishing L.L.C., Champaign, Illinois

*BASEBALL IN THE BUCKEYE STATE* is published by the Society for American Baseball Research, Inc., 812 Huron Road, East # 719, Cleveland Ohio 44115. Copyright 2004. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission is prohibited.

# ***INTRODUCTION***

As co-chairs of the publication committee for the 2004 SABR National Convention, let us be the first to welcome you to Cincinnati. Our local chapter, led by president Rich Gibson, has worked long and hard to put together an action-packed four days for each of you.

This anthology represents the best efforts of nearly two dozen SABR members and was culled from nearly 50 entries. Only space and budget restrictions kept us from including more submissions. It is indeed a tribute to the quality of research being done by members around the world that the choices were so difficult to make.

Our goal was to provide the reader with a variety of topics, all centered around the theme of baseball in southwest Ohio. Here, you'll find articles on both amateur and professional players and leagues. Poetry and prose will honor players, owners, ballparks and businessmen. Each with a storyline designed to educate, illuminate and further our shared knowledge and passion for the game. As you thumb through these pages, let these accounts take you back to a simpler time when the "national pastime" really was the only game in any town, large or small. You'll find characters like "Brewery Jack" Taylor, whose love of the night life was all too typical of his era. You'll meet players like Emory Ray Moyer, who never played a day in the major leagues, yet achieved their own level of greatness. A first-person account by Reds owner Sidney Weil will shed new light on club ownership during the Depression; while players Lloyd Merriman and Jim Greengrass will speak to the trials of making it an era of only 16 teams. The rich legacy of black baseball in Cincinnati will be spelled out and you'll uncover the breeding ground for dozens of future major leaguers.

So let us take you on a journey courtesy of many individuals who gave of their time and resources to make this volume possible. Thanks to the Cincinnati Reds ball club for allowing SABR the use of many of their photos. We'd have been helpless without designer Ryan Asher, who's responsible for the cover design and layout. And lastly, to Sports Publishing for generously agreeing to print and bind together our tales. A big round of applause is due all of them by all of us. Enjoy your time in the Queen City and thank you for allowing us to add our own chapter to the SABR lore.

Sincerely,

Dick Miller  
Mark Stang  
Publication Co-Chairs

# A CINCY LEGEND A NARRATIVE OF BUMPUS JONES' BASEBALL CAREER

by Chris Rainey

On Saturday, October 15, 1892, Charles Leander Jones of Cedarville, Ohio, pitched a no-hitter for the Cincinnati Redlegs against the Pittsburghs. It was Jones's first major league game and the first National League no-hitter for the Reds. Additionally it was the last game of the last season with a pitching distance of 50 feet. Yet this highly noteworthy event earns less than a line of print in Harry Ellard's classic history *Base Ball in Cincinnati* (1907). Is it any wonder that local, oral historians took over to spin a fanciful tale about this fellow known as "Bumpus"?

The legend begins with Jones as the local teenaged hero who pitched for his town team and struck out 27 batters on the rival West Jefferson team. He would later pitch for Cedarville College and also hire out his talents to other town teams for \$7 or \$8 a game. One version of the tale has him playing a Cincinnati semi-pro team. The tale has the under-educated Bumpus, either third or fourth grade, working at the local lime company stoking wood into the kilns. In the summer of 1892, the legend insists, Jones was recruited by a Wilmington, Ohio, team to pitch an exhibition game against the Reds on the 4th of July. In true Hollywood fashion he won! Here the tale takes two diverse paths. In one version, Red manager Charles Comiskey travels by train to Cedarville to take Jones out of the kilns to come to Cincinnati to pitch for the Reds. Another version has the audacious lad walking into the Reds' locker room announcing himself ready to pitch in the majors.

No matter how Bumpus got to the Reds, the tale turns to historical reality when Jones hurls his no-hitter in his first major league game, and becomes the toast of the town. He is immediately signed to a contract and tours with the Reds around the state for the rest of October.

In the spring of 1893 his career takes an immediate slide. He is beamed in a preseason game by Tony Mullane. Unable to regain his form, he runs up

a 1-3 record in regular-season games with an astronomical ERA and is released to the New York Giants. He pitches horribly in his only start and never appears in the major leagues again.

Then the legend continues to assert that in the big city, tortured by headaches from a blood clot, the country lad falls prey to the evil of drink. In 1920 he is discovered destitute in the county home in Dayton, Ohio. A benefit exhibition is held for him and a small pension provided and he lives out his years in Cedarville and remains a hero to the local youth.

This fascinating tale appears in various Reds' histories over the decades and makes an appearance every 10-15 years in the *Dayton Daily News*, most recently on June 29, 2003. As with every legend, some facets stir curiosity. One "red flag" is the reported 4th of July exhibition. The Reds would never schedule an exhibition against a team town on the 4th holiday when they could receive a decent gate with a major league opponent. (In fact on that 4th they split a doubleheader with Boston.) It is also implausible that Bumpus could come from "nowhere" and spin a major league no-hitter.

I determined to seek out the "truth" behind the legend as best I could. Lonnie Wheeler's book, *The Cincinnati Game*, has a vignette concerning Bumpus which mentions he was still a hero to local school boys when he died in 1938. I began my search meeting with some of those "school boys" who by the mid-1990s had become the "old timers" but still spoke of Bumpus with great respect. Curtis Hughes had played in a town game in the 1920s and was awarded a bat from Bumpus for his efforts. The bat was treated like the Holy Grail by the remaining contingent of Bumpus admirers.

At a breakfast meeting, these gentlemen recounted the legend, with embellishments, and offered some clues where to start the search for Jones. It seems he

was not the only baseball star in Cedarville in the late 1880s. A lad named Cal Morton was his catcher and the locals thought they went to Illinois together. It was hard to imagine Bumpus in college, but the first stop in the journey did begin in Monmouth, Illinois, where Morton was enrolled in college in 1890 and Jones pitched for the local team. Jones started the season with Monmouth in the Illinois-Iowa League, and was the winning pitcher on May 15. Sometime in June, Bumpus joined the Aurora team and is reported to have had a successful season. It was now clear that Bumpus did not appear from “nowhere” in September 1892 to pitch his no-hitter.

In 1891, Jones returned to the area and opened the season with Ottumwa, despite claims from Aurora that he was rightfully their property. Bumpus pitched for Ottumwa for about three weeks, with a 3-2 record. He also pitched in relief and played center field. League President Nic Young was asked to settle the dispute with Aurora and suspended Jones pending a decision which prompted a May 22 ditty in the *Ottumwa Daily Democrat*.

There is a young pitcher called Bumpus  
Who has raised a considerable rumpus.  
But Ottumwa, you know, don't wish him go  
As without him the other clubs thump us.

A few days later Young's decision awarded Bumpus to Aurora, a team with a losing record of 3-18 when Bumpus arrived. They were poor batsmen and even worse in the field. Jones debuted on May 28 in a loss to Joliet, but won his next three games to raise the hopes of Aurora fans. Problems arose when the manager left and the team resumed their slide. The final straw came on June 17 when Jones allowed league-leading Quincy only six hits, yet lost 9-8 when his team committed 11 errors that led to nine unearned runs. The team directors disbanded the team the next day. Jones had a 3-3 record with Aurora.

Bumpus and Aurora catcher Brandenburg were signed within hours by league-leading Quincy. In his first appearance Jones struck out 14 Joliet batters but controversy continued to haunt him. Reports say he had promised Ottumwa he would return if Aurora folded. Once again, Jones' fate was in the hands of President Young. Bumpus pitched six games for the Quincy Ravens with a 5-1 record before Young sent letters to all franchises awarding Jones to

Ottumwa. Quincy hoped to ignore the decision but the Joliet team prevented Jones from pitching against them by producing a copy of Young's letter. Jones went to Ottumwa in early August and earned a 4-3 record before his sale to Portland, Oregon of the Pacific Northwest League for \$200. His travel across the U.S. must have been a grand adventure for the 21 year old from Cedarville.

Bumpus was immediately thrust into a pennant race as Portland chased Spokane for the league title. Jones pitched very well but had only a 5-6 record. Portland settled for second place. Lost amidst all the team-shuffling is the fact that Jones won 20 games in 1891.

In 1892 Bumpus was back in the Illinois-Iowa League with Joliet, who had put together a dominating ball club. Jones was in top form and by the end of June was 15-0 with six shutouts. His fastball was blazing (“as hard to find as a match in a dark room”) and his curve ball left batters shaking their heads. Joliet lead was so large, the league redrew the schedule, declared Joliet the first-half champs, allowing all teams to start even for the last half of the season. Joliet lost their touch, played .500 ball, but Bumpus was still overpowering. When Joliet folded in early August, Jones has a 24-3 record. The Joliet directors anticipated the demise of the League and sold two players to the Chicago Nationals for \$1,000 and after the season's premature end, six players went to the Southern League, Bumpus among them. As was his custom, Jones was again in an “ownership dispute.” While making arrangements to play with Atlanta, he accepted a salary advance from Montgomery. He went to Atlanta and Montgomery and filed a complaint with the league office who pushed it up to the National League President, who ruled in Atlanta's favor, possibly because Jones returned the advance to Montgomery.

Jones made his debut with Atlanta in a September 1 game versus Macon. The *Constitution* reported, “every lover of baseball...is enthusiastic over the little pitcher. He is very speedy, with a good head and a hard worker.” A ninth-inning Macon home run spoiled his debut. His next outing, also at Macon, came a day after a near riot at the ball park when umpire Crowell made several calls against Atlanta, and refused to umpire the next day. Macon brought in a local umpire. Bumpus was breezing along with a 3-

0 lead when suddenly everything changed in the sixth inning. The *Constitution* reported “Then the fun begins, every ball Jones pitched was called a ball. Instead of retiring Macon with no runs, nine were scored and Atlanta robbed of an honestly earned victory.” Late in September, Jones returned to Cedarville.

He was probably working again in the kilns when the Wilmington Clintons recruited him to pitch an October 12 exhibition with the Redlegs. Clintons pitcher David Reese started the game and gave up nine runs before Bumpus took the mound. He held the Reds hitless the last three innings and the *Wilmington Democrat* stated that Jones was invited by Comiskey to come to play in Cincinnati. The October 13 *Cincinnati Commercial Gazette* made the same claim.

Three days later Bumpus pitched his historic no-hitter against the Pittsburghs, noted in the Bumpus legend as “the best hitting team in the league.” Once again the legend overreached. Pittsburgh finished ninth in 1892 with a .236 team batting average. No

matter, a no-hitter will always be the highest measure of pitching excellence. Jones walked two batters in the first inning before settling down. According to the *Commercial Gazette* “after the first, Bumpus was all wool and a yard wide.” The only blemish was in the third inning when Bumpus walked Patsy Donovan, then made a throwing error that allowed him to score. The *Commercial Gazette* mentions there were only two tough plays, both line drives that center fielder Bugs Holiday hauled in. Comiskey and George Smith were the batting stars in a 7-1 Reds victory.

The Reds immediately made plans for Jones on the squad in 1893. They embarked on a two-week exhibition tour and Comiskey, a wise showman, put Bumpus in charge of the game in Springfield, Ohio, ten miles from Jones’s home town. Bumpus tossed a 7-hitter and won 12-0. Estimates of the crowd ranged from one to two thousand.

The 1893 season introduced the pitchers plate at 60 feet. The Redlegs opted to train in Cincinnati with exhibitions in the midwest. On April 9 Bumpus



*Bumpus Jones stands proud in the middle of the back row in a team photo of the 1894 Sioux City Base Ball Club. To his right at the end of the back row is “Cincinnati” Bill Hart. Manager William Watkins is in civilian dress. (photo: National Baseball Hall of Fame Library, Cooperstown, N.Y.)*

faced St. Louis and won 12-3. The *Commercial Gazette* reported he pitched a “splendid game” with good speed on his “inshoots” that foiled the visitors. In his first regular-season action, Jones could not loosen up and was quickly yanked. Three days later he threw a complete game against Chicago but lost 7-1. It was decided he should go home and get “the kinks out of his arm.” When he returned, he pitched poorly throughout May and June, with many days of inaction. With the Reds ahead of Louisville 14-0 on June 18, Bumpus was called in to mop up so starter Chamberlin could be rested. Despite his lackluster performance, six walks and many hits, the Reds won a lopsided 30-12 win. It was Jones’s second major league victory and his last game for Cincinnati.

In mid-July the Giants added Bumpus to their roster. He started against Cleveland and Cy Young on July 14 with mediocre results. Jones walked ten, hit a batter, and made an error on the way to a 6-2 loss. He remained with the Giants through July but never saw action again. His major league career was over with two wins and four losses. And a no-hit game.

But Bumpus’s career as a baseball professional was not over. He left the New York Giants to join the Providence Grays of the Eastern League who needed pitching in their struggle to get out of the league cellar. Bumpus did not report when expected after signing his contract which may have been caused by a drinking binge following his departure from the big leagues. On August 11, he was reported to show “terrific speed” but also poor control with nine walks leading to an 8-4 loss. Three more appearances left him with a 1-2 Eastern League record and on September 2 the Providence paper reported Jones had jumped to Reading, but the Reading papers show no evidence of Jones taking the field.

Jones had become a baseball vagabond. He played for at least 17 teams, several of them more than once with other teams in between. One reason may have been his reputation as a “hot weather” pitcher, a notoriously slow starter. Another may be his reputation as a player with a drinking problem. What was not under his control was the frequent demise of some teams.

From 1894 through 1899, Bumpus played in Ban Johnson’s very competitive Western League,

with periods of considerable success in a league known as a “hitter’s circuit.” In 1894 he was with Sioux City as the number-three pitcher behind Bill Hart and Bert Cunningham, both with major league experience. By mid-June, Sioux City was 31-9 and Bumpus was 8-4, and when traded near the end of the season to Grand Rapids he was 13-14. In seven games with Grand Rapids he had a 3-3 record including a revenge win over Sioux City when he hit a three-run home run in a 23-2 rout.

Bumpus’s longest stay with one club was 1896-1899 with Columbus. In his first year he was again mediocre and earned a dedicated acerbic critic, Salvator of the *Columbus Dispatch*. His remarks included, “Bumpus had nothing but a slow ball and a wild pitch” and “two out-of-town writers say Bumpus was at his best today (in a 12-8 win), if this be his best, pray tell what is his worst.”

Finally the tide turned and Jones had the two best years of his professional career. In 1897 he went 17-6 with an ERA of 1.45 and became an undisputed ace in 1898 winning 27 games and losing 13. After the 1897 season, the *Detroit Free Press* sponsored a Cup Series between Indianapolis and Columbus, won by Indianapolis three games to two. It was reported the Columbus players received \$75 each for the series. To Bumpus it meant rent for six months. On opening Day, 1898, Bumpus beat Connie Mack’s Milwaukee team with a four-hitter, and in August twirled a one-hitter against St. Joseph.

Ban Johnson was determined to move his Western League to major league status and changed the league name to American League in 1900. It would not happen until 1902, but the Western, now American, League would become by far the strongest minor league. Bumpus had moved from Columbus to Grand Rapids, and to Cleveland in 1900. He was the first player to report to the Lakeshores, trained in Cleveland in horrible weather and was named the starting pitcher for the first game. Bumpus became the winner in Cleveland’s first game in the newly named American League.

By May, however, he was released to Ft. Wayne of the Interstate League. He pitched well but in early August was released. The *Sentinel* reported that he and others were let go because their behavior had not been “suitable,” hinting the players were

enjoying the nightlife too often. In 1901 his career ended after two starts with St. Paul and a stay in the hospital. There were reports of benefits to raise money for his hospital expenses in varied papers, but his hometown paper, *The Cedarville Herald*, was surprisingly silent about his plight.

Information about Jones's final 19 years is sketchy. Writer Fred Marshall of the *Dayton Journal Herald* wrote the story about Jones being destitute in the county home in 1920. For the remainder of his life he lived mainly in Cedarville. His death on June 25, 1938, was the result of complications from a stroke he suffered in the mid-1930s.

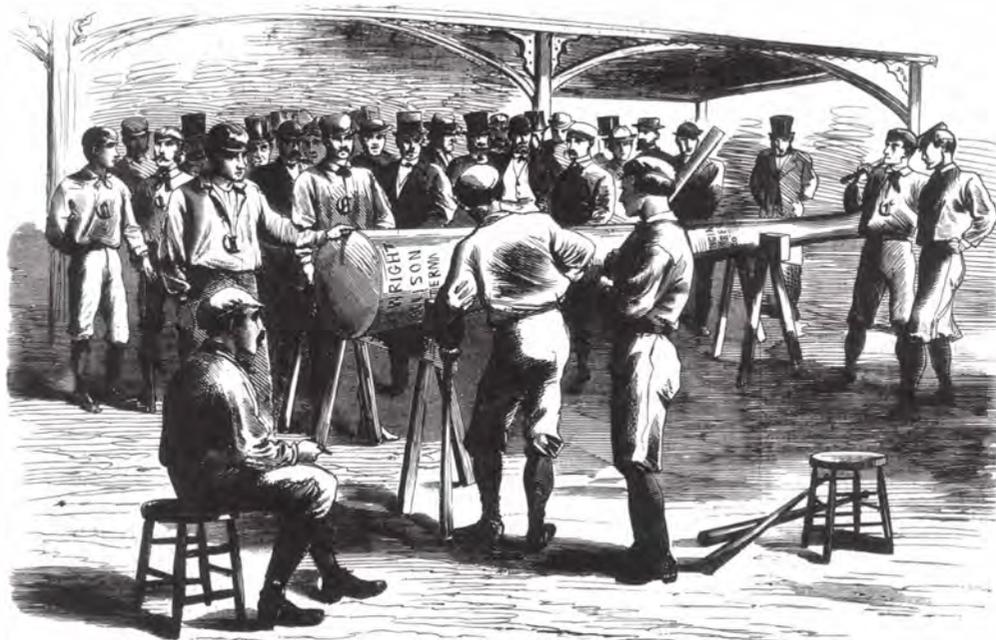
A poorly educated kiln worker parlayed his baseball talents into an 11-year career, with three 20-win seasons. He played with the likes of Pete Browning, Connie Mack, John McGraw, Rube

Waddell and Cy Young. And he pitched a no-hitter in his first major league game.

## AFTERWORD

There is speculation as to Bumpus's ethnic origins. He is listed on the 1880 census a mulatto and the old-timers in Cedarville said, "He was black, you know." His death certificate lists him as white. His spending a month with the Atlanta team would suggest he could easily pass as white.

*Chris Rainey is a longtime teacher and coach at Yellow Springs High School, Ohio. A SABR member since the late 1970s, he has presented papers at the Cleveland and Dayton chapter meetings. He traveled far and wide and searched out scores of local papers to match the Bumpus legend to his actual baseball career.*



PRESENTATION OF A CHAMPION BAT TO THE "RED STOCKING" BASE-BALL CLUB, CINCINNATI, OHIO, ON ITS RETURN HOME.—[SKETCHED BY J. A. GREVIL.]

The "trophy" presented to the undefeated 1869 Cincinnati Red Stockings upon their return home from their dramatic tour of 20 victories over the best teams in the nation was a 27-foot-long wooden bat, weighing 1,600 pounds. The event was marked by a woodcut print in the July 24 issue of *Harper's Weekly*.

"An employee of the Cincinnati Lumber Company set up a special lathe and completed the job in 10 hours. The bat was made of ash and at 27 feet must have consumed the better part of a tree. A gilt inscription on the large end of the bat read: 'Champion Bat, 1869. The Cincinnati Base Ball Club, First Nine,' the last names of each starter plus the two substitutes followed.

"Whatever happened to the bat? It is likely the bat was stored outside during much of its life and eventually decayed" From *The First Boys of Summer*, by Greg Rhodes and John Erardi, Roadwest Publishing, 2000.

SABR member Greg Rhodes, recently appointed Director of the Cincinnati Reds Hall of Fame and Museum, has announced the missing bat will reappear in a splendid re-creation in the new Reds museum.

# MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL IN HAMILTON, OHIO

by Charlie Bevis

Cincinnati's August 25, 1889 home game with American Association rival Brooklyn, staged 25 miles north of Cincinnati in Hamilton, Ohio, is nearly lost in the annals of baseball history. You won't find the game in the Retrosheet logs, nor will you see Hamilton on the list of alternate sites used by major league teams in sources such as *Green Cathedrals*.

That's because the August 25 game lasted just three and a half innings, as police stopped the contest before five innings could be concluded, rendering it a non-game. Although the game didn't count in the league standings, the August 25 game was quite important, because its incompleteness led to the Cincinnati club abandoning any hope of remaining financially viable in the American Association. Soon after the 1889 season ended, the Cincinnati team bolted the Association to join the more prestigious National League.

Combined with Brooklyn's coincident switch of major league affiliation from the Association to the League, the American Association soon collapsed, forcing it to merge with the National League following the 1891 season.

At issue in 1889 for both the Cincinnati and Brooklyn teams in the American Association was Sunday baseball, or the ability to stage professional baseball games on the Lord's Day. Sunday was a day many nineteenth century citizens held sacred as the Biblically designated "day of rest." Groups of Sabbatarians, or people who zealously protected Sunday as the Sabbath, vigilantly protested any use of Sunday for commercial enterprise and demanded the enforcement of state laws prohibiting labor or admission fees on Sunday.

Sunday baseball was a basic tenet of the American Association, while the National League prohibited such games. Association cities such as St. Louis, Louisville, and Kansas City generally viewed Sunday activities with much less piety than did cities on the East Coast. For the 1889 season, seven of the eight Association teams scheduled Sunday home games, including Cincinnati (at its regular site, the Cincinnati Base Ball Grounds) and Brooklyn (at a

Sunday-only site, Ridgewood Park in Queens), two sites that were essential to continued Association prosperity.

After seven years of growth since its founding in 1882, the Association began to experience definite cracks in its foundation during the 1889 season with the increased opposition to Sunday baseball. To Sabbatarian groups, Sunday baseball was a demon to be eliminated. The Sabbatarian position was enhanced in 1889 by the consideration in the U.S. Senate of a National Sunday Law, which would mandate a day of rest for the entire nation. The nation stood at a moral crossroads, Sabbatarians argued, and if Sunday baseball were not exorcised, America's future would resemble the legacies of Rome and numerous other hedonistic societies.

Cincinnati, whose citizens generally held a liberal view of Sunday much as St. Louis, played baseball on nine Sunday dates during the first part of the 1889 season. By August, though, with rumors circulating for weeks that both Cincinnati and Brooklyn would abandon the Association and defect to the League for the 1890 season, the Cincinnati Law and Order Society charged forward to take action.

The last Association Sunday game at the Cincinnati Base Ball Grounds was played on August 11, as 8,000 spectators viewed a 4-3 defeat at the hands of Baltimore.

To appease the Law and Order Society, Cincinnati management looked to move its Sunday games elsewhere. Not only did the ball grounds need to be in a "Sunday-friendly" area, but the grounds needed to be served by adequate transportation facilities so spectators could get to the game in this era before automobile travel.

The club initially settled on Ludlow, Kentucky, located across the Ohio River from Cincinnati, where ferry service could bring patrons to the Sunday games. The club signed an option to use Ludlow Base-Ball Park for Sunday games the rest of the 1889 season, but when they rescheduled the August 18 game with Columbus to Ludlow, local authorities in Kentucky stepped in to prevent the game.

Next on the list of possible Sunday sites was Hamilton, Ohio, where the local minor league team in the Tri-State League played Sunday games outside the city limits. With train service available to Hamilton, the Cincinnati club arranged for the August 25 game with Brooklyn to be played there. The club had also arranged with the local authorities to play the game unimpeded—or so they thought.

Before the game, managers and players of both teams “were taken and arraigned before a white-whiskered, red-nosed country squire, who informed them that they were under arrest for violating the state law that forbids the playing of ball on Sunday,” the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* reported on August 26. “That was all of the legal interference [supposed to occur] at that time.”

About 5,000 people crowded into the Hamilton ball grounds, where many had to stand around the perimeter of the field to watch the game. In the fourth inning of a 2-2 tie game, with Joe Visner on first base and Brooklyn pitcher Bob Caruthers at bat, several police officers, led by Chief Lindsey, walked onto the grounds.

“When the squad of bluecoats marched through the park gate they were vigorously cheered by the spectators, most of them laboring under the impression that the minions of the law had come to preserve order and to put the crowd back,” *The Cincinnati Enquirer* related the incident the next day. “As the errand of the police became apparent, howls and groans rent the air.”

The police had come to arrest the players in the game, not to move the standing-room crowd farther from the diamond. In the confusion, spectators swarmed onto the field, allowing several players to escape the grasp of police. Several Cincinnati players fled to the train depot to get out of town, while others simply blended into the throng of spectators to escape detection.

Police managed to capture Cincinnati players John Reilly, Hick Carpenter, Elmer Smith, and Kid Baldwin, along with several Brooklyn players. The players were taken in a covered wagon to Mayor Dick’s office, who, as *The Cincinnati Enquirer* wryly noted, “evidently expected the ‘pinch’ to occur, for he was at his desk, something unusual for a municipal officer on a Sunday.”

President Aaron Stern of the Cincinnati club disregarded his lawyer’s advice to fight the arrests in court and instead asked the mayor to set a suitable fine that Stern

could pay for all 18 players in the game, not just those players the police were able to chase down.

“The mayor at first thought \$13 per person would about fix the offense, but afterward reduced it to \$5 plus costs, or \$8.30 per man,” the *Cincinnati Enquirer* reported. “Stern offered to give his check for the entire amount, but this was not acceptable. He therefore returned to the hotel and a few moments later counted out \$149.40 into the mayor’s hand, payment in full for both the Cincinnati and Brooklyn players.”

After the incident concluded, Stern told the newspapers, “Had I known that we were to be arrested, I would not have played here and would have telegraphed to stop the excursion. I was given to understand that there would be no interference of any kind.”

Cincinnati was headed off for a September road trip, but Stern was forced to cancel the team’s last two Sunday baseball games scheduled for October 6 and 13. Despite the indignity of Stern’s check being refused by the local mayor, the Hamilton Sunday incident seemed to be a win-win situation. The Law and Order Society could claim a victory for the Sabbatarian cause, while Cincinnati management solidified its argument for why the team needed to leave the Association and join the League.

“Since our Sunday games were stopped, we lost \$15,000,” Stern was quoted after the 1889 season in the October 30 issue of *Sporting Life*. “We would have made [it] up during the week days at fifty cents had we been in the League,” compared to the quarter admission that was standard in the Association.

With Brooklyn and Cincinnati both seemingly unable to schedule Sunday baseball games for the 1890 season, the two clubs left the American Association to join the National League once the 1889 season concluded. Sunday baseball did return to the Cincinnati Base Ball Grounds three years later in 1892, following the merger of the two leagues, when the National League finally relented and permitted Sunday games.

*Charlie Bevis is a baseball historian who has been a SABR member since 1984. He has written two books on baseball history as well as numerous journal and magazine articles.*

# BREWERY JACK TAYLOR BIG TALENT, BIG PROBLEM

by Peter J. Mancuso, Jr.

Jack (John Budd) Taylor had already earned his salty nickname, "Brewery Jack," when he became the property of the Cincinnati Reds before the start of the 1899 season. The Reds purchased Taylor from St. Louis. Taylor, only 25 years old, had already appeared in eight major league seasons, achieving 20 or more wins three times (1894-96) with the Phillies. He was released by the Phillies in a trade with St. Louis in November, 1897. Unfortunately, one of his hardest-working seasons, 1898 (50 games, 47 starts, 42 complete games, 397 innings and a 3.90 era) was wasted on one of the all-time worst teams in baseball history, the 1898 Browns. Jack led St. Louis with 15 wins, but he also headed the league with 29 losses. At the end of the season, however, he was one of baseball's most sought-after pitchers.

Cincinnati Reds owner John T. Brush was everything that Brewery Jack wasn't. He was highly self-disciplined, frugal and a man focused on financial success. Brush had started as a major league magnate in one of baseball's smallest markets (Indianapolis) and would finish in baseball's largest, as the owner of the New York Giants. He achieved this while afflicted with a painful degenerative spinal disease. As the driving force behind the league's salary structure of the 1890s, he also crusaded against players imbibing and crafted a "temperance clause," in all his players' contracts. This clause called for a \$700 fine for a player who could not perform due to the affects of consuming alcohol.

In 1899 the Cincinnati finished sixth in the 12-team NL with Taylor appearing in only 24 games. He started 18 times and finished with nine wins and 10 losses. Jack's \$2,400 salary was the maximum allowed that year, under the league owners' agreement. After two defeats, he won his first game at the end of April.

Then, in Cincinnati, on May 28, Jack Taylor had a terrible outing in relief. The supposed reason for his poor performance was alluded to the following Thursday, a day after the Reds started play in New York.

*New York, (Wednesday) May 31—The story from Cincinnati that one of the Reds' pitchers—undeniably Jack Taylor was referred to—had been out late Saturday night (May 27) and had indulged*



*John T. Brush, owner, Cincinnati Reds, 1891-1902  
(photo: Cincinnati Reds)*

*in the flowing bowl to the extent that he was unable to do himself justice on the rubber in Sunday's game, has aroused the greatest indignation among Cincinnati players. It also set Captain Ewing [future Hall of Famer, Buck Ewing, then the Reds*

manager] about making an investigation, which came to a satisfactory result, and by which Taylor was exonerated of the charges. Miller [Reds CF Dusty Miller] and Steinfeldt [Reds 3B Harry Steinfeldt] were the principal witnesses for Taylor, and it was their testimony that Taylor was cleared of the charges. Both men told Captain Ewing that they were in front of the Gerdes Hotel [in Cincinnati] Saturday evening when Taylor and his wife came in and that was a long time before they themselves retired. They claim that they had sat up for a long time after Taylor had gone to his room and that he did not come down again. (The Cincinnati Enquirer)

Meanwhile, Jack's wife remained at their in-season hotel residence in Cincinnati. On Tuesday, May 30, before a large Decoration Day crowd at the Polo Grounds, Jack Taylor started the first game of a doubleheader. It proved to be a hotly contested outing, with Cincinnati losing as the result of a disputed call. After the game, Taylor asked manager Ewing for permission to go to Staten Island (his home community) for that evening.

Jack Taylor failed to appear at the Polo Grounds for the next two games. Then on Friday, June 2, as the Reds were losing their opener in Boston, Cincinnati fans were greeted by the following headline: "Jack Taylor Is In Very Serious Trouble. He Has Been Indefinitely Suspended By Captain Ewing."

*New York, (Wednesday) June 1—Jack Taylor has been suspended indefinitely....On Tuesday Taylor received permission...to spend that night at the home of his mother, with the understanding that he was to be back Wednesday...He failed to show up. When Captain Ewing returned to the hotel Wednesday night he found a message there from Taylor informing him that he would spend another night on Staten Island and promised to turn up today [Thursday]...Again he failed to materialize.*

The following day, Cincinnati fans heard that Reds owner John Brush was, "waiting to see what action Taylor will take."

*Boston, (Friday) June 3—Jack Taylor has been here and has gone. He arrived on an early*

*morning train, and before the whistle blew for the noon hour he had started back to Staten Island... Taylor saw Captain Ewing about 9 o'clock and was informed for the first time that he was indefinitely suspended without pay. He tried to explain to Captain Ewing that he had gone fishing off Coney Island in a small sailboat, a calm came up and he could not return to land earlier than to get there this morning. Ewing expressed the opinion that Taylor could have swam ashore in that time, and then proceeded to lay down the law to the recalcitrant pitcher... Taylor tried to square himself by saying that he had not been drunk during his absence, but that did not soften Ewing, and he ordered Taylor back to New York, informing him that he would notify him in due time when he would again draw salary from the club. President Brush said that the punishment of Taylor was entirely in Ewing's hands, and that the club would stand by anything he did. (The Cincinnati Enquirer)*

Months later, one newspaper revealed that Jack's two sailing companions that fateful day were none other than the daredevil, Steve Brodie, who survived a jump from the Brooklyn Bridge in 1886, and a well-known and popular turn of the century bantam-weight prizefighter, Patsy Haley.

For five weeks the Cincinnati press followed Jack's suspension. Although Taylor made several promises to reform and pleaded for reinstatement, management held firm. He was not allowed to travel with the team, but was ordered instead to work out at the Brooklyn team's Washington Park to get into shape. As the weeks passed, Taylor realized the resolution of the Reds management and continued to work out in earnest.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Taylor remained in Cincinnati, the loyal wife lobbying for Jack's reinstatement:

*Ever since Jack's suspension the loving wife has been trying to have Jack restored to the good graces of the club. She has written a number of letters to President Brush asking that Jack be given another trial. Yesterday, [June 23] Mrs. Taylor received a letter from President Brush to the effect that Jack would be allowed to join the Reds when they start on their Eastern trip...on the 11th of*

*July....Mrs. Taylor was at the game yesterday. She was overjoyed at the news. She will leave for her home at Staten Island tomorrow. (The Cincinnati Enquirer)*

True to his word, John Brush reinstated Taylor, who pitched his first returning game July 12. Back from suspension, Jack began pitching nearly as good as he ever had in his career. He continued to do so for most of the remainder of the season. About a week after returning, however, Taylor publicly complained that the Cincinnati management had been overly punitive and that he wanted to be traded:

*Jack Taylor is bent on getting away from the Cincinnati team. He realizes that the only way he can get his release is by the trading route. He said yesterday [July 23] that he intended to do such good work for the Reds from now on that he would be in demand. "I'll pitch good ball and do my best," said Taylor. "I have worked during my vacation and I am lighter now than I have been this season. The report about my [sic] suspension cost me is all wrong." "In what way?" was asked. "The reports have it that I lost \$500 by my suspension," was the reply. "That isn't a marker. It isn't half what that lay off cost me. I am out just \$1,200." "In what way?" was asked. "Well, I lost \$100 a week for the five I laid off," said Taylor. "Then the Cincinnati Club is holding out \$700 to enforce the temperance clause. Captain Ewing tells me I will lose that also. Do you blame me for wanting to get away from Cincinnati? Twelve hundred is pretty expensive for a little fun." (The Cincinnati Enquirer)*

In late August, Jack was being revered on the Cincinnati sports pages. He recorded a save against the Giants, the team for which he pitched his very first game, nine seasons before:

*Jack Taylor is back again in the good graces of the rooters. Jack jumped in and took Phillips's place on short notice. He pitched in the last three innings in excellent style. His command of the ball was first class. He did not allow a batter to get him in the "hole." Right over the center of the "pan" was his object, and he did it nicely... Taylor seems to be himself again. When he is right there is no pitcher in the country that has anything on the big pitcher.*

*On Labor Day, Taylor squared off against Cleveland in the second game of a doubleheader played before a huge crowd. Jack Taylor and the Reds won by a score of 8 to 1. The win was the big pitcher's 120th and final career victory; (against 117 career losses). (The Cincinnati Enquirer)*

#### *JACK TAYLOR'S DEATH*

*On Tuesday, September 12, 1899, Jack Taylor took to the rubber for his last game. It was in Washington, against the Nationals. Taylor got off to a rough start; he struggled into the fourth inning and gave up four runs (three earned) on five hits. Then suddenly, "he was pitching, as usual, and had just entered the box and was preparing to throw the ball when his right arm fell powerless to his side and the ball rolled from his fingers. A physician was called and it was learned that he strained his right side. He was taken to his hotel and was compelled to stop playing for the remainder of the season." The following evening, "Jack Taylor was sent back to Cincinnati..."*

By season's end Jack Taylor returned to his home in Staten Island. He died the following February. Several accounts of his death indicated that he was still pursuing a trade, and many speculated that he was going to get one. One Cincinnati writer at the news of Jack's death reported that he had seen Taylor at the annual meeting of the NL in New York in December [1899] and that Jack "was in excellent health" (undoubtedly, John T. Brush was there too). Another report stated that Taylor had written to Ewing only a few days before his death requesting the Reds to trade him to the New York club.

Some clues to understanding the cause of Taylor's death may be connected to the death of his 64-year-old mother, Phoebe Ann Taylor, who resided with the ballplayer and his wife. Some evidence indicates that Jack's mother had been ailing in mid-August. Phoebe Ann Taylor died of pneumonia on January 20, 1900, just 17 days before her son Jack's death. On Wednesday, February 7, 1900 Jack Taylor died at age 26 years, eight months and 16 days. The cause of death was "Brights Disease", (acute nephritis—kidney failure). One local Staten Island paper reported the following:

John B. Taylor, aged 27 [sic], otherwise known as "good natured" Jack, for several years a prominent baseball player in the National League, and a resident of West New Brighton, died on Wednesday morning in the Smith Infirmary from a complication of diseases, after a brief illness. His mother died two weeks ago, and after that Taylor began to complain of feeling unwell, but did not think he was seriously ill. On Wednesday of last week [January 30th] he was taken worse and a physician was called in. His condition became serious and it was decided to remove him to Smith Infirmary, where an operation was performed, and death ensued in a few hours afterward. Taylor began playing ball 13 years ago with the old Corinthian team. Five years later he joined the Lebanon team in the Eastern League, and two years later he signed with the Philadelphias as a pitcher and afterwards played with the St. Louis and Cincinnati teams. Late last September he played his last game with the latter team in Washington, D.C. Several weeks afterward he returned to his home to recuperate. He was expecting to sign with the Cincinnati this year, and the day that he was removed to the hospital he was looking for his new contract. He leaves a widow, but no children. The Funeral was held yesterday afternoon at his late home. The interment was in Fairview Cemetery. (The Staten Islander, February 10, 1900)

In Cincinnati, Reds fans read in part:

*ONE OF THE REDS IS MISSING—The Death of Pitcher Jack Taylor. His End Came Suddenly and Was Unexpected... Poor Jack was his*

*own worst enemy. Although nearly 30 years of age, his conduct was that of a youngster just starting in his professional career. He never got over "being a boy," and he was in his best humor when in company with a party of congenial spirits. His good fellowship and love of fun cost him dearly with the Cincinnati Club last season. Although he signed a "limit" contract with the Reds, he did not get over half of \$2,400 for his services. Poor Jack lived up to the requirement of his strict temperance contract fairly well until the team started on its first Eastern trip. At New York Jack fell from grace. He was a New York boy, and a return to the old atmosphere was too much for him. Jack joined a yachting party...missed the train and did not go with the team to Boston. Although Taylor was on the Cincinnati Club's reserve list, it is hardly likely he would have played here this season. In all probability he would have been found with the New York club...Taylor was one of the best pitchers in America when in condition and in the humor to give his club his best services...For five or six years he was the crack pitcher of the Quaker City team...On account of his habits his work with the Reds last year was a big disappointment. (The Cincinnati Times-Star)*

*Peter J. Mancuso, a SABR member for five years, serves on the Biographical, 19th Century and Oral History committees. He is a producer of shows, events and antiquarian book fairs and lives in New Hope, Pennsylvania.*

---

Between the end of the 1890 season and the beginning of the 1891 campaign, the Reds had three different owners and announced plans to play in three different leagues...At the end of the 1890 season, Reds owner Aaron Stern withdrew the club from the National League and sold the team to Albert Johnson who announced the Reds would move to the Players League. But the Players League folded in January 1891, and Johnson decided to place the Reds back into the American Association (where they had played in the 1880s). In mid-February, he secured King Kelly as player-manager and star attraction.

The National League, not wanting to lose its franchise in Cincinnati, then granted the vacated Cincinnati spot to John Brush, a wealthy Indianapolis clothing merchant. Brush had owned the Indianapolis franchise in the National League, but the Hoosiers folded in 1889, and a year later he invested heavily in the Giants and kept the New York club solvent. The League owed Brush a debt of gratitude, and the Cincinnati franchise was given to him as a gift.

From *Redleg Journal*, by Greg Rhodes and John Snyder, Roadwest Publishing, 2000.

# SALLEE DAY, 1919

by Paul Sallee and Eric Sallee

After 11 years in major league baseball, winning 159 games for the St. Louis Cardinals, the New York Giants, and now the Cincinnati Reds, Harry "Slim" Sallee was to have his greatest day. The Cincinnati Reds and Manager Pat Moran designated September 21, 1919, as "Slim" Sallee Day and slated their veteran to pitch against visiting Brooklyn. A lifelong native of Higginsport, Ohio, a tiny farming community not far from Cincinnati, this small-town hero was being recognized for his incredible 1919 season and contributions to the Cincinnati pennant.

To aid in the celebration, the Reds reserved two sections of the grandstand for friends and fans from Slim's native Brown County. The Cincinnati, Georgetown and Portsmouth Railroad advertised the event throughout southern Ohio with a special "Baseball Excursion" rate, ranging from \$.80 to \$1.70 for a roundtrip ticket to Redland Park. In order to accommodate the large crowds expected from Brown and neighboring Clermont Counties, each town along the train route was allotted tickets for the game, which could be reserved in advance for \$1.10, which included the War Tax.

As thousands from around the state gathered at Redland Park, Sallee, whose "excellent work in the box is given much of the honor and glory of the Reds winning the pennant," was met at home plate before the game by a committee from the Brown County contingent. He was presented with an elaborate vase of flowers and a handsome gift from a jewelry firm for Mrs. Sallee to select. The large crowd cheered wildly at the conclusion of the presentation, and anxiously awaited the start of the ball game.

The Reds had clinched the National League pennant five days earlier when they sealed the second place fate of the New York Giants by defeating the McGrawmen, 4-3. Consequently, Reds manager Pat Moran was in a restful mood, for he rested all but three of his regulars on Sallee Day. Outfielder Sherwood Magee was the second baseman, and Dolph Luque, a pitcher, played third. Seldom used players Hank

Schreiber and Nick Allen were employed at shortstop and catcher, respectively. Even Moran himself, although in uniform, took time off from his usual third base coaching duties. This arrangement proved fatal.



*Harry "Slim" Sallee, Cincinnati Reds 1919, 21 wins, seven losses. (photo: Cincinnati Reds)*

The game had hardly begun before several botched infield plays by the irregulars netted Brooklyn three runs in the first inning. Things weren't looking too good for the tall southpaw on Sallee Day and the embarrassment of an early exit was a real possibility.

Olson, the first up for Brooklyn rolled a weak groundball down third to Luque, who got a slow jump on the ball, came up with it slowly, and threw to first slowly, allowing Olson the base. A passed ball moved Olson to second. It was after this that Slim made his only mistake of the game as he walked Johnston.

Myers then hit a ball through the box and Slim knocked it down. It rolled right to shortstop Schreiber, standing about a step and a half from second. Instead of stepping on the bag for the forceout, he instead only looked that way, and then threw wildly to first, and all were safe.

Wheat then grounded out to Schreiber for what should have been the third out, but Olson scored on the play. Schmandt then rolled a slow grounder between Luque and Schreiber, slow enough for both Johnston and Myers to score. After this, Slim took matters into his own hands and after a single, retired the last two batters. For the next eight innings, he allowed only three scattered singles and not a batter reached second base. He was invincible and could not be touched.

After laboring through 15 pitches in the first inning, Slim needed only seven pitches in both the second and third, eight in the fourth, four in the fifth, seven in the sixth, six in the seventh, eight in the eighth, and concluded the game by tossing a mere three pitches in the ninth. This effort of 65 total pitches established a new major league record for a complete-game, nine-inning contest, besting Christy Mathewson's previous mark of 69 pitches. The result was a contest that barely allowed the faithful Reds fans to warm their seats, as this contest lasted all of 55 minutes. Unfortunately, the Reds managed only one ninth-inning tally off of Brooklyn's Sherry Smith, and the game was lost 3-1. Slim batted for himself in the ninth inning to give his Brown County admirers a complete show, but grounded out to the third baseman for the final out.

This game exemplified Slim Sallee's entire season. Having injured his back in 1918 while hurling for the Giants in New York, the injury continued to plague him through the 1919 season. Unlike his first eight years pitching for the cellar-dwelling St. Louis Cardinals, when his speed and physical ability were enough to overpower hitters, his bad back now forced him to throw as few pitches as possible to relieve the stress of pitching. With his incredible control, Sallee was able to induce hitters to swing early in the count, walking only 20 batters in 227 innings. His .79 walks per nine innings in 1919 is tied for seventh best in history and his 21 wins in 29 total games pitched was a record for 25 years. He also became one of only two 20-game winners with more wins than walks in a single season.

The Sallee partisans, as they filed out of the turnstiles and headed back to the Carrel Street Station for the journey home, must have had mixed emotions after Sallee Day. They had just showered their friend and neighbor with accolades and presents, watched him break a major league record, only to ultimately see his team fail him. They could rest assured that the Reds and Slim Sallee would return to glory in the coming weeks when they would compete for baseball's ultimate prize, the 1919 World Series Championship.

*Eric Sallee is a CPA, and a SABR member for six years. Paul Sallee is a musician, performer, teacher, and a SABR member for six years. Paul and Eric are cousins of Harry "Slim" Sallee.*

Cincinnati manager Pat Moran was undecided about whether he would start Hod Eller or Slim Sallee in Game 2 (1919 World Series). In the end Moran gave the assignment to Sallee, despite the fact that Sallee had faced the White Sox in the 1917 World Series while with the Giants and been beaten by them twice. But Sallee had a brilliant 1919 season with a 21-7 record and certainly deserved a chance at starting Game 2.

(Sallee pitched a complete game and defeated the

White Sox and Lefty Williams 4-2). Slim Sallee, despite throwing only 92 pitches, was hit hard giving up ten hits. However, if it had not been for the bad throw by Greasy Neale in the top of the seventh inning which allowed Risberg and Schalk to score, Sallee may have shut out the White Sox.

*From The 1919 World Series, What Really Happened? copyright William A. Cook by permission of McFarland & Company, Inc. Box 611, Jefferson NC 28640. www.mcfarlandpub.com*



# A SHADOW IN THE NIGHT... THE GRAYING OF THE WHITE

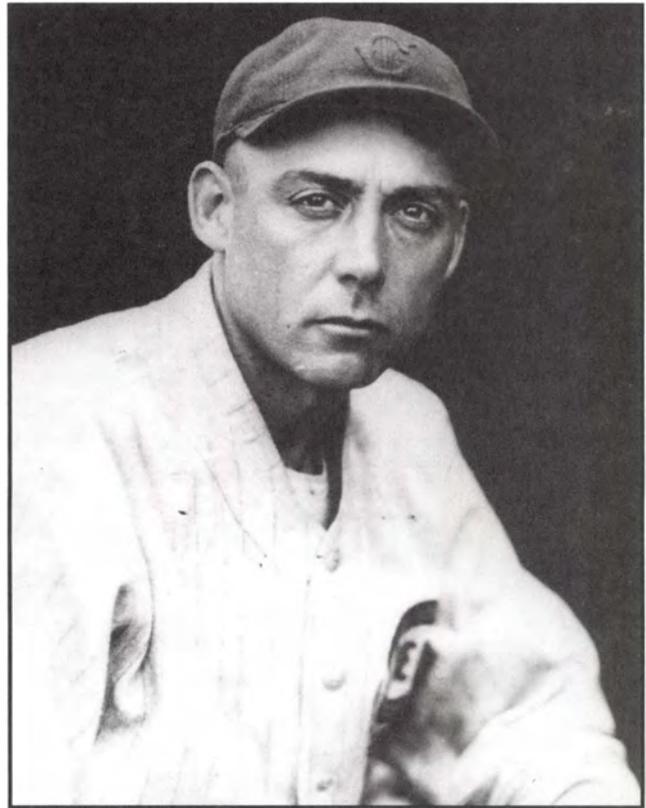
by Susan Dellinger

*"The complete story of this series has yet to be told. It still lacks the spectacular details on the Cincinnati side and the efforts of gamblers to double-cross the sure-thing thieves who had arranged the Black Sox tank job. I would like to read how before the eighth and last game of the best five out of nine series, Roush called a meeting of the Reds behind locked doors and looked a certain player in the eye." Dan Daniel's Column, Syndicated (7/23/62)*

It all began during the 1917 season when Edd Roush was leading the National League and on his way to his first batting championship. He was having a great year and was touted as the exciting new player on Christy Mathewson's squad. Among the joys of this year was the birth of Edd's first and only child, Mary, on August 18. Edd wanted to do something special for his wife, Essie...something really special. He thought about the simple gold wedding band that he had placed on her finger in front of the Justice of the Peace in Indianapolis three years prior. Inside the band was the simple engraving, "Edd to Essie, Apr. 27, 1914." For Essie, it was enough. But not for Edd...not now. Now he was 24 years old, a professional baseball player and a father. He decided to buy her a diamond wedding ring.

That's when he turned to his new friend, Jimmy Widmeyer, for help. Other players on the team told him that Jimmy could get anything he wanted—anything from those rare foreign cigars to the finest Bourbon whiskey (Essie's drink of choice). Jimmy was one of the first people Edd had met when he came to Cincinnati after two years in the Federal League (with Indianapolis and Newark) and with a sour taste of John McGraw in his mouth after a brief stint with the Giants. Jimmy was an unlikely character for Edd to befriend. He seemed more like a New Yorker than a Midwesterner. He was of average stature, but looked small in the company of professional athletes. He had a pink complexion, round German face and big, wide eyes that made it seem he was in a constant state of surprise. He was not a pushy salesman or a show-off. Edd liked that about him. He came off as an average Joe with a genuine liking for people, a quick wit, and a salesman's gift of gab. Jimmy had played some amateur baseball, so the conversation between him and Edd flowed easily. Edd had come to like Jimmy, although he was wary of him.

In 1917, Jimmy was 33 years old and had sold newspapers since he was eight. He had no family and lived alone. To the outside world, his life appeared to be his newsstand on the corner of Walnut and Fifth



*Edd Roush, Cincinnati Reds, 1916-1926.  
(photo: Cincinnati Reds)*

Streets. Few knew that Jimmy had once had a very promising career as a professional boxer. It is likely that he met other boxers on the circuit like Abe Atell and Billy Maharg, in Chicago in the early years of the century. This connection would prove to be noteworthy as the sordid events of the 1919 Series unfolded.

Jimmy seemed to know everyone, and everyone knew Jimmy. Players, sportswriters, businessmen and politicians—all had a friendly greeting for him and a facile handshake. Jimmy called all his customers by their first names. The Widmeyer newsstand was to be a fixture in Cincinnati for 60 years. He seemed to always be hanging around the ballpark and the hotels, even when the team was on the road. He often seemed to single out Edd—he liked this quiet, young Hoosier. Edd was one of the few people in town who knew that Jimmy lived in a three-room suite at the Gibson Hotel across the street. Family members would later claim that Jimmy liked to live in a hotel because he wanted the “grand life.” This dramatic flair was a side of Jimmy that few of his customers knew.

There was much more to Jimmy Widmeyer than what appeared on the surface—merely a gregarious local businessman. In the locker room, the guys called Jimmy the “million-dollar newsboy.” They rumored that he had a million bucks stashed away. Edd thought that was just talk; how in the world could a guy make a million dollars selling newspapers and magazines for buffalo nickels?

Years later it would be reported that, indeed, Jimmy Widmeyer was Cincinnati’s “millionaire newsboy.” He parlayed a \$5,000 savings from his newsstand into \$1.8 million by investing in stock tips given to him by customers in the financial world who stopped by his newsstand every morning to buy a paper and chat.

One of those customers was Horace Schmidlapp, the oldest son of the financier J.G. Schmidlapp and son-in-law to prominent attorney Lawrence Maxwell. The Schmidlapp family was the upper crust of Cincinnati. Jimmy was the bottom of the loaf. But Jimmy was a shrewd entrepreneur and skillful at ingratiating himself with others. It was an unlikely match, but Horace and Jimmy became great friends. They shared a love of adventure, and as Jimmy’s wealth increased (with Horace’s help), they traveled the world together. Little did customers know that when Jimmy was absent from his post on the corner in the bitter Cincinnati winters that he was on safari in the Belgian Congo or riding a camel in Egypt with Horace. It was reported that he went around the world a total of three times from 1915 through the 1920s.

But then the adventures came to an abrupt halt. Two circumstances contributed to the end of this globe-trotting duo, one of their own doing, and one beyond their control. In an embarrassing moment in the Far East, an inebriated Jimmy publicly announced that he

and Horace would buy China! Jimmy saw a deplorably poor and primitive country and he thought it could benefit from some American “know-how.” As Jimmy told the story, Horace became enraged at his traveling companion’s social blunder and called him a “so-and-so” newsboy. Jimmy socked him in the nose on the spot. Horace picked up his hat, walked away and sailed home the next day. He never spoke to Jimmy Widmeyer again as the story goes.

Shortly thereafter, the stock market crashed. Overnight, Jimmy lost all his money and became a struggling newsboy with an open-air office again. Horace Schmidlapp died suddenly (and rather mysteriously) on board the Santa Barbara steamer off the coast of South America in 1929. His body was taken ashore at Callao. No reason was given for his death. His obituary identified him as the president of the Monitor Stove Company and brother of Carl Schmidlapp, vice-president of the Chase National Bank of New York.

How did Horace Schmidlapp die? Another drunken fight, accident, suicide? Was Jimmy Widmeyer also on board the Santa Barbara that night? Jimmy would later report that his favorite city in the world was in South America. He was quoted as saying: “I’ve seen Paris, London, Rome and all the other big towns, but none of them match Buenos Aires.” No evidence has survived and the death of Jimmy’s companion remains a mystery to this day.

This was no ordinary newsboy. Edd would come to learn this as the situation surrounding Essie’s wedding ring took shape. This first encounter would foreshadow events to follow two years later.

The Reds were leaving for the usual two-week road trip and Edd needed that ring. Jimmy said he couldn’t get a ring, but he did have some “special” contacts for fresh cut diamonds. Wouldn’t Essie prefer to have a setting made to her own liking? Edd hemmed and hawed, not having any remote knowledge of rings and said “Okay, but get me a good one, Jimmy.” “No problem, but it’ll cost ya’ a couple hundred or more,” said Jimmy.

Two weeks later Edd opened a small gray velvet pouch and stared down at the flawless, multifaceted, three-carat diamond that would grace Essie’s long, delicate fingers for the rest of her life. (Harry Winston Jewelers in New York would nestle the gem in the classic platinum and sapphire setting chosen by Essie.) The next day Edd put the precious pouch in an envelope and addressed it simply; Mrs. Essie Roush,

Oakland City, Indiana. He sent it via the U.S. mail, no insurance...no special delivery...no problem in 1917! Days later, Essie would gasp as she opened the plain envelope and withdrew a huge, three-carat diamond! She laughed when she told the story over and over again for years to come.

Sometime later it occurred to Edd to ask Jimmy how he came by such a beautiful gem. Jimmy skillfully sidestepped the question. Years later Essie would swear that the stone was “hot” and Edd would smile. But he knew too little about the provenance to deny it.

The diamond ring incident made the events that were about to unfold in 1919 all the more credible, for Jimmy had a part to play in the “graying” of the White Sox, too. It was just a minor role, or—if not—history has been kind.

Cincinnati, October 2, 1919

The euphoria of the day was finally beginning to wear off as Edd stood outside the Metropole Hotel on the evening after Series Game 2. As he looked up into the starry Hudepohl heaven, he gave a small thanks to that Greater Being who had granted his one wish for this day—that he wouldn’t get one of those billy-bedamned charley horses during the big game. As he leaned against the building he crossed one foot over the other and allowed himself a few moments of pride as he relived that sixth-inning catch. The *Spalding Guide* would later give a glowing description of the play: “Once more the Sox were disappointed in their effort to score when Roush ran almost to the center field fence for a marvelous leaping catch of Felsch’s terrific hit.”

Most of the fans had dispersed. Essie was home on Gilbert Hill by now, and the players were standing around smoking cigars and chatting in small groups as they waited for their taxis to take them to the overnight train headed for Chicago and Games 3, 4, and 5. In the soft blue twilight with the golden street lights twinkling around them, the scene looked like a Van Gogh painting of the Arles sidewalk cafe.

As Edd glanced toward Fountain Square, he noticed the familiar newsstand on the corner and a dark, but familiar figure walking toward him—the bit player making his entry onto the stage. Like a shadow in the night, Jimmy’s voice was hushed as he delivered the lines that would thicken the plot in the days to come. There was no formal greeting; the message was too urgent. Jimmy said, “Roush, I want to tell you something. Did you hear about the squabble the White

Sox got into after the first ball game?” “No, what about it?” said Edd. Jimmy was eager to tell all now that he had a willing listener. “Well, the gamblers has got to ’em and they’re supposed to throw the series to the Cincinnati ball club.” Jimmy paused to calculate the impact of his words. No response. Perhaps more evidence was required, so he continued. “And they didn’t get their money after the first ball game and they had a meeting up in Cicotte’s room last night. They had a heck of a go-around.” Edd asked the logical question. “How the devil do you know about this, Jimmy?” The reply came swiftly and without hesitation. “My room was right next to theirs and I heard everything they said. They didn’t get their money and they agreed among themselves to try to go out and win.” “Well, I’ll be dogged.” Edd didn’t want to believe the story, and he didn’t want to prolong the conversation. Somehow he felt complicity by merely talking about it. That was enough. Edd was always uncomfortable with gossip, probably because his mother, Laura, had that reputation in the small farming town where he grew up and it embarrassed him.

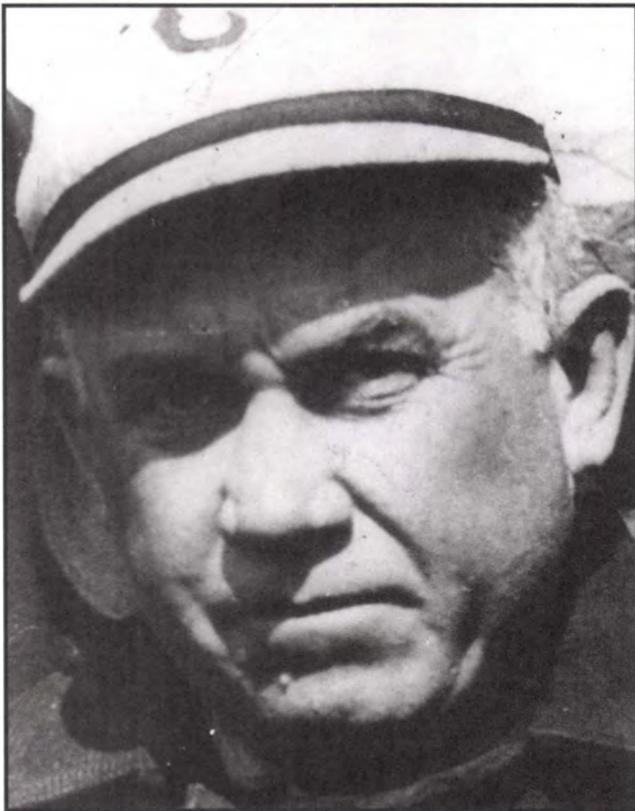
Edd just nodded, said “Good night,” and turned away from Jimmy. Edd didn’t know that only minutes before, Sox manager Kid Gleason was trying to strangle Chuck Gandil under the bleachers, and future Hall of Famer Ray Schalk had to be pulled off of Lefty Williams. Gleason and Schalk must have suspected the same rumor that had just reached Edd’s ears.

He walked back into the hotel and crossed the lobby. Given this new information, it seemed to Edd that the men standing around in the lobby all looked like big-time gamblers from New York or New Jersey. He wondered if Jimmy knew these guys. Gambling wasn’t new to baseball. Edd knew this. Flashes of the past season passed through his mind. Lee Magee throwing the Boston game...that damned Hal Chase in New York! Edd smirked as he remembered how Greasy Neale had cornered Magee on the way down to the locker room and beat the “livin’ daylights outta him.” Magee went down, changed his clothes and left. They never saw him again. “Good riddance,” Edd would say. He remembered what his pal Heinie Groh liked to say to Chase before a game...“So who are ya’ bettin’ on today, Chase? I want to know how many errors I’m going to get.”

Then he thought of Jimmy’s excited face again and suddenly remembered Essie’s diamond. Was Jimmy just listening in the room next to Cicotte, or was his information coming from another source, a source more sinister? Was Jimmy actually involved with big-

time gamblers who were plotting to fix a World Series? As he walked across the lobby, he noticed a clump of men dressed differently from the usual array of writers and fans in their gray and brown fedoras. Their hair was slicked back with grease, big shirt collars were high and stiff, and the silk bowties were the clincher. They looked like big-time gamblers. Or was it just his imagination? He overheard a few of them talking and it seemed they were all placing bets on the Reds. This was odd because the Sox were heavily favored to win.

A thought instantly entered his mind, what was he doing in this lobby alone? He was, after all, the recognizable star of the Reds. Had others seen him talking with Jimmy outside? Would he now be accused of colluding with gamblers? For a brief second he wished



*Pat Moran, manager, Cincinnati Reds, 1919-1923.  
(photo: Cincinnati Reds)*

he could go home to Essie and Mary tonight. He wanted to escape all this. The young athlete now had a new burden to add to the pressure of playing in his first (and last) World Series. He put his head down and hurried outside the hotel just as the taxis were pulling up to take the team to the train station.

All the way to Chicago Edd's mind was racing. Numerous scenarios marched in front of him. Was

Jimmy lying? He'd never known him to lie before. Had Jimmy told anyone else on the team? He thought not. Then logic emerged—what was Jimmy doing with a room at the Sinton where the Sox were staying? Jimmy lived in the Gibson across the street, not the Sinton. Did he move just to be close to the action? Was Jimmy sent there to eavesdrop on the ballplayers for some big-time crooks? Was he some sort of “inside sleuth” for them? If what he said was true, was it his job to find out how the Sox would react to not getting their payoff and what the next move of Cicotte and his gang would be? Who was the gang anyway? Was Joe Jackson in on it? Oh, surely not. Joe had been fielding and hitting well. Maybe Gandil? Certainly not Collins—he was a man of integrity and no friend of Cicotte from all Edd had seen on the field. Couldn't be Schalk—he was hoppin' mad at Cicotte for ignoring his signals yesterday. It all added up. Something was wrong out there, a guy on the field could feel it. A passing thought made Edd mad. They know they can't beat us so they're layin' down out there to steal our glory! He whispered under his breath, “Sonbitches!”

Suddenly he felt ill. He was, after all, out there on that field. He was a player and this was a World Series! Were they all just puppets on that field being manipulated by some powerful forces beyond their control? Did it even matter how he performed the next day? Maybe it was all “predestined”—that idea he had been taught as a boy in the Presbyterian church.

As the train clacked along on its way north, Edd sat alone. His thoughts moved to the concept of integrity—a primary value he had adopted as a novice Mason. He began to wonder what he should do about this. What would be the “right thing” to do? Should he walk up into the next car where the guys were shooting craps in the men's room and just blurt it all out? Should he find Moran and tell him privately? Should he whisper it in the ear of the umpire, Bill Evans, the next day when he came up to bat? Crazy. Evans and Rigler would throw him out of the game! And what real evidence did he have anyway, the word of some newsboy in Cincinnati?

This last thought gelled. The whole thing was absurd. He didn't know anything for sure. He would keep his mouth shut. Edd would try to put it all out of his mind and get some rest now. He had an important game to play in Chicago tomorrow and, yes, his performance would make a difference! Edd didn't make it to the Pullman car. He slept all night sitting up. But things would get worse before they got better.

Cincinnati. October 8, 1919

The city of Chicago was dumbfounded that those Ohio hicks called the Red Stockings had snatched four games away from their World Champion Sox. People surmised that some underhanded business had gone on down in the Ohio River Valley during those critical Games 1 and 2. Had their boys been drugged? Had Kentucky Derby gamblers bought out the umpires? Sure Jackson had played brilliantly, but what had happened to the pitchers! Had they lost their minds drinking southern Indiana moonshine? Well, they were coming back home in Chi-town now, and surely the white boys would clinch the Series and run away with Games 8 and 9.

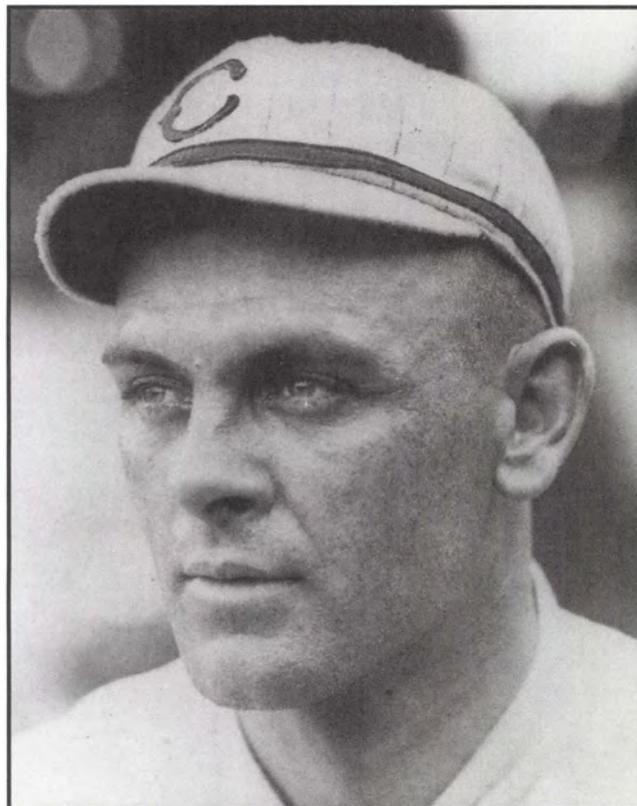
The third and final episode between Edd and Jimmy occurred the evening after Game 7. The Reds were again waiting for their rides to the train station to play what was to be the final game of the Series in Chicago. The fans were milling around the newsstand and the opportunity presented itself. Again, Jimmy initiated the conversation. "Roush, come over here a minute." Edd flicked his cigar on the street and walked over slowly. His only thought was, "Here we go again" "You know what I told you about the gamblers getting to the White Sox?" Edd replied with a "Yup." "Well, they got to some players on your own ball club now!" Jimmy's eyes were wider than ever. Edd's mind raced back to Game 6 and the indelible image of Ruether throwing puffballs. This time, Edd took the bait. "If that's true, I know damn well what it is; it has to be the pitchin'. It's damn sure not in the field." Jimmy said nothing more; his message had struck his victim to the quick. Edd looked into those wide eyes for a long few seconds, but he was done. He'd said his piece. And, he didn't deny Edd's allegations. Edd knew now what he had to do.

Chicago. October 9, 1919

At exactly 11 a.m. Edd walked into the clubhouse loaded for bear. He had kept the conversation with Jimmy to himself all night on the train, but he had thought of nothing else and had not slept well. He had visions of Ruether drinking with the gamblers the night before Game 1. Although Dutch had pitched well the next day, he remembered his lousy performance in Game 6 when Jimmy Ring was brought in to replace him in the fifth inning.

He stood at his locker and waited for his moment. He was still burning and committed now to bringing it all out into the open. Jimmy's words had

cut deep. He saw Ruether standing down the row and couldn't bear to look at him. Then he saw Hod Eller and remembered that he would be pitching today. Hum, come to think of it, he wasn't sure about Eller either. Suddenly the whole room seemed suspect to him. He knew it was irrational, but he couldn't help it. Edd's anger over the betrayal had collided with his anxiety over the ball game and the emotions were poisoning him.



*Hod Eller, Cincinnati Reds, Cincinnati Reds, 1916-1921.  
(photo:Cincinnati Reds)*

The moment neared. Moran was due to arrive any minute now. The players all knew the routine; Moran would come in and call a clubhouse meeting to go over the other team's hitters. That would be Edd's chance.

Moran entered the room, cleared his throat and began to speak. Edd interrupted him. "Before you start this meeting, Pat, I have something to say. I understand that the gamblers have gotten to some players on THIS ball club and damned if I'm going out there and run myself to death trying to win a World Series if somebody around here is trying to throw it." There it was...on the table...indisputable. You could hear a pin drop. Moran's reaction was immediate. He yelled to

Jake Daubert (Reds Captain) to come over to them and motioned for Edd and Jake to go into the shower room with him. Moran told Edd to repeat what he had just said and he did. Jake seemed dumbfounded. Then Moran cut to the chase; “Eller is our lead-off pitcher today. We need to talk to him.”

Three somber men marched back out into the open space of the Reds locker room. They walked right up to Hod Eller who had his back to them. He turned sharply to see the three angry faces in front of him. Moran said, “Hod, I want the truth right now. Did any gamblers approach you and offer you money to throw today’s game?” Hod didn’t miss a beat. He raised his thick, black eyebrows and looked directly at his manager and said, “Yep. Some fella’ followed me up to my room in the hotel in Chicago. As I was unlocking the door, he walked right up to me and held up five 1,000 dollar bills. Said, ‘These are yours if you throw the game tomorrow. And there’ll be five more just like ‘em for you after the game.’” There was a stunned silence in the room. Moran said, “What did you tell him?” Hod’s natural backwoods honesty gleamed behind his eyes. He, too, had waited for this moment. He was exploding with the deep desire to tell his story. And, he knew he was blameless. He straightened his back and prepared to relive the event.

“Why I told him to get outta my sight quick or I would punch him right square on the nose! I don’t have any use for those kinda’ guys. And... I would have, too!” It was so honest. No man could have disbelieved the tall, gangly pitcher. Edd felt a surge of pride in his teammate. He knew Hod spoke the truth. He knew that Hod was not capable of not doing so. Hod and Edd’s careers had paralleled one another. Both were Hoosiers and both started with the Three-I League in the Midwest. When Christy Mathewson was putting together his team in 1917, Hod and Edd were both new members. He felt a slight pang of guilt at the thought that he had suspected him. Damn that Jimmy Widmeyer!

But Moran still had to do his job. All eyes were on the boss. Moran said, “Ok, Eller, I’m going to start you today. But, if I see anything off-kilter...if they start hitting you...I’m going to yank you. Do you understand?” Eller responded with a simple “Yup.” He turned back around and continued to adjust his gear at his locker. He wasn’t the least bit upset, in fact he felt surprisingly good! He had told the story and gotten it out of his craw. Now it was time to “play ball.” And, in the final game of the 1919 World Series, Moran’s

most interesting and brilliant moundsman threw an elegant array of raw fastballs combined with his famous talcum powder and paraffin “shine” balls to win the day...and the Series!

### *Postscript*

When the statisticians completed their analysis of the 1919 World Series, the numbers didn’t lie. There had been no one outstanding hitter for the Reds. The best batting average for the Reds was earned by Greasy Neale with a .357 in 28 tries, whereas Joe Jackson pounded .375. (Strange tally for a man trying to throw games?) The two top hitters for the Reds in the regular season had poor showings: Roush at .214 and Groh at .172. (Edd would get the NL crown with a .321 batting average and a .429 slugging ratio.) Although Edd and Heinie didn’t deliver at the plate, they more than made up for it in their defensive play. They were the motivators, the hustlers, and the never-say-die guys on the team. The Reds had something to prove—the dopers had deemed them the underdogs. The difference was the 1919 Reds played as a team. It would be 20 years before another group of hustlers in Cincinnati uniforms would play that way again.

Until his dying day (age 94) Edd Roush swore to anyone who asked that the Reds were the better team. He would get angry, even throw a fit, when someone said the Reds won only because the Sox threw the Series. He knew in his heart that the Reds were a better team. He loved to say, “We woulda beat ‘em anyway!” And, through it all, he protected the mystery of the shadow figure that tipped him off to the fix those many years ago.

Although Roush told his story to journalists who interviewed him, none identified the “missing link” as Jimmy Widmeyer, the million-dollar newsboy. This discovery sheds new light on a small corner of the most controversial baseball event in American history. The full and final truth may never be known, but scholars will continue to find heuristic value in each new contribution to the unfinished mosaic.

*Susan E. Dellinger, PhD. is a three year SABR member and participates on the Deadball Era committee. She is the granddaughter of Edd Roush. This account contains a lot of first-hand family oral history that will become part of a biography she is preparing with the working title, Her \$ 10,000 Beauty: The Life and Times of Edd J. Roush.*

# A MINOR MYSTERY FROM THE 1919 WORLD SERIES

by Gene “Two Finger” Carney

It is always good practice in doing research to be wary of “facts” that show up in just one source. They should automatically raise suspicions. Even if they show up in two sources, it is best to check and see if the later source is just quoting the earlier. Yet, I found one orphaned item in the “Black Sox” file in Cooperstown’s library that had about it the ring of truth—even though I have seen it cited nowhere else. Tom Swope, in his column “I Recall” wrote on October 24, 1935, about the 1919 World Series Game 7.

*“To refresh memories: the Sox, down 4-1 in the best-of-nine showdown, won Game Six, preventing the Reds from clinching the championship at home. Game Seven was also in Cincinnati. Over 32,000 fans turned out for Game Six—the first two games in Cincinnati drew around 30,000, too. Yet Game Seven’s attendance was only 13,923. How come?”*

The weather was perfect—warm and sunny. There had been traffic problems the day before. There were also rumors flying that the Reds were tossing games, so the Series would go nine and bring in more money for everybody. Eliot Asinof mentions both of these explanations in *Eight Men Out*. Most sources skip over the question. Harvey Frommer in *Shoeless Joe and Ragtime Baseball* guessed that the Reds’ fans were so disappointed with their team’s showing in Game 6 that they decided to stay home. But think about it, this was the first time the Reds were in a World Series, and their fans were rabid.

Victor Luhrs in *The Great Baseball Mystery* concludes that so few fans showed up for Game 7 because “the fix rumors had taken place and fans had become disgusted.” He is referring, by the way, to the rumors that the Reds were now coughing up the Series. Joseph Krueger in *Baseball’s Greatest Drama* agrees that the Reds fans were “thoroughly displeased” with the way Game 6 went, and stayed away from Game 7 to punish the Reds.

The Reds sold their 1919 Series tickets in an unusual way. According to Fred Lieb’s account in *The Story of the World Series*, fans could purchase three-game strips for the games that were guaranteed (barring a sweep) to be played in Cincinnati—Games 1, 2 and 6. Perhaps there was a nice discount for those who bought the strips, but maybe the single-ticket price for Games 7 was set too high?

*The Spalding Guide* explains the falloff in attendance for the fourth game in Cincinnati as “due to a misunderstanding concerning the sale of tickets.” They also chide the Cincinnati fans for being too depressed after the Reds lost Game 6, thus failing to clinch the championship.

But then there is Tom Swope’s column. It begins with a nice description of the Reds’ owner (and swing vote on the National Commission) Garry Herrmann. Garry was a party animal, it seems, and he was having one fine Oktoberfest. Herrmann had been influential in reviving the World Series after the Giants just said no in 1904, and it was Herrmann’s idea to try the best-of-nine format in 1919. With his team still up four games to two, Herrmann partied well into the night on October 7.

And the next day, he slept in. Game 7 would not start till 2 PM. Why rise before noon? According to Swope, Herrmann not only slept later, but bathed and had a manicure. And he may not have done all this in his own room, because people had been looking for him. Why? Because in his suitcase, Herrmann had all of the tickets for Game 7.

At just about the same time Herrmann realized this, he was found by his son-in-law, Karl Finke. There was less than two hours before game time, and practically all of the 13,923 tickets were sold in a frantic effort in that short span. Presumably, the game might have been delayed a little, but no one reported that.

Again, Tom Swope’s version is not corroborated. But it seems believable. It is clear to anyone root-

ing around in the 1919 scene that there was a lot of drinking going on. It is not much of a strain to imagine Herrmann and Ban Johnson emptying pitchers of Cincinnati suds, and while they may not have had a victory to celebrate, they both must have been very much relieved that the White Sox had not laid down again in Game 6, as they had in Games 1, 2, 4 and 5. It is also pretty clear that everyone had by then heard the rumors of the big fix being in, and those four losses served up by the Sox aces, Cicotte and Williams, made the rumors believable. So yes, Garry and Ban were old friends on top of the world—Garry’s team was still in a good position, Ban chortling over Comiskey’s problems—they had a lot to celebrate.

In 1919, reporters were not out to embarrass club owners. More likely, they drank along with the “magnates” and would no more report an owner drunk and disorderly than they would write about their own peccadillos. And if they tried, there were editors to remove anything potentially libelous—or scandalous.

So even if reporters knew that Garry Herrmann had slept while his suitcase full of tickets went unsold, no one would want to embarrass him by putting that in print. Unfortunately there was no good cover story, either. Which left historians to wonder: what was wrong with those Reds’ fans? Why did they practically boycott Game 7?

*The Cincinnati Enquirer* on October 9, offered an explanation.

*“Some few were informed that they could purchase tickets in the evening at the Hotel Sinton but there was no general sale. Then it was announced that all tickets would be at the ball park at 8 o’clock yesterday morning, but most of the reserve seats were held out and kept up town and thousands were turned away at the yard, unable to attain what they wanted in the way of reservations.*”

*“Joe Sweeney and his assistants handled the downtown sale as well as they could, but it was impossible for them to take care of the crowds that thronged the office, and hundreds of willing fans turned back when they found that they would have to stand in line for a couple of hours in order to secure tickets.”*

*The Chicago Herald and Examiner* commented the next day on the long lines of men, women and children that stretched for blocks at every ticket outlet in the city, lines that could be seen by those on their way to work on the morning of the game. But they had no ideas about the reason for them.

Garry Herrmann died in 1931. Prohibition was repealed in December 1933. The article by Tom Swope appeared in October 1935.

#### **Comments from Kevin Grace:**

I’ve researched Herrmann for over 20 years and have heard this story several times. Frankly, not much basis in fact. Swope was a good reporter but sometimes was more intent on telling a good story and got a little carried away. Many years ago, I interviewed an elderly lady by the name of Fairweather who had been a secretary to Finke off and on from 1918 until the late ’20s. She had also heard this story, and according to her, Herrmann only had the tickets for his personal guests and other dignitaries.

Everyday sales of tickets were typically handled by the Strauss Tobacco Shop and at the ballpark. Herrmann was indeed someone who enjoyed a good party and that evening was no different. And he was so meticulous about his personal appearance that he would have bathed and had a manicure before the game. Herrmann had to rush off to the ballpark to make sure his guests could go in.

The general attendance may have been low for a couple of reasons: although Herrmann managed to have the Series go nine games instead of seven in order to recoup some of the lost income due to the changes effected by the war, fan attention was wavering by Game 7. This could have been due to the length of the series, but it also could have been that a fix of some sort was becoming more and more of an open secret. Certainly there were enough journalists and team hangers-on who had suspicions, so this suspicion could have filtered down to the everyday fan and diminished interest.

Also, when Swope wrote this article, Herrmann was dead, and the stories that people told about how colorful and gregarious he was just improved and expanded with the telling. He was a great favorite with fans and reporters during his life,

well before his baseball career and certainly during it, and people liked to talk about the “Herrmann days.”

Those who thought a nine-game series was a bad idea in the first place, seized on the low turnout for Game 7 as proof that fan interest could not be sustained. But a sellout crowd of 32,930 showed up for Game 8 in Chicago. Presumably these fans heard the same rumors about fixes that the Cincinnati fans heard.

As with so many things about the 1919 World Series, there is no unanimity about just what happened. And what we do not know for sure seems to outweigh what we do know.

The site of the ninth game of the 1919 World Series, if it was necessary, would have been played in

Cincinnati. And that is because the Reds won a coin toss after Game 7. National League president John Heydler did the honors in Garry Herrmann's office. He flipped a quarter. Charles Comiskey called heads. This was the second coin toss Comiskey lost to Herrmann; after the first one, Herrmann won the right for the Reds to play at home for the first two games.

The Cincinnati newspapers after Game 7 said tickets for Game 9, if there was to be one, would go on sale at 4 p.m. the day before and the offices would stay open until 10 p.m.; they would reopen at 8 a.m. on the day of the game.

*Writer and editor Gene Carney serves on five SABR committees and is Vice Chair for the Leatherstocking Chapter.*



Hotel Sinton, mentioned in three articles in this anthology, was located on Fountain Square in the heart of downtown Cincinnati. It is best known as the meeting place for the “gamblers” and the White Sox players in the “fixing” of the 1919 World Series. (photo: Dick Miller collection)

# CINCINNATI'S KING OF DIAMONDS

by Kevin Grace

In Garry Herrmann's biographical file in the National Baseball Library in Cooperstown, New York, there is an article that is telling in what it says about the kind of man he was. The article is "The Story of Sauer Kraut," written by an hotelier named George Wolf, taken from a speech he gave to the Chicago Stewards Club in 1921. How the article ended up in Herrmann's file isn't a mystery:

an associate or fan addressed it to him, and Herrmann duly put it in his office files, along with the decades of correspondence about baseball player contracts, community concerns and functions, and the daily details of operating a Major League franchise. And as the Reds' boss from 1902 to 1927, Herrmann was deeply involved in the Cincinnati culture, a hometown favorite who was always true to the local German

American heritage of working-class sentiments and ethnic cuisine.

Wolf's sauerkraut article extolled the heritage and the health virtues of kraut, along with the author's admonition: "...don't laugh at sauer kraut...remember that sauer kraut is a serious proposition. Sauer kraut is the poor man's dish and the rich man's medicine." Over his lifetime, and especially since his

death in 1931, Garry Herrmann's image has been much like the popular notion of sauerkraut. He has been caricatured as an ethnic stereotype—the little brush moustache, the loud, checkered suits accessorized with diamond pinkie rings and elaborate stickpins, along with his culinary predilection for beer, sausages, and kraut. It is a simplistic view of someone who was a complex man, how-

ever. For all his glad-handing with the fans and fellow team owners, for his boisterous, high-living public persona, Garry Herrmann was an astute, hard-edged politician known in urban political circles throughout the country and courted by the media for his opinions about Organized Baseball's economics. Herrmann was arguably the most powerful man in American sports for the first two

decades of the twenty-

th century. And, he epitomized the National Pastime as the "poor man's dish and the rich man's medicine." He was the first true boss of baseball.

August Herrmann was born in Cincinnati on May 3, 1859, the son of German immigrants Christian and Margaret Meyer Herrmann. At the time, Cincinnati was still experiencing the constant change in its population and in its business activity



*Garry Herrmann, President, Cincinnati Reds, 1902-1927.  
(photo: Cincinnati Reds)*

that marked it as a city of newcomers and cultural assimilation since its founding on the Ohio River in 1788. It was a city at once Old World and distinctly American. Soon, German Americans were establishing leading roles in ward politics, local industry, religious influence, and cultural influence.

It was in this heady metropolitan environment of factories, saloons, breweries, civic clubs, churches, and politics that Herrmann was raised in a working-class home. When he was 11, his father died suddenly, and young August was responsible to help provide for his mother and sister. His education in the public schools was quickly overmatched by his education in the streets of Cincinnati. At first he pursued odd jobs around the city. Soon, though, he landed the job that would influence his community standing for the rest of his life and determine the path of his career.

Herrmann took a position in a print shop as a “printer’s devil,” an apprentice and errand boy. His foreman took a liking to him, and thinking the young man resembled the Italian patriot Giuseppe Garibaldi, he gave him the nickname “Garry,” and it was as Garry Herrmann that he became popularly known. One of the contracts held by the print shop was the publishing of *The Law Bulletin* for Cincinnati and Hamilton County. In 1887 at the age of 26, he was already married to Annie Becker, daughter of German immigrants herself, and with his membership in the Typographers Union, along with a keen sense of local politics, he became a ward captain in the machine of Republican boss George B. Cox. Herrmann’s affiliation with Cox led to a number of political patronage jobs, and eventually a partnership in the Reds that allowed him to become the president of the club.

At heart, Herrmann was a community joiner, whether it was Republican organizations, his labor union, or athletic clubs, such as the Nord Cincinnati Turn Verein. Coming of age in a time when the Cincinnati Red Stockings made their professional debut in 1869, when the Reds became part of the fledgling National League in 1876, and when the American Association Reds entertained the city’s baseball fans in the 1880s, Garry Herrmann was acutely aware of the importance baseball held in Cincinnati culture, and of the natural connection between boss politics and the game, between courting voters and fans and in some cases making use of the latter to create the former. Politics and baseball were a time-honored combination in the history of the sport.

In 1902 Herrmann got his chance to experience both at the same time. A group of investors that included Cox, other local Republicans, industrialists Max and Julius Fleischmann, and a number of minor investors, purchased the Cincinnati Reds from absentee owner John T. Brush for \$150,000. Julius Fleischmann was a former mayor and part of the Cox machine. It was primarily the brothers’ fortune that allowed the partnership to buy the club. Max was ostensibly the chairman of the group, but he preferred to pursue his own pleasures of big-game safaris, race-tracks, and world travel, leaving the politics to Julius. All of them appreciated Garry’s substantial organizational skills, so he was installed as president of the team. Formally Herman reported to Max. On an everyday basis, he was in charge.

Herrmann was in his element. He loved the entire world of sports, but he particularly loved the baseball environment. In Cincinnati in 1902, that environment included the Reds’ ballpark, the Palace of the Fans. Before selling the team to the Cincinnati group, John Brush had put a new façade and grandstand on old League Park. The result was a white diamond in the red brick neighborhood of row houses, saloons, and factories that was the West End. Partly inspired by the architecture of the 1892 World’s Fair in Chicago, the Palace of the Fans featured scalloped box seats for the well-to-do fans, and bleachers and a chicken wire-covered “Rooter’s Row” for the working-class fans. And typical of many urban ballparks, it served for more than baseball games. Police reviews, boxing matches, and political rallies were held there as well. In one particular instance in 1904, local strongman Henry Holtgrewe, a popular German saloon owner in the neighborhood of Over-the-Rhine, put on an exhibition in which he did a back lift of a platform holding the entire Reds team, along with their opponents—a weight of 4,103 pounds. This was Garry’s playground; the boxers and policemen and saloon owners were his friends.

He was making friends and admirers in Major League Baseball as well. In the year after he became the Reds president, Herrmann negotiated a peace between the established National League and the fledgling American League, led by a former Cincinnati newspaperman and Herrmann crony, Ban Johnson. The new league played in some of the same cities as the National League and competed for some of the same players, not to mention the competition for fan dollars and affections. On January 10, 1903,

Herrmann mediated an agreement between the National and American Leagues in Cincinnati's St. Nicholas Hotel, the so-called "Cincinnati Peace Agreement" whereby the disputes over players, territories, and baseball business would henceforth be governed by a three-member National Commission composed of the American League president, the National League president, and one owner. Garry Herrmann was the overwhelming choice as that third member. As chairman of the commission, Herrmann was de facto the first commissioner of Organized Baseball. In negotiating the peace, Herrmann raised his own stock in the eyes of his fellow owners by relinquishing his claim to outfielder Wahoo Sam Crawford to the American League Detroit Tigers. Crawford had signed contracts with both the Reds and the Tigers, and so Herrmann acknowledged that the Detroit contract superseded the Cincinnati one.

His political acumen also came to the fore in 1905 when, as chairman of the commission, he negotiated a permanent World Series in 1905 between the two leagues. Herrmann made the Series an annual event rather than an occasional exhibition at the whim of the league championship clubs, and in so doing earned a designation as the "Father of the World Series."

And, had electric lighting technology been a little more advanced, Herrmann might have been called the "father of night baseball" as well. Always looking for an edge to make the Reds competitive on

the field, and lucrative at the ticket office, Herrmann experimented with installing lights in the Palace of the Fans in 1908. Working with a floodlight manufacturer named George Cahill, Herrmann planned to have five light towers placed around the ballpark, each tower holding 14 arc lights. To raise the \$50,000 necessary, Herrmann formed the Night Baseball Development Company. Only three towers were erected that season, and Herrmann determined to

wait until the next year to stage a night game. On June 18, 1909, Herrmann

planned to have his Reds play an amateur team, but as the afternoon waned, he hesitated about using his players. Instead, after

the Reds beat the Phillies 4-1 in an afternoon game, Herrmann recruited

a Cincinnati Elks team to play a squad from across

the river in Newport, Kentucky. As the Grand Exalted Ruler of the Elks, Herrmann was

in a position to request an immediate favor. The Cincinnati team

won the game 8-5 in a contest marked

by 18 errors. Though the infield was well illuminated, the outfield remained in shadow.

Herrmann was only partially satisfied, and cancelled further plans for night games.

Herrmann must have believed that his efforts as an owner and as the chairman of the commission were worth it when the Reds reached the 1919 World Series to battle the Chicago White Sox. And, he must have felt a great wave of triumph when his team prevailed in what was to be a nine-game championship to recoup some of Organized Baseball's financial losses



during the previous two years. The infamous Black Sox scandal that followed tempered his joy. He certainly could not have been surprised by the influence of the gamblers in getting seven White Sox players to take bribes. After all, betting was a part of the game, and notes from fellow owners and league officials show up in Herrmann's files as early as 1904 when Ban Johnson paid off a bet to Garry: "Enclosed please find check for \$50 to cover the wager we had on the first game Wyatt Lee pitched against the Cincinnati club." And, in 1916 from Charles Weeghman of the Cubs: "I am enclosing my check for \$75.00, as per our little wager on our opening game. I am enclosing check as I remember it for a suit of clothes."

He was no innocent bystander in the matter of gambling, but Herrmann was undoubtedly stung by the scandal and its aftermath. Herrmann viewed betting on a game as distinctly different from throwing a game, as evidenced by his strenuous effort to have his first baseman Hal Chase, one of the most corrupt players in baseball history, thrown out of Organized Baseball after 1918. But whether there was a World Series scandal or not, his days as chairman of the National Commission were numbered. Too many things in the Major Leagues were going awry. After a fairly strong two decades of growth and further solidification of the game in the public mind as the "National Pastime," baseball needed to get its house in order. Just before the World Series began, National League president John Heydler refused to back Herrmann's reappointment as chairman. On January 8, 1920, Herrmann resigned from the National Commission. In the wake of the World Series scandal, the owners named Chicago federal judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis as the sole commissioner of the game, and Herrmann's only baseball concern became his role as president of the Reds.

In his final years before he resigned from the Reds in 1927 because of ill health, Garry Herrmann continued with his diverse interests in American sports. In 1926, he applied to the American Professional Football League for a Cincinnati franchise, but what local pro teams there had been on the city's gridirons had not lasted long, and Cincinnati was considered a poor venue for football. His application was denied.

As his health continued to decline due to arteriosclerosis and diabetes, Herrmann resigned from the Reds and retired. Four years later, on April 25, 1931,

he died at the age of 71. Newspapers around the country carried his obituary, extolling his high living, his genial parties with reporters and his fellow owners, and his stewardship of the Major Leagues. In Cincinnati, Herrmann's funeral service was handled by his beloved Elks, and the former Grand Exalted Ruler was honored by hundreds of people. And, in the decades following, he became a legend among the journalists who knew him first-hand, and their stories of the man were embellished with each reminiscence.

It is a curious omission that Garry Herrmann is not in Baseball's Hall of Fame. No executive or owner influenced the game the way he did during a crucial period in baseball history. No one had more control of the game's workings from 1902 to 1920. Today his influence is duly noted by any baseball historian who writes of that period, but in the public mind, his story has all but faded.

In 1988, the year the city of Cincinnati celebrated its bicentennial, Cincinnati author Philip Clayton wrote a monologue that was performed by an actor portraying Herrmann, part of a series of local historical characters in period costume telling of their lives. In the monologue, Herrmann's character, rotund, florid, and loudly dressed, sums up the real Herrmann's life well in Clayton's script. Speaking of the joy he experienced in his life and career, "Herrmann" states: "Nothing in the world I like better than beer—unless it's baseball."

*Cartoon opposite from **Club Men of Cincinnati in Pen and Ink Sketches** by E.A. Bushnell.*

*Kevin Grace has been a member of SABR since 1984. He teaches sports studies at the University of Cincinnati, including courses on the social history of baseball. His current research centers on baseball and American vice, the tobacco industry and baseball, and a biography of Garry Herrmann.*

# SIDNEY WEIL

## OWNER OF THE CINCINNATI REDS, 1929-1933

*Sidney Weil's brief but influential tenure as owner of the Cincinnati Reds set the stage for the team's rebirth in the late 1930s. As a young man Weil had worked in his father's stable, helping provide work horses to area businesses in Cincinnati. He eventually became such a keen judge of horseflesh that he traveled far and wide, gaining a reputation as one of the finest horse traders west of the Alleghenies. But his brief stint in the army during World War I convinced him that his future lay with the emergence of the automobile, already quickly replacing horses in the nation's economy.*

*By 1919 Weil had become owner of the largest Ford dealership in Cincinnati. Within ten years he presided over the largest dealership under one roof in the United States. Throughout the Roaring Twenties, Weil's growing fortune was increasingly invested in the stock market, much of it "on margin," a common practice of entrepreneurs in those largely unregulated years.*

*In April 1929, Weil realized a boyhood dream by becoming majority owner of the Reds. His timing could not have been worse. Just five months later the stock market collapsed, taking nearly all of Weil's fortune with it. He struggled for the next four years to recover his losses, before declaring bankruptcy early in 1933. When the bank demanded he repay his loan of \$100,000, Weil couldn't raise the funds, and the franchise was sold to Powell Crosley, one of the bank's directors.*

*In 1966, Weil wrote his memoirs, detailing his life in and out of baseball. The following are excerpts from his manuscript.*

"In the first year we were married, 1919, Mrs. Weil and I stood behind the last row of the upper grandstand, she on a pop box, to see a double header with Pittsburgh, and I said, 'Honey, next year we are

going to have a box seat.' Sure enough we have had the same box for the past 45 years."



*Sidney Weil, President, Cincinnati Reds, 1929-1933.  
(photo: Cincinnati Reds)*

"Since early childhood I had wanted to own a baseball club. In 1929 I had accumulated a small fortune and went to work to acquire control of the Cincinnati Reds. In early September, I had a broker contact a man who held 2,400 shares of the 6,000 shares outstanding. My broker offered \$210 per share, but was turned down. I asked a friend, Joe Garretson, if he knew of any Reds stock available and I would pay \$125 per share. That afternoon, he said he could get several hundred shares. He continued to buy more stock and delivered it to the Pearl Market Bank but not transferred to my name.

“Rumors went around town that someone was buying up Reds stock. In a few days, Jim Orr, one of a group holding 1,250 shares, left a message he wanted to talk. He said his stock could be bought ‘at a price.’ I offered \$210 a share if Orr would help me obtain enough stock to gain control of the team. His call to Hulbert Taft, editor of the *Times-Star* newspaper, brought in more shares but also a six-inch headline in the paper that an unknown was purchasing stock in the ball club.

“Orr gave me list of stockholders, few of who held more than five shares. What a job! My broker contacted each person until we thought we had enough stock when we learned the preferred stock also had a vote and we had to go back to work. When I finally knew I had control, I called a press conferences to announce my ownership and took over as President just before the season ended in September.

“The first day I arrived at the Reds office at 8:30 am. The door was locked and no one arrived until 9:30. I set 9 a.m. as the beginning of the work day and promised to keep everyone in their job unless there was a problem. The secretary continued to arrive at 10:30 and she soon received notice. My sister-in-law, Frances Levy, expressed interest in the job, was hired and has remained with the Reds, under Larry McPhail, Warren Giles, Gabe Paul and now, Bill DeWitt.

“At the December meeting of the National League, my new manager, Dan Howley, told me the Yankess wanted to get rid of Leo Durocher, who had been a pet of Miller Huggins, now deceased. I went to see Mr. Barrow. Yes, Durocher was for sale for \$25,000 plus one minor league player. I mentioned \$7500 and the player. He swiveled around and looked out the window. After a long pause, I said, ‘Well, I’ve been thrown out of better offices than this.’ With that he turned around and in a few minutes I bought Durocher for \$10,000 and the player.

“As soon as I arrived home I began to get letters from hotels enclosing bills owed by Durocher. I

answered them stating that as soon as he began to earn some money I would try to help them. When the club went south for the spring, I called Durocher to my room and showed him the bills. He admitted they were valid and he eventually would pay them. They amounted to nearly a year’s salary. We made an agreement I would withhold all of his salary except what he needed to live, and apply the balance against his indebtedness.

“Durocher was a very natty dresser. It wasn’t a week after our agreement that I received a \$350 haberdasher’s bill for a Durocher purchase. I called him at once and asked him what of the purchase he had worn. He said only the sweater he had on. I gave him enough to pay for the sweater and told him to return the rest. With all his faults, one couldn’t help liking him.

“On Opening Day, 1930, I received a call from Commissioner Landis. He said, ‘Weil, Durocher owes a lot of money here in New York, do not permit him to play until he pays.’ I explained our payment plan and pleaded that if he could not play he would never have any money to pay the bills. So the Judge reversed himself. It took Leo about two and a half years to pay his bills. He would come and ask me for \$100 and we would settle for \$25. He got the name of C-note Leo.

“One winter while Leo remained in Cincinnati, I made him speaking representative of the club. He would completely charm any group with his storytelling. One of his favorite anecdotes was about Babe Ruth. Early one season, after two weeks of play, Leo was hitting .300 and the Babe only .250, so Leo commenced to ride him about it. Ruth replied, ‘Kid, when October comes and I look for your average, I’ll run my finger down the percentage column to .220 and I’ll go to the left and there I will find Durocher.’ Then Leo added, ‘And I was there.’ He always brought down the house.

“During a late-season game in Boston, two men in the stands roasted Durocher throughout the

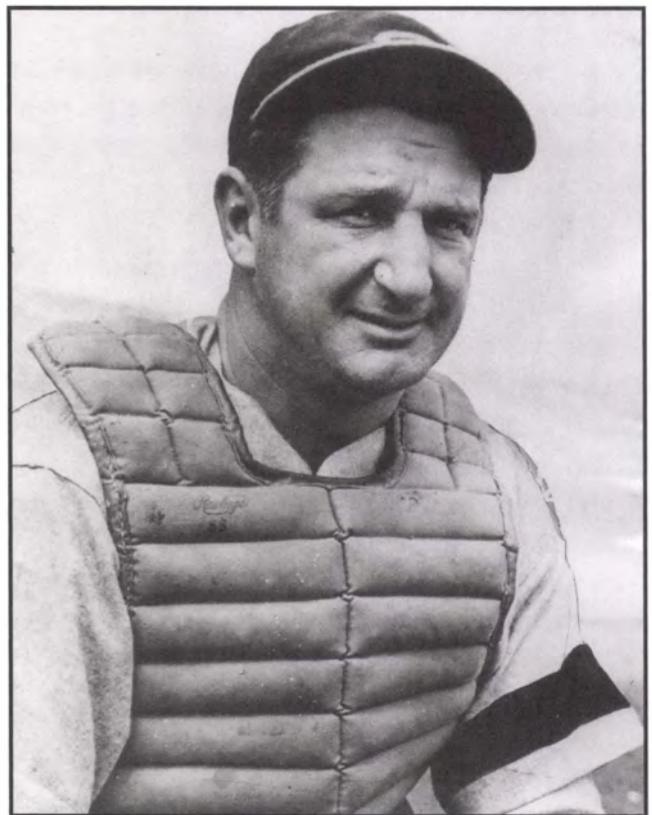
game. After the game, they came on the field to shake hands and Durocher happened to step on their feet with his spikes. They got a warrant for his arrest but we sent him to our next stop in New York before the warrant could be served. The next spring I called Boston owner Judge Fuchs requesting he find a lawyer for Leo in case the warrant was served. It was, and a trial was held. A woman, a stranger to us but familiar with all the Boston players, was Leo's chief witness. She testified she sat behind the men at the game and heard them call Leo atrocious names. When asked by the Judge what they said, she responded that a lady just couldn't use such language. Durocher was acquitted.

"A message from Branch Rickey in 1933 requested a meeting in the lobby of the then-Pennsylvania Hotel in New York. He said he needed a good shortstop for St. Louis to make a run for the pennant. Eventually the discussion got around to Durocher. I said he was untouchable. But Rickey persisted. He led out with pitcher Paul Derringer, whom I had been trying to get for a long time. He also offered another good pitcher, Allyn Stout, and an infielder at the end of his career, Sparky Adams. In return he wanted Durocher and a pitcher, Jack Ogden. Derringer was worth \$125,000-150,000. Stout I sold for \$20,000 a couple of months later, and Adams was a throw in. Durocher was worth only \$35,000-50,000. I consulted my manager Donie Bush and coach Jewell Ens. Both agreed I should be willing to swim across the river to make the deal. I called Branch and the deal was done.

"When I gave Durocher the news he shouted, 'I won't go; I won't play for that slave driver and join his chain gang.' Finally he quieted down and agreed to talk to Rickey. We meet Rickey in his hotel room where he was still in bed in a silk nightgown and sleeping cap, having just finished his Bible reading. Leo put his foot on the bed edge and began the same barrage he gave me. Rickey let him talk, then said, 'Leo, now it's my turn to talk. I'm sure you will play for St. Louis, but suppose you don't change your mind. Suppose you watch our present shortstop fail

to make plays you would make easily, that cost us games and keeps us out of the World Series. Won't you fell silly causing yourself and others to miss the World Series money?' Leo agreed to report to the Cardinals that day. And Derringer joined the Reds.

"Every year my scouts recommended many players that I had to pass on for lack of funds—Joe DiMaggio, Billy Herman, Big Bill Lee, to name a few—all who could have moved us from non-contenders to winners. John McGraw said to me at a World Series game, 'Mr. Weil, wouldn't this game look good in Cincinnati?' We had just finished in last place. Yet he said if I would just come up with two or three really good players there was no telling where we might go. The next season, 1932, I added Chick Hafey, Ernie Lombardi and Babe Herman, with several others, and on May 30 we were in third place, only five games behind the top. Hafey was hitting .335 when he got the flu and was out for the season. The Reds lost six or seven games by one run in the next ten games and we shot from third place toward



*Ernie Lombardi, Cincinnati Reds, 1932-1941.  
(photo: Cincinnati Reds)*

the bottom. We had made around \$100,000 when Hafey took sick and by the end of the season without him we had lost about \$50,000. One player can make a difference.

“My worst trade was the one I didn’t make. At the funeral of Barney Dreyfuss, Charlie Stoneham asked me to come to his room after the service. He proposed a trade of Bill Terry for my pitcher Si Johnson. Johnson was 21 or 22 and Terry was 32 or 33. I offered him Red Lucas, another good pitcher, who was the same age as Terry. Johnson had a great year and looked like he would become a great pitcher, so I refused. Johnson never attained greatness but Terry continued to play great baseball for four or five more years.”

After losing the Reds, Weil tried selling cars with limited success. Then he recreated himself once again as an insurance salesman. In his first year he wrote \$700,000 and by his fourth year over a million, which he did every year after, sometimes as much as four and a half million.

Irwin Weil, Sidney's son, who had urged his father to write his Memoir, shared some personal remembrances of his father specifically for this article.

“In his work with the Reds, Sid acquired a very close friend in Branch Rickey...Branch was a colorful, articulate person who had promised his Mother he would never go to a ball game on the Christian Sabbath...He knew that Sid was a very religious Jew, who observed almost all of the traditional Jewish Law (Halakhah) including the rules of kosher eating. Somehow, the Baptist and Jewish warmth of faith came together in these two men, and they remained close friends for life. To this day I habitually wear bow ties because my Dad told me I looked better that way, just like Branch Rickey.

“Those were exciting and mostly pleasurable days for my Dad, immersed in the business around

his favorite activity. After the 1929 crash Sid struggled manfully, but the inevitable bankruptcy came with all the attendant pains. I was only five years old, but I experienced vicariously many of the pains in listening to him and the family talking about it for years later.

“Yet, maybe the best measure of the man was what he told me when I was in high school in the 1940s. He said that Sid Weil (talking of himself) became a greedy man in the prosperity of the 1920s, and God decided to punish Sid for his greed. In the 1930s, he learned his lesson, and that's how he made a comeback. He now knew that money was a good thing only in the context of its use. When put to good, charitable, educational uses, money was a good instrument. ‘Irwin,’ he said, ‘never work only for the sake of money. Work for the sake of what you can do well and usefully, producing good in the world.’

“He never lost his passion for baseball and remained good friends, in frequent contact, with Branch Rickey and Bill Veeck. Veeck looked to my Dad as a special confidant. If a phone call came at 6:30 a.m., both of them knew from whom it came. Bill was an enormous support for my Dad, just as Sid was for Bill a bearer of good advice, encouragement in adversity, bedrock of decency and human soundness.”

On his way to Sid Weil’s funeral, Bill Veeck wrote a remembrance that was printed in many papers on Sunday, January 23, 1966. He recalled offering his good friend the opportunity of buying into the ownership of Veeck’s teams in Cleveland, St. Louis and Chicago. On each occasion, Weil refused saying, “This way I have all the fun and none of the headaches.” Veeck concluded, “Sid was a baseball fan. Not the publicity-seeking, glamor-bitten kind. He was the real 24-karat article.”

# THE CINCINNATI BASE HIT

by Norman L Macht

The evolution of baseball's playing and scoring rules was a slow and turbulent process beginning in the nineteenth century. Apart from the early establishment of such basics as four bases and their 90-foot separations, there was plenty of experimenting along the way. Nor was consistency in place when the American League broke in in 1901. At various times, the foul strike, infield fly and balk rules differed between the leagues. World Series games, as today, were played by different rules in the NL and AL parks.

The lack of uniformity infected the scoring rules even more. Lacking an authoritative code, individual scorers used their own judgment and predilections, which raises questions of the validity of comparing certain stats from one era to another. There were times and places, for example, where base runners got credit for steals even if the pitch they ran on was put in play by the batter.

Later the leagues differed over what constituted an earned run. There were no standards for assigning wins and losses to pitchers; it was up to the official scorer. The autocratic Ban Johnson sometimes overruled a scorer and changed a WP or LP days or weeks after a game.

In 1913, when the number of complete games declined sharply in the American League, Philadelphia writer William Weart complained, "When there are so many changes in the box as there have been this season, it is more than the human mind can do to figure out who has won and who has lost the game. The won and lost column is bound to lead to ceaseless arguments."

As if there wasn't enough chaos, NL president John Heydler once suggested that scorers add errors of judgment to the box scores.

The major league meetings in February 1913 were dull. There was little news. The two leagues spent more time discussing ways to speed up the

game than anything else. (Truly, nothing has changed in baseball.) Average times in 1912 had been just under two hours.

The baseball writers spent most of their meeting wrangling over the lack of uniformity among the scorers. They agitated for someone to establish standards for pitchers' wins and losses, and railed against the varying heights of pitchers' mounds.

But the most contentious issue was the disparate treatment of a play in which the batter hit a ground ball to an infielder, with men on base, and the fielder attempted to throw out a base runner other than the batter, and failed. Example: man on second, one out, grounder to shortstop, runner heads for third, shortstop throws to third, runner slides in safely. Some scorers gave the batter a hit; some called it a fielder's choice; some scored it as a sacrifice, since it advanced the runner.

Jack Ryder of *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, was the most outspoken advocate for crediting the batter with a hit. He spoke so earnestly on the subject that the play was quickly dubbed a "Cincinnati Base Hit."

Fred Lieb, *New York Press*, supported him. William Hanna, *New York Sun*, led the opposition, calling the idea "ridiculous." At least one writer declared that he would never score it as a hit unless the league ordered him to do so.

Chairman Tom Rice, *Brooklyn Eagle*, appointed a committee to try to straighten out and reconcile the conflicting interpretations of the play. In addition to Rice, Lieb, Hanna and Ryder, the committee included George McLinn, *Philadelphia Press*. The committee failed to come to an agreement. So, in the interests of uniformity—not reason—Ban Johnson decreed that the Cincinnati base hit would be the official way to score the play. *The Sporting News* supported the decision, asking only for a clearer definition of the rule.

It lasted for one season.

During its lifetime, the rule resulted in the rare occurrence of a batter singling into a triple play. The Athletics were at Cleveland on May 16. In the bottom of the seventh, Doc Johnston was on third, Ray Chapman on second, and Ivy Olson at bat. Olson hit a grounder to short. Barry bobbled the ball slightly. Johnston stuck close to third, but Chapman started toward third. Johnston then started for home. Barry threw to the catcher and Johnston was caught in a rundown. The catcher, Thomas, threw to Baker, who chased Johnston and threw to the pitcher Houck, who had come over to the third-base line. Houck threw back to Barry who was now covering third. Barry tagged out Johnston. Chapman had held up between second and third. Meanwhile, Olson was heading for second. Barry threw to Collins, who tagged Olson for the second out. While that was going on, Chapman had rounded third and headed for the plate. Collins threw to Baker, who was now standing on home plate. Left fielder Rube Oldring, seeing third base unguarded, raced in from his position, took the throw from Baker and tagged Chapman trying to get back to third.

The official scorer gave Olson a single, one of only three known instances of a batter singling into a triple play.

The last Cincinnati base hit occurred on a play in which Fred Merkle was embroiled in another boner, less remembered than his fateful 1908 base-running adventure. It happened in the last game of the 1913 World Series between the Giants and Athletics. In the top of the third, the A's had Eddie Murphy on third and Rube Oldring on second with one out. Frank Baker hit a dribbler down the first base line. Merkle raced in and picked it up. Baker started toward first, then stopped. Murphy started

toward home, then stopped. A bewildered Merkle held the ball. The action froze like a tableau vivant. Murphy inched back toward third, then suddenly dashed for the plate. By the time Merkle woke up and threw to McLean at home, it was too late. Murphy scored while Baker sprinted past Merkle to first base. The official scorers credited Baker with a single.

The play provoked William Hanna to comment in *The Sun*, "The absurdity of the Cincinnati base hit never was more clearly illustrated than in the fifth game of the World Series . . . Under the obnoxious scoring rule, Baker received credit for a base hit, when as a matter of common sense it should have been scored as a fielder's choice. The attempt to give batsmen hits under such ridiculous conditions is decidedly unfair to pitchers and the rule has been condemned by practically all the managers and scorers."

*The Sun* declared the Cincinnati base hit "doomed."

And it was.

The Cincinnati Base Hit never made it into the official scoring rules. At the time Ban Johnson decreed it, nothing in the rules could be taken as either permitting or prohibiting it.

That winter, the BBWAA conducted a mail vote on several proposed rule changes. The 187 members approved all the changes except the one that would have legitimized the Cincinnati Base Hit. Instead, they approved rule 85 section 4, defining a fielder's choice in such a way as to seal its doom.

*Norman Macht is a free lance writer, SABR member since 1985, member of Executive Board. He is currently working on a biography of Connie Mack.*

---

In 1935 the Cincinnati Reds scheduled seven night games, the first in major league baseball. They scheduled every club, including St. Louis twice, since New York refused to play after dark. The Reds drew 130,337 for their seven night games, an average of 18,620. The other 69 day games drew 317,910, an average of 4,607. The Reds jumped from seventh to fourth in attendance in the N.L., and the owners extended the seven-game rule for another season.

By 1940, eight of the 16 major league teams had made an investment in lamps. Teams were soon allowed to schedule 14 night games at home. By the mid-1950s the Reds were playing more than half their games at night and every club except the Chicago Cubs played at night.

From *Redleg Journal* by Greg Rhodes and John Snyder, Roadwest Publishing, 2000.

# BAD BREAKS

## Mickey Heath of the 1931 Reds

by Robert W. Bigelow

Baseball history is littered with the career remains of once promising future stars who due to injury or bad luck never fulfilled their promise in the major leagues. In 1931, one such player was Minor Wilson “Mickey” Heath. Heath, a rookie, was to be the Reds’ starting first baseman. He had just arrived from the Hollywood Stars of the Pacific Coast League where his fielding ability was becoming legendary. He had shown incredible improvement as a hitter and was coming off two straight stellar seasons at the plate. In 1929 he had hit .349 with 38 homers and 156 RBIs and followed this up in 1930 slugging .324 with 37 homers and 136 RBIs. In September of 1930, Heath set a Coast League record by collecting 12 consecutive hits. In 1931 Heath was having a reunion of sorts with new Reds manager Dapper Dan Howley who had made good use of Heath on the International League Champion Toronto Maple Leafs of 1926. By the end of spring training, Heath had shown enough to justify Howley’s faith in him and was the starting first baseman.

Heath’s baseball journey to the big leagues had been long and arduous. Few players were more deserving of such good fortune than Heath. As a 12-year-old boy growing up in Toledo, Ohio, Heath was badly burned in a campfire accident and was injured

so badly that he was not expected to walk again. His legs were damaged as his tendons were drawn up to the point he could not straighten out his legs. Though he would carry the scars of his accident for the rest of his life, he did walk again, and through hard work and determination developed into a fine sandlot ballplayer.

After several years of semi-pro ball, Heath showed enough to be signed to a contract with Ottumwa of the Mississippi Valley League (Class D). Heath hit .297 in 1923 and .353 in 1924 with little power, but he showed enough to be sold to

the Detroit Tigers for \$3,000. Heath played a month for the Birmingham Barons of the Southern Association (Class A) and in 1925 moved to Toronto of the International League which was the highest rung in the minor league ladder (Class AA). That year he hit .225 and the Leafs finished second behind Jack Dunn’s powerhouse Baltimore Orioles. In

1926, Heath’s hitting improved dramatically (.335, 10 HR, 115 RBI) and Toronto went on to win the International League pennant and Little World Series. Heath tied a record hitting three home runs in one of the games against Louisville of the American Association.

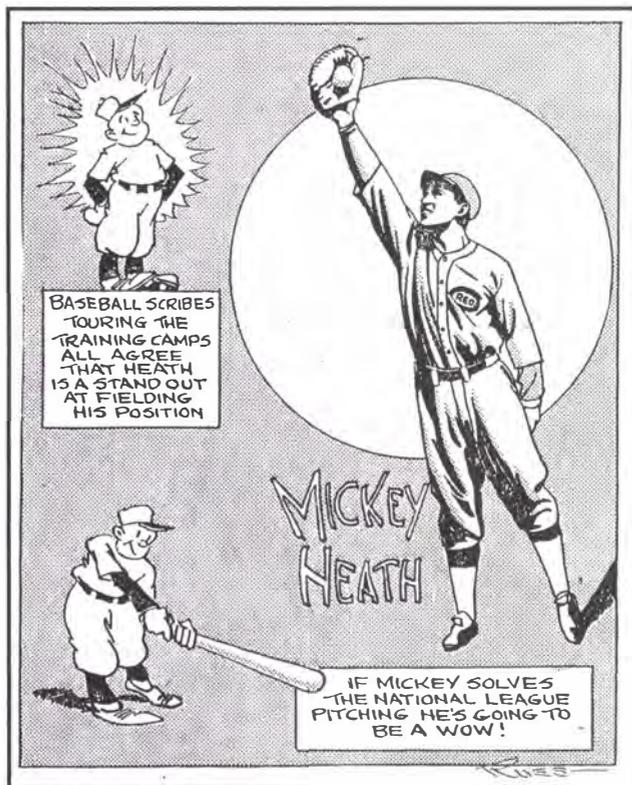
Unfortunately for Heath, the Tigers sent future American League batting champion Dale



*Mickey Heath makes out lineup card while manager of the Milwaukee Brewers, 1939. (photo: Author's collection)*

Alexander to Toronto in 1927 and while Heath was far superior in the field, Alexander was the more talented batsman. This led to a bizarre situation where Heath was sent to the Hollywood Stars of the PCL on a "loan basis." It would be unfair to say that Heath languished in the PCL, as he steadily improved in the field and at the plate, but despite several outstanding seasons, he was never called up to Detroit and was not eligible for the draft since Detroit held his contract. Heath batted .282 in 1927 and .307 in 1928, showing some power with 19 home runs and 109 RBIs. He followed this with the two tremendous seasons mentioned above in 1929 and 1930 but was still not sold to the big leagues. Heath's understanding of the rules was that if he still belonged to Detroit he could only be optioned out for three years and was now eligible to be a "free agent." Heath wrote commissioner Landis and suddenly was sold to Cincinnati and signed to a \$6,000 contract.

So here he was now, a starting first baseman in the big leagues. Heath related what happened in his seventh game of the season as follows:



Harold E. Russel cartoon from *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 1932. A Russell cartoon appeared almost daily in the *Enquirer* from 1914-1959. (photo: Author's collection)

"Tommy Thevenow, the Pittsburgh shortstop was at bat and hit a slow roller between first and second base to our second baseman, Tony Cucinello. Tony charged the ball, caught it in his bare hand and flipped it to me at first. The throw was low and into the runner, and I reached in and tried to catch the ball with my gloved hand. I caught the ball all right, but my arm had gone between Thevenow's legs. There was a loud snap and everyone in the ballpark knew I had broken my arm."

While being treated for a break above the wrist, Heath had complaints about body aches, which turned out to be rheumatic fever. Heath suffered greatly and dropped from his 180 lbs. playing weight to 130 lbs. over the next two months. Season over. If this wasn't bad enough, he was badly burned for the second time in his life, this time in a house fire. He reported to camp in 1932 underweight and in poor health. He had hit .269 in his seven games the previous season and now after just 39 games it was clear he was not making the grade while hitting .201. He was sold to St. Louis and sent to Rochester, never to see the big leagues again.

It was a two full years before he returned to form. There were stops in Indianapolis and Montreal before landing in Milwaukee to close out a minor league career of 2,268 games hitting .298. Heath was briefly the manager of the Brewers, an executive under Bill Veeck and their radio announcer until 1951 when he left the game behind.

The promise of the 1931 season was never fulfilled for Mickey Heath or the Reds who finished dead last in 1931 and 1932. Heath enjoyed many an adventure but did not achieve his dream of a lasting big-league career. He had some tough breaks but never quit on himself or his teams and had a lot to be proud of, not in spite of the bad breaks but also because of the way he dealt with them.

*SABR member Robert W. Bigelow is the grandson of Minor Wilson "Mickey" Heath. Among his resources was an unpublished manuscript by Heath's daughter Dona Heath and an interview with her.*



# GREATER CINCINNATI'S OLD TIMER'S REUNION

## Program

Ball Game, Following Chicago Cubs Cincinnati Reds Game  
Banquet at 7 p. m. Sinton-St. Nicholas Ball Room  
General Public Cordially Invited

**Tickets \$1.00 Ea. on Sale at Exchange Window**

*Sponsors:*—John L. Horgan, Managing Director, Sinton-St. Nicholas Hotel; Cincinnati Post;  
The Enquirer; Cincinnati Times-Star; Cincinnati Base Ball Club.

*Reunion Secretary, Julian Behr*

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <p>No. 1—Orville Woodruff, Inf., Cin.<br/>No. 2—George Yeager, C., Pitts.<br/>No. 3—Dr. F. G. Hahn, P., Cin.<br/>No. 4—Heinie Peitz, C., Cin.<br/>No. 5—Gus Shallix, P., Cin.<br/>No. 6—W. A. Schwartz, Inf., Pitts.<br/>No. 7—W. F. Hart, P., St. L.-Cin. Phila.<br/>No. 8—Wm. E. Hoy, OF., Cin.<br/>No. 9—Larry Kopf, Inf., Cin.-Boston.<br/>No. 10—John Suthoff, P., Cin.<br/>No. 11—Tommy Griffith, OF., Cin.-Brk.<br/>No. 12—Geo. Rohe, Inf., Chi. A.<br/>No. 13—William C. Hill, P., Cin.<br/>No. 14—John Thoney, OF., Am. L.<br/>No. 15—Billy Campbell, P., Cin.<br/>No. 16—Tom J. Sullivan, P., Cin.<br/>No. 17—Harry Matthews, C., Cin.<br/>No. 18—Al. Kaiser, OF., Chi. N.-Boston.<br/>No. 19—Al Bashang, OF., Det. Am.<br/>No. 20—Cliff "Tacks" Lattimer, C., Pitts.-Cin.<br/>No. 21—Al Selbach, OF., Cin.<br/>No. 22—P. S. "Peaches" O'Neill, C., Cin.<br/>No. 23—C. H. "Chauncey" Fisher, P., Cin.<br/>No. 24—William James, P., Boston N.<br/>No. 25—Chris Heisman, P., Cin.<br/>No. 26—Jess Tannehill, P., N. Y. A.<br/>No. 27—John G. Reilly, Inf., Cin.<br/>No. 28—Fred Mollenkamp, Inf., Phil. N.<br/>No. 29—Robt. Ewing, P., Cin.<br/>No. 30—Jack Pfeister, P., Chi.<br/>No. 31—Ambrose Puttman, P., St. L. N.<br/>No. 32—William "Bill" Rariden, C., Cin.-N. Y.<br/>No. 33—J. C. "Red" Calhoun, Inf., Pitts.</p> | <p>No. 34—John Siegle, OF., Cin.<br/>No. 35—Harry Sallee, P., Cin.-N. Y.-St. L.<br/>No. 36—Lefty Houtz, OF., Cin.<br/>No. 37—Horace "Hod" Eller, P., Cin.<br/>No. 38—Al Bridwell, Inf., Cin.-N. Y.<br/>No. 39—Robt. Bescher, OF., Cin.-N. Y.-St. L.<br/>No. 40—Cy Young, P., Cleve. A.-Boston A.<br/>No. 41—Pat Duncan, OF., Cin.<br/>No. 42—Mordecai Brown, P., Chi. N.-Cin.<br/>No. 43—Earl Moseley, P., Cin.<br/>No. 44—Josh Devore, OF., N. Y.-Cin.<br/>No. 45—Jack Hendricks, OF., Wash.; Mgr., Cin.<br/>No. 46—Jimmy Viox, Inf., Pitts.<br/>No. 47—Henry Gastright, P., Brook.-Cin.<br/>No. 48—Eddie Tiemeyer, Inf., Cin.<br/>No. 49—Bobbie Mitchell, P., Cin.<br/>No. 50—Eli Cates, P., Ind. Fed. League.<br/>No. 51—Algie McBride, Inf., Cin.<br/>No. 52—Chas. B. "Dusty" Miller, OF., Cin.<br/>No. 53—Pick Shanhan ("Pick Hyatt"), P., Pitts. N.<br/>No. 54—Frank Behle, C., Shamrocks.<br/>No. 55—George Paskert, OF., Cin.-Phila. N.<br/>No. 56—Neal J. Brady, P., Cin.<br/>No. 57—Joe Benz, P., Chi. Am.<br/>No. 58—Nick Altrock, P., Chi. Am.<br/>No. 59—John Bates, OF., Cin.<br/>No. 60—Chas. L. "Buck" Herzog, Inf., Cin.<br/>No. 61—Theodore "Whitey" Guese, P., Cin.<br/>No. 62—Bumpus Jones, P., Cin.<br/>No. 63—Jack Frost, P., Cin.<br/>No. 64—Tony Mullane, P., Cin.<br/>No. 65—August Weyhing, P., Phil. N.<br/>No. 66—Arlie Latham, Inf., St. L.A. A.-Cin.</p> | <p>No. 67—Mattie Schwab, P., So. League.<br/>No. 68—James Tilford Jones, P., Cin.<br/>No. 69—Emil Haberer, C., Cin.<br/>No. 70—Chas. "Red" Dooin, C., Mgr., Phil.<br/>No. 71—Clarence Munson, C., Phil.<br/>No. 72—Jack Bushelman, P., Cin.<br/>No. 73—Charles W. "Jack" Harper, P., Cin.<br/>No. 74—Jimmy Archer, C., Chi. N.<br/>No. 75—Johnny Heilmann, Inf., Cin.<br/>No. 76—Cy Barger, P., Brook. N.<br/>No. 77—J. A. Shriver, C., Pitts. N.<br/>No. 78—Bert Baumgartner, P., St. L.<br/>No. 79—Eddie Boyle, Inf., Balti.<br/>No. 80—Robt. Geary, P., Phil. A.<br/>No. 81—Wm. F. Clingman, Inf., Louisville.<br/>No. 82—Jack Reis, P., St. L. N.<br/>No. 83—Geo. Keifel, C., Semi Prof.<br/>No. 84—John J. McCloskey, OF., St. L.<br/>No. 85—Chick Smith, P., Cin.<br/>No. 86—Branch Rickey, C., St. L. Am.<br/>No. 87—Will Bartley, P., Phil. Am.<br/>No. 88—Eugene Baker, 87 years old.<br/>No. 89—L. J. Backman.<br/>No. 90—George Pearson.<br/>No. 91—F. W. "Red" Sweetman.<br/>No. 92—W. A. "Bill" Rourke.<br/>No. 93—Will Irwin.<br/>No. 94—Casey Jones.<br/>No. 95—George L. Moreland.<br/>No. 96—Geo. Pechiney.<br/>No. 97—Clarence Burnett.<br/>No. 98—Wm. "Bill" Norton.<br/>No. 99—Jack Benny.</p> |
|--|--|--|

KEY: N.—National; AM.—American League; Inf.—Infielder; OF.—Outfielder; P.—Pitcher; C.—Catcher; Mgr.—Manager; AM. Assn.—American Association.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	R.	H.	E.
<b>OLD TIMERS</b>												

NOTE—Players will change positions after each inning in order to give as many as possible an opportunity to play. For this reason it was not practical to present a batting order or regular line-up of the teams.

## AMATEUR ALL STARS

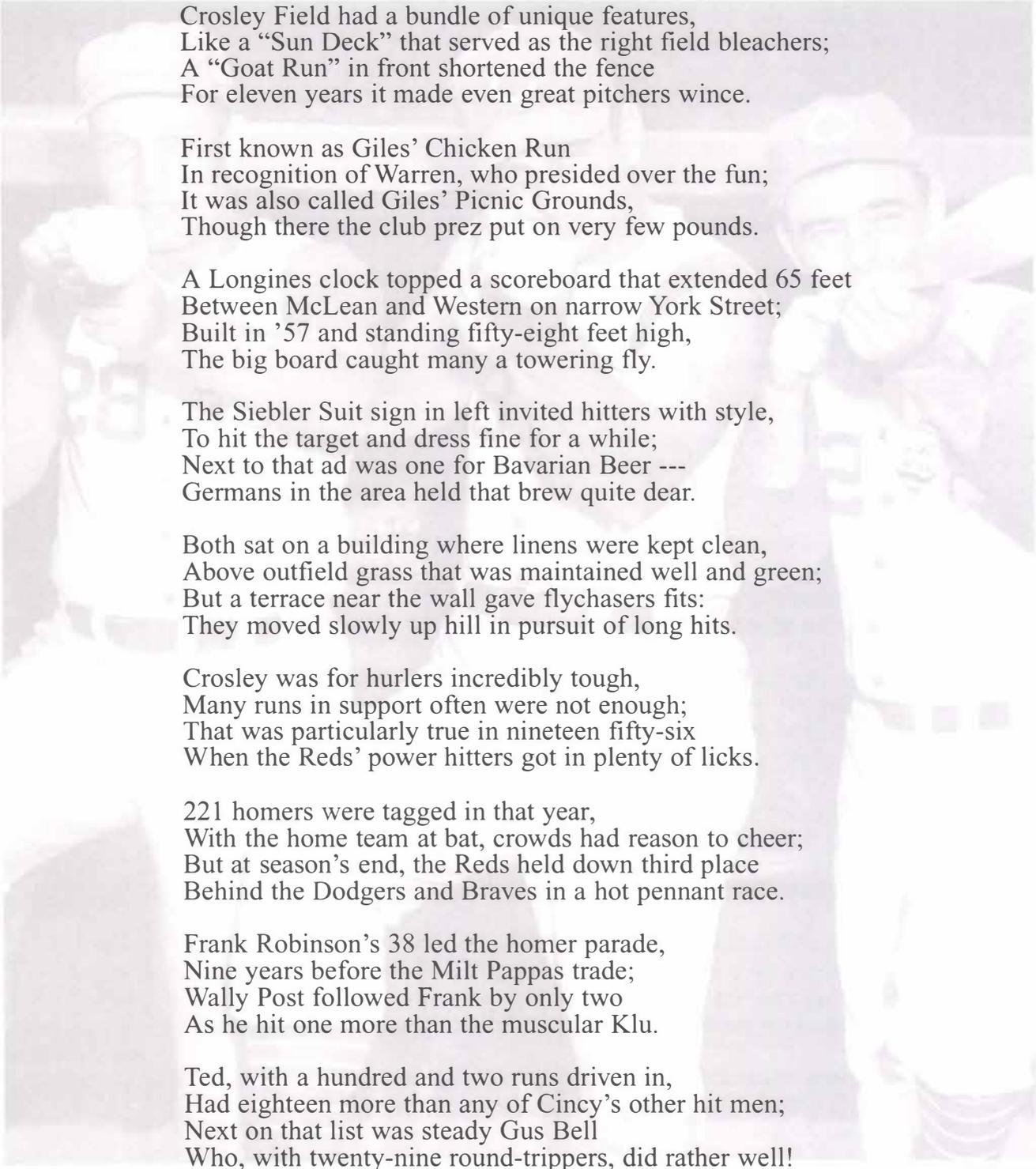
- |   |  |  |   |  |
|---|--|--|---|--|
| <p>101—Paschka, P.<br/>102—Hess, P.<br/>103—Cramer, P.<br/>104—Legaly, P.</p> | <p>105—Schott, P.<br/>106—Prost, C.<br/>107—Callon, C.<br/>108—Brannan, Inf.</p> | <p>109—Edrich, Inf.<br/>110—Miller, Inf.<br/>111—Applegate, Inf.<br/>112—Osborne, Inf.</p> | <p>113—Broft, Inf. &amp; OF.<br/>114—Steidel, Inf.<br/>115—Botts, OF.<br/>116—Lahm, OF.</p> | <p>117—Bova, OF.<br/>118—E. McCarthy, P. &amp; OF.</p> |
|---|--|--|---|--|



(photo: poster from Author's collection)

# CHARACTERISTICS AND CHARACTERS: REMEMBERING CROSLY FIELD

by Francis Kinlaw



Crosley Field had a bundle of unique features,  
Like a "Sun Deck" that served as the right field bleachers;  
A "Goat Run" in front shortened the fence  
For eleven years it made even great pitchers wince.

First known as Giles' Chicken Run  
In recognition of Warren, who presided over the fun;  
It was also called Giles' Picnic Grounds,  
Though there the club prez put on very few pounds.

A Longines clock topped a scoreboard that extended 65 feet  
Between McLean and Western on narrow York Street;  
Built in '57 and standing fifty-eight feet high,  
The big board caught many a towering fly.

The Siebler Suit sign in left invited hitters with style,  
To hit the target and dress fine for a while;  
Next to that ad was one for Bavarian Beer ---  
Germans in the area held that brew quite dear.

Both sat on a building where linens were kept clean,  
Above outfield grass that was maintained well and green;  
But a terrace near the wall gave flychasers fits:  
They moved slowly up hill in pursuit of long hits.

Crosley was for hurlers incredibly tough,  
Many runs in support often were not enough;  
That was particularly true in nineteen fifty-six  
When the Reds' power hitters got in plenty of licks.

221 homers were tagged in that year,  
With the home team at bat, crowds had reason to cheer;  
But at season's end, the Reds held down third place  
Behind the Dodgers and Braves in a hot pennant race.

Frank Robinson's 38 led the homer parade,  
Nine years before the Milt Pappas trade;  
Wally Post followed Frank by only two  
As he hit one more than the muscular Klu.

Ted, with a hundred and two runs driven in,  
Had eighteen more than any of Cincy's other hit men;  
Next on that list was steady Gus Bell  
Who, with twenty-nine round-trippers, did rather well!

Ed Bailey knocked 28 over outfield walls,  
And Smokey Burgess added a dozen long balls;  
With forty home runs from his two backstops,  
Birdie Tebbetts could count on their regular pops.

The hot corner was covered by a guy named Ray,  
You may remember Jablonski—if your hair is quite gray!  
Fifteen balls over National League fences he lined,  
Ten more than McMillan and Temple combined!

A bespectacled first baseman could hit fastball and curve,  
Though with Klu on the roster, he was used in reserve;  
The ten homers contributed on few swings by George Crowe  
Would have, in the nineties, earned him lots of dough.

These players won no flag, but local fans had a wish:  
For all to start an All-Star Game instead of go fish;  
The next year, the Queen City mailed so many ballots  
That vote counters were forced to haul forms in on pallets.

This scheme angered Commissioner Ford Frick,  
Who decided to enforce his own right to pick;  
He ordered the replacement of both Bell and Post  
With Mays and Aaron, ignoring who tallied the most.

In the late fifties the club's standing dropped  
But, in '61, the long slump finally stopped;  
Behind Joey Jay, Bob Purkey, and Jim O'Toole,  
Hutch's Reds edged the Dodgers to once again rule.

The last flag had been won with Ernie Lombardi,  
So the club and its fans were ready to party;  
Though the Yanks took the Classic in forty-five frames  
Crosley had, once again, hosted World Series games.

The '70 season brought something quite new,  
As the club and its fans bid the old park "Adieu";  
When games moved in late June to round Riverfront,  
Sparky's team usually won and the Bengals would punt!

Now memories and images are all that remain,  
And they keep coming back like a Sinatra refrain;  
But while Ol' Blue Eyes often sang of the loss of a girl,  
Crosley lovers recall fondly their own vanished pearl.

# WHY THE REDS WON THE 1940 WORLD SERIES

by Leo Bradley, Ed. D.

The 1940 Cincinnati Reds clinched the National League on September 18, with 13 games remaining in the regular season. After the game, manager Bill McKechnie climbed up on a chair in the clubhouse and said to his victorious players, “no celebrating.” McKechnie was thinking of the 1939 Reds team, which won the pennant only to be swept by the Yankees in the series. McKechnie wanted a world series win and thought he had the team to beat whichever team would win the close American League race; the Indians, Tigers, or Yankees. Upon the insistence of the newspaper photographers, Reds players posed with smiling faces.

The Reds rolled on to a final record of 100 wins and 53 losses. However, some heavy clouds from the baseball gods loomed over the team as they prepared for the series. On September 15, as Bucky Walters was winning his 20th game of the season, catcher Ernie Lombardi, chasing a foul popup, tried to pull up to avoid crashing into the stands, slid on the concrete track, and twisted his ankle in the gutter at Ebbetts Field. At series time he was still lame. The Reds’ bad luck continued on September 28 when Lonny Frey broke his big toe when the heavy medal lid of the ice cooler fell off and struck his foot. As the series began, Lombardi and Frey were relegated to the bench to recover.

The Detroit Tigers won the 1940 American League pennant by one game over the Indians and two games over the Yankees, thus ending the Bronx Bombers’ four-year reign over the baseball world. The Tigers, led by sluggers Hank Greenberg, Rudy York, Charlie Gehringer, Barney McCosky, Bruce Campbell, and Pinkie Higgins and hurlers Bobo Newsom, Schoolboy Rowe, and Tommy Bridges, were old and slow but powerful at bat and on the mound. Gamblers made the Tigers slight favorites mainly because of the injuries to Lombardi and Frey. However, the Reds’ record in one-run games, 41 wins and 17 losses, led many to believe that the National League was going to capture its first World Series win since the 1934 St. Louis “Gas House Gang.” Baseball writers covering the series voted 42 to 29 in favor of the Reds.

So, why did the Reds prevail in this, one of the most closely contested World Series in history? I offer seven basic reasons for their victory.

**First: The Reds picked up Jimmy Ripple on waivers from the Dodgers in August.** On August 30th, 1940 the Reds made two roster moves. Johnny VanderMeer was recalled from Indianapolis, and Jimmy Ripple, a 31-year-old journeyman outfielder, was purchased on waivers from the Brooklyn Dodgers. Thus, by two days, these two players were eligible for the World Series. Ripple was not playing for the Dodgers at the time. He was on a ten-day option to the Dodgers AAA farm club, the Montreal Royals. When the Reds claimed Ripple on waivers, the Royals appealed to Commissioner Landis, stating that, although the purchase was in line with baseball waiver rules, Ripple had to stay with them for the entire 10-day option. Commissioner Landis, who hailed from Milville, Ohio, ruled that Ripple was to report to the Reds immediately.



*Paul Derringer, winning pitcher for Games 4 and 7 of 1940 Series (photo: Cincinnati Reds)*

Had Landis ruled in favor of Montreal, Ripple would have reported to the Reds after September 1 and been ineligible for the 1940 World Series. When Warren Giles, then general manager of the Reds, saw Ripple's name on the waiver wire, he asked McKechnie if he should claim him. McKechnie said, "Yes, we will need him for the series."

The Ripple pickup addressed the offensive woes of the Reds outfield. The 1939 and 1940 Reds rosters were very similar and should be viewed as one era. In 1939, eight different players attempted to solve the left field problem after it became evident that Wally Berger had passed his prime. In 1940, rookie Mike McCormick hit .303 and solved that problem. However, he spent a lot of time in center filling in for the slumping Harry Craft, and in right when Ival Goodman was injured. With the addition of Ripple, McKechnie was able to move McCormick to center, put Ripple in left, and, with Goodman in right, the Reds had some offensive punch in the outfield. With Lombardi and Frey out for almost the entire series, this was crucial. Without Ripple, the Reds would not have won the 1940 series. Playing all seven games, Ripple hit .333 with one home run, six RBIs, and three runs scored. And, most importantly, he drove in the tying run in the seventh inning of the seventh game.

**Second: McKechnie's pitching rotation in contrast to Detroit's.** The 1940 World Series was played in seven consecutive days, October 2 through October 8. The resulting pitching match-ups ended like this:

Game 1-Derringer versus Newsom .....	Tigers win
Game 2-Walters versus Rowe .....	Reds win
Game 3-Turner versus Bridges.....	Tigers win
Game 4-Derringer (with 2 days' rest) versus Trout .....	Reds win
Game 5-Thompson versus Newsom (with 3 days' rest).....	Tigers win
Game 6 Walters (with 3 days' rest) versus Rowe .....	Reds win
Game 7 Derringer (with 2 days' rest) versus Newsom (with 1 day rest) .....	Reds win

For the Reds, Walters won two games, the second and the sixth, being well rested in the second and with three days rest in the sixth. Derringer pitched the opener well-rested but did not pitch well early in the game, probably due to rustiness. He won the fourth and seventh games on two days' rest. That is not much rest, but in 1940, was a fairly common practice among ace pitchers in crucial situations. McKechnie never panicked in his pitching selection. Even though the series was tied after four games, he pitched Junior Thompson, his weakest starter, in the fifth game at Detroit, thus saving Walters and Derringer for the sixth and seventh games back at Crosley Field.

Tiger skipper Del Baker chose to gamble in Game 4 with Dizzy Trout, thus leaving Newsom to pitch Game 5. When the series went to the seventh and deciding game, he had to bring Newsom back on one day's rest to oppose Derringer, who had two days' rest. In the seventh and deciding contest, both pitchers were superb. Derringer gave up one unearned run in the third inning on a Werber throwing error. He retired the last seven batters to close out the game, all routine outs. Earl Averill made the final out on a ground ball to second. Derringer had his stuff till the end. Newsom, although he scattered seven hits, weakened in the seventh and gave up two earned runs. There were three hard-hit balls in the inning; two doubles to the wall, and one long sacrifice fly to deep center. Would the extra day's rest have made Newsom strong enough to match Derringer? Or, could he have preserved the one-run lead with the extra day's rest that was afforded Derringer by McKechnie's rotation? No one knows for sure, but I think Baker's rotation helped the Reds win the series.

**Third: McKechnie's decisions in the winning seventh-inning rally of the seventh game.**

Going into the last of the seventh, the Tigers held a 1-0 lead with an unearned run in the third. Due up for the Reds were hitters number 4, 5, and 6—Frank McCormick, Jimmy Ripple, and Jimmie Wilson. McCormick led off with a stand-up, line-drive double to left center to the right of the scoreboard. When Ripple came to the plate, most fans thought McKechnie would signal a sacrifice. The Reds skipper had the reputation of playing by the book. Conservative by nature, he almost always played percentage baseball. This also applied to McKechnie when he managed from the third-base coaching box. In fact, although it wasn't a controversial topic, the Reds players preferred that Jimmie Wilson coach third base because he was more aggressive in sending runners than McKechnie. So the conventional wisdom was that he would bunt with Ripple. Instead, he gave Ripple the hit sign. He later said that he let Ripple hit because earlier in the series, in Detroit, he had homered off a high fast ball. He thought Newsom, thinking Ripple would be bunting, would throw him a high fast ball because that is the hardest pitch to bunt. Newsom did, and Ripple doubled to right field, sending McCormick in with the tying run. Then McKechnie did bunt with Jimmie Wilson, sending Ripple to third with one out. He then sent up Lombardi to bat for Eddie Joost. Incidentally, this decision of McKechnie angered Joost, who told me that he knew the Tigers would walk Lombardi and set up a double play. The Tigers did just that, bringing Billy Myers to the plate. He promptly flied to deep center to bring in the winning run. I think McKechnie made the right move to bat Lombardi for Joost. Had they pitched to Lombardi, he would have almost assuredly made contact and most likely driven in the

winning run. He was that good a hitter. Had Lombardi not pinch hit, they would have pitched to Joost because he was only in his second year in the big leagues, and was only in the game because of Frey's injury. Myers, on the other hand, was a veteran and somewhat of a free spirit who would not feel the pressure as much as the youthful Joost. By making Wilson bunt and sending up Lombardi, McKechnie set up the scenario he wanted; a veteran contact hitter to put the ball in play and take his chances on getting the winning run home. It worked. It was McKechnie's finest hour in a long and illustrious career.

**Fourth: The Tigers' Dick Bartell not taking advantage of McCormick's base running blunder in the Seventh inning of the Seventh game.** The seventh game was played in one hour and 47 minutes. All the thrills were packed into two innings; the third for the Tigers and the seventh for the Reds. In addition to what I consider McKechnie's cool decision making under fire, another factor led to the Reds' winning seventh-inning rally. Although there were only 26,854 in attendance at Crosley Field, they were cheering loudly when Ripple doubled with McCormick on second and none out. For some unknown reason, McCormick stayed close to second base when Ripple hit the double to deep right center field, and then hesitated after rounding third. Evidently, he thought the ball was going to be caught. Everyone else on the field knew that Bruce Campbell, the Tigers' right fielder, was not going to catch the ball. As Bill Werber said to me, "We were all yelling frantically to Frank to run. Of course, he couldn't hear us." Luckily, neither could Dick Bartell, the Tigers' shortstop who took Campbell's relay throw. With his back to the infield, Bartell did not know that McCormick was still between third and home. So, as Werber put it, "He stuck the ball in his back pocket," baseball lingo for he didn't throw the ball home. I interviewed many of the 1940 Reds and asked them if McCormick would have been out had Bartell thrown the ball home. They all concurred that we'll never know, although the consensus was it would have been a close play at the plate. Interestingly, none of the players blamed Bartell. They all said that any infielder in that situation would have assumed that McCormick would have been home easily and that the key play was making sure Ripple didn't go to third.

In discussing who was the most valuable Red in the series, some writers claimed they should give it to the fans who allowed the tying run to score. The controversial play went the Reds' way. If it hadn't, they might still be playing.

#### **Fifth: The Reds defense**

After the sixth game of the series, the Tigers' young catcher Birdie Tebbetts sighed, "That Red defense was great, as good as I've ever seen. But the Reds

have to play top defense to beat us." He was right and the Reds did. Shortstop Billy Myers hit .150 for the series. Eddie Joost, filling in for second baseman Lonny Frey, hit .200. But both fielded flawlessly. Apart from his error in the seventh game that allowed the Tigers to score their one run, Bill Werber was brilliant in the field throughout the series. In center field, Mike McCormick played well, so the Reds did not miss the defense of Harry Craft, who was one of the best flychasers of his day. The Reds turned nine double plays during the series to the Tigers' two. Although Bartell and Gehringer had been great defensive players in their prime, both had slowed considerably. Hank Greenberg had moved from first base to left field in 1940 to make room for Rudy York at first base. The Tigers played with two first basemen. Jimmie Wilson was flawless behind the plate and called a great game for the hurlers. Both teams had great pitching. Neither team was going to slug their way to a series win. It was going to take a good defense to win the close, low scoring games. The Reds had it, the Tigers didn't.

#### **Sixth: Jimmie Wilson had a great series filling in for Ernie Lombardi.**

With Lombardi injured and Hershberger having committed suicide in August, McKechnie had a choice between the 40-year-old veteran Wilson or the rookie Bill Baker. He wisely chose the veteran. As Bill Werber put it, "Wilson was the star of the whole shebang." Actually, Werber led the Reds in hitting with a .370 average to Wilson's .353. However, Werber's star was expected to shine, Wilson's performance was not expected. Throughout the series, Wilson suf-





*Coach Jimmie Wilson took over catching duties for 1940 World Series as replacement for injured Ernie Lombardi. (photo: Cincinnati Reds)*

fered from cramps in both legs. In order to catch six of the games, Wilson went to the Health Club of the downtown Netherland Plaza Hotel every night for treatment from a doctor the Reds brought in for him. They would pack his legs in heat and ice to enable him to play the next day. Hank Greenberg later stated that Wilson could not crouch low enough to hide his signals so the Tigers knew what pitches were coming. The fact that they still couldn't hit Derringer and Walters is a testament to the Reds dynamic duo.

Much has been made of the fact that Wilson stole the only base in the series. It's a nice tidbit but did not affect the outcome of the series. But there is no dispute that Wilson's performance was key to the Reds victory. Remember, Lombardi won two batting titles (1938 and 1942) and was the league's MVP in 1938. He also had a powerful throwing arm. Losing Lombardi was as equivalent to the Tigers losing York or Greenberg. If "Old Jimmie" had not come through, the Reds couldn't have won the series.

**Seventh: Derringer and Walters versus Newsom gave the Reds a 2-to-1 advantage.**

The 1940 series was the story of three great pitchers: Paul Derringer, Bucky Walters, and Bobo Newsom. Bobo Newsom had his best year in 1940, winning 20 and losing five. Walters won 22 and Derringer won

20 in 1940. But neither Red ace matched their 1939 season, when Walters won 27 and Derringer 25. Including their four victories in the 1940 series, Derringer and Walters combined for 98 victories in only two years!

Newsom won two complete games including one shutout, and lost the seventh game 2 to 1 without relief. His ERA for the series was 1.38. Derringer pitched two complete-game victories and lost one with a series ERA of 2.79. Walters hurled two complete-game victories with one shutout and a series ERA of 1.50. Had Newsom had someone the equal of Walters or Derringer, the Tigers would have probably prevailed. The Reds beat Schoolboy Rowe twice, Dizzy Trout and Newsom once each for the four wins. The only Tiger pitcher to beat the Reds in the series other than Newsom was Tommy Bridges, who beat them in Game 3. The Tigers beat Derringer, Jim Turner, and Junior Thompson once each for their three wins. Bill Werber had played against Bobo Newsom in the American League during the 1930s. He told his teammates that if you stayed close to Newsom you could beat him. That's what they did in the seventh game. But Newsom was brilliant in the series, even in defeat.

Dick Bartell, the Tigers' shortstop, probably best summed up the 1940 World Series by saying, "We didn't win the series because we didn't hit. And the reason we didn't hit is because of Derringer and Walters. They're a better one-two punch than the Dean brothers."

**SOURCES:**

- Interview with Eddie Joost, April 29, 1989, San Jose, California.
- Interview with Bill Werber, March 28, 1989, Naples, Florida.
- Interviews with Lonny Frey, Junior Thompson, Harry Craft, Johnny VanderMeer, 1989-90.
- Cincinnati Post Sports Pages*, October 9 and 10, 1940
- Bartell, Dick & Macht, Norman; *Rowdy Richard*: (1987). Berkley, California, North Atlantic Press; p. 304.

*Leo Bradley is professor and program director in educational administration for Xavier University, a long time SABR member and served on the SABR 2004 Convention committee.*

*He is also a baseball historian, songwriter musician, and singer and has written and recorded over 40 original baseball songs for Fraternity Records available on two albums, "One Bounce and You're Out, the history of baseball in song" (1999) and "Remembering the Reds, the history of the Cincinnati Reds in song" (2003).*

# AN INTERVIEW WITH LLOYD MERRIMAN: FOOTBALL STAR, WAR HERO, BIG LEAGUER

by Jim Sargent

After serving in the marine corps and the navy during World War II, Lloyd Archer Merriman starred in baseball and football at Stanford University. After Stanford, he played one season of minor league ball and five seasons in the major leagues. Lloyd played four years for the Cincinnati Reds and spent his finale, the 1955 season, in Chicago playing one game for the White Sox and the rest with the Cubs.

Reflecting on his boyhood in California during a 2003 interview, Merriman, a quiet and likeable gentleman, recollected, “We didn’t have organized Little League ball, or anything like that. Clovis wasn’t a very big town, so we made up our own games. We would play ‘street ball.’ That’s where we would get four or maybe six boys and play in the street.”

Born on August 2, 1924, Lloyd grew up in Clovis, near Fresno, where he became a standout performer in baseball and football at Clovis High, graduating in June of 1942, the first full year of World War II. That summer the 18 year old enrolled at Stanford University on his father’s recommendation. Lloyd completed his freshman year in 1942-43, and he made the football team that fall as a walk-on.

Lloyd recalled, “I wasn’t even thinking about athletics, but the football coaches were very nice to me. They let me play fullback. They had a whole list of guys from all around the country who came to Stanford to play football.

“I knew I wouldn’t be at Stanford very long, because World War II was going on. After my freshman year in 1943, I enlisted. I played a couple years of football in the service. What I did was enlist in the marine corps in November of 1942, and they let me finish the school year. In June of 1943 I got called in. I graduated from flight training at Corpus Christi, Texas in July 1945. I got out of the service and went back to Stanford for the winter quarter. I played baseball for Stanford in the spring of 1946 and football that fall.

“During the football season, I hurt my leg. Actually, I aggravated a nerve in the pelvis area. So I was having trouble lifting my leg that fall. The leg would kind of drag when I ran. I was playing fullback, and I couldn’t run as well as before. In the spring of ’47, my leg was still sore, but I played baseball.”

In fact, Merriman was a star fullback. A United Press story dated October 23, 1946, about the upcoming Stanford-Southern California game, commented that Stanford’s line had been opening holes for “the finest fullback in the West. His name is Lloyd Merriman and he can do just about anything expected of a halfback, including skirt the ends, kick, and pass. He goes into the USC game with a record of averaging better than five yards carrying.”

Although Merriman chose not to play pro football, the Chicago Bears of the National Football League and the Los Angeles Dons of the All-America Football Conference drafted the hard-running Stanford back. “I signed a contract with the Reds after we finished Stanford’s baseball season, so I never played football after that. They gave me a bonus of \$12,000. I started playing minor league ball in 1948, but I would go back to Stanford in the off season. I would take classes in the winter quarter, and that’s how I graduated in 1949.”

In 1948 the Reds sent Merriman to Columbia of the seven-team class A South Atlantic League. With sixth-place Columbia, Merriman hit .298 and led the league in runs scored with 120, triples with 18, and stolen bases with 44. Local fans nicknamed him “Citation” because of his speed. He also made the league’s All-Star team as an outfielder. But the hot weather bothered Lloyd, and he dropped in weight from 195 to 180 pounds:

“I finally got it going with Columbia, but I was hitting only about .200 for the first month when I got a phone call from George Halas, the coach of the Chicago Bears. He says, ‘Why don’t you come up here and play with us? We’re just getting started.’

"I said, 'No, I think I'll stay here with baseball."

"The Bears drafted me, but I had to turn Mr. Halas down. Pretty soon I got to where I felt a little more at home at the plate, and I started hitting the ball better in the Sally League."

In 1949 Lloyd went to spring training with the Reds for the second time, and this time he made the big club. For the season he averaged .230 in 103 games, including 12 doubles, five triples, four homers, and 26



Lloyd Merriman as star halfback at Stanford University, 1946.  
(photo: Author's collection)

RBIs. Although he didn't play much in the first half of the season, the speedster ended up as the Reds' center fielder.

Cincinnati finished seventh in the National League in 1949, but the Reds had a promising lineup. Big Ted Kluszewski, in his second full season at first base, led the club with a .309 average and produced 68 RBIs, veteran catcher Walker Cooper hit .280 and topped the Reds in homers with 16, and third baseman Grady Hatton hit .263 with 11 homers and a team-high 69 RBIs.

Reflecting on Kluszewski, Merriman, ever modest about his own talent, recounted, "One day as a rookie I was sitting there on the bench and ol' Ted came to me and said, 'Watch my swing and see if you can tell what's different. I'm not feeling right up there.' It's funny he would come to me to watch him. For gosh sakes, I'm a rookie! But Ted and I got to be good friends.

"One time in Brooklyn Kluszewski hits a home run, and I'm following him up to bat. So I know I'm probably going to get knocked down, which I do. So I get up, ready to hit, and the next one, I almost ate it. Boy, that ball came right at me! I just barely got out of the way.

"On the next pitch I hit a little dribbler down to first. The pitcher had to cover first base, and I just ran right up his back! Anyway, he never threw at me again. I used to have a picture of the two of us, flying in the air! But that's the way they played the game in those years."

Cincinnati had an outfield by committee that included Merriman, Danny Litwhiler, (.291 average, 11 homers), Johnny Wyrostek, (.249 with nine homers), Peanuts Lowrey, (.275, two home runs) Harry Walker, (.318 with one round-tripper), and Hank Sauer.

The previous year Sauer clouted 35 homers for the Reds, but Cincy traded him to the Cubs in 1949. Sauer's trade meant increased playing time for the other outfielders, including Merriman.

In the first game of a doubleheader on April 24, Merriman batted leadoff and faced veteran right-hander Elmer Riddle, pitching in the final season of his 10-year career.

"My first at-bat I was really nervous," Lloyd reminisced. "I was so nervous that I couldn't swing the bat. I just stood there and took two strikes. I thought, 'It's strike two. I gotta start swinging.' The next pitch I took a whack at, and by God, if I don't hit it! My hit ends up being a triple. Later on in the ball game, against Hugh Casey, I dinked one down the right field line, which was about 300 feet right down the foul line just by the foul pole, and that goes for a home run!

"I end up getting two for three and we win the ball game, 3-2. So I really had a lot to do with winning a ball game. But then I don't play again for about two or three weeks. Here I thought I'd done so well, and nothing happens for about three weeks.

"That's how my .230 average came about. You'd get in now and then. Things didn't go in such a way to give you the incentive to do well. But I tried. I did everything I could to help the ball club. I'd pitch batting practice. I'd run in the outfield. I'd shag balls. But I was, you know, kind of 'hanging out.'"

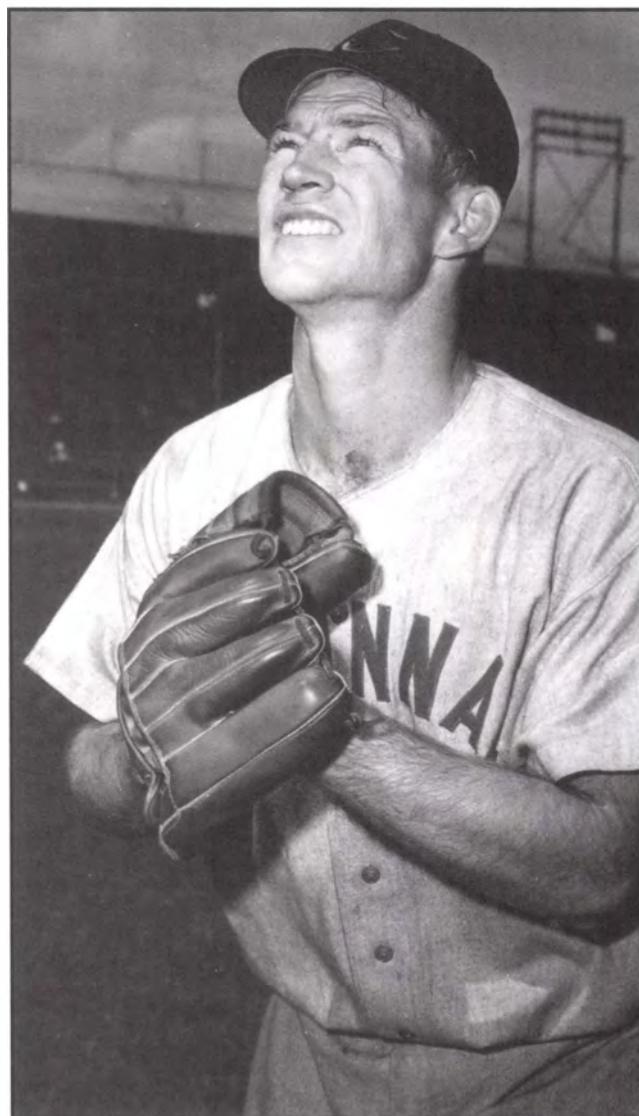
Four days after the Reds beat the Pirates, boosted by Merriman's two-for-three performance, Lloyd traveled with his club to Chicago. Against the Cubs, he sprained his right thumb trying to pick up a grounder to center, so he missed several games.

Danny Litwhiler, who made the big leagues in 1940, befriended the California rookie. "When I first made it with the Reds," Merriman said in 2003, "it was kind of a dog-eat-dog life. Danny really helped me out. He was showing me the ropes, what to do, and how to take care of business. He was good at everything. He even showed me where to buy my suitcase. You had to have something, you know, to travel with. Danny took me to this place in St. Louis where they made trunks and suitcases. When we'd go on the road, Danny would show me the best restaurants. One time in New York he took me to Mama Leoni's. We sat there, and Danny knew all the waiters. Every time they'd come by, they'd give us a little bit of everything they were serving to the other people. I never ate so much in my life! Danny would come out with me early, or stay late with me, and we'd take batting practice, just the two of us. In other words, he was trying to help me. Baseball is really not that way. It wasn't that way at all in the late 1940s. You know, you don't help somebody. They're going to take your job. He helped me break into the big leagues, and I have always appreciated that. We're still good friends."

In 1950 the Reds climbed from seventh to sixth place in the NL, going 66-87 under new manager Luke Sewell. Big Klu came through with a fine season, leading the club in hitting with a .307 mark while slugging 25 homers and driving in 111 runners. Again the outfield was crowded. Merriman hit .258 with two home runs and 31 RBIs. Right fielder Johnny

Wyrostek hit .285, left fielder Bob Usher, back with the Reds after two seasons in the minors, batted .259. Peanuts Lowrey, a right-handed hitter, averaged only .227 before the Reds traded him to the Cardinals. Rookie Joe Adcock averaged .293 with eight homers but lacked the speed to play center field.

"You know, it's so hard to get an assist from center field," Lloyd explained. "It's tough to throw somebody out at home from center field, because the



Lloyd Merriman, Cincinnati Reds 1949-1951, 1954.  
(photo: Dick Miller collection)

mound is in the way. The mound usually makes the throw bounce away from the catcher. You have to be like Willie Mays and throw that ball on the fly. I don't think Willie ever hit a cut-off man. But he had a good arm, and he'd throw it all the way on the fly, so he was able to get some runners at home."

In 1951 Cincinnati ranked sixth in the NL, and Merriman produced his best all-around year. His average slipped to .242, but he set personal highs in games with 114, doubles with 23, homers with five, and RBIs with 36. Lloyd fielded .997 (he committed one error), made a career-best 308 putouts and took part in two double plays.

He also enjoyed two memorable highlights within one week in 1951. On September 7, in an 18-inning game in which the Reds beat the Cubs, 7-6, Lloyd tied a National League mark by making 12 putouts in center field. Five days later, he led the Reds to a 6-3 win over the Dodgers by hammering a bases-loaded triple off Carl Erskine in the seventh inning.

In the meantime, the Korean conflict had erupted in June 1950. The armed forces were calling up thousands of men, including dozens of major leaguers.

“When I got out of the marines in 1946, you could either get out in the reserves, or you could stay in and go to China. I didn’t want to go to China. I was a first lieutenant, but I hadn’t done anything with the reserves. Then along comes Korea, and the marines like to be able to call up their troops all of a sudden.

“The marines called me up in May 1952. I hadn’t been near an airplane in five years. I had 10 hours in on what they called an SNJ, a practice plane. They sent us to the marine base in El Toro, California, and told us to learn how to fly a jet.”

“Flying a jet was quite a thrill. The jets were single-seated. You weren’t riding with anybody. You get the groundwork, and you go to takeoff. The funny thing is how you hear all this sound going down the runway, but about 300 feet after takeoff, all the sound goes away! You think maybe that jet has quit on you, but what happens is that you’ve left the sound behind you. I met Ted Williams at El Toro, and John Glenn was in our group too. Ted and John both flew jets in Korea. We trained there, and then we trained near Honolulu in Hawaii. We left for Korea around January 1953. I spent about eight months in Korea in the First Marine Air Wing, so I got in on the tail end of the war. I flew 87 combat missions in an F9F Panther Jet. I saw quite a bit of Jerry Coleman, the Yankee second baseman. Jerry was a marine pilot who flew a Corsair.”

After being mustered out of the marines in September 1953, Merriman played winter ball in Havana, Cuba. “Cuba was a good deal for playing ball. They had only one ballpark, so you didn’t have to travel. They had two ball games every night. I played for Cien Fugas. They probably had six or eight teams in the Cuban League. Each team could have a few ballplayers from the States, usually major leaguers. That was a fun side trip. I played about the same in Cuban ball as I had for the Reds in 1950 and 1951.”

Merriman’s service in the marine corps had cost him all of the 1952 and 1953 seasons. While he enjoyed a good training camp in the spring of 1954, the Reds had acquired several good young outfielders.

Lloyd remembered competing against Gus Bell, Wally Post and Jim Greengrass. Greengrass hit .280 with 27 homers and 95 RBIs, Bell hit .299 with 17 homers and 101 RBIs, and Post averaged .255 with 18 four-baggers and 83 RBIs.

“I did a lot of pinch hitting in 1954. It was disappointing, because I played well. I hit six home runs on the way north and I hit over .300 in the spring. But the Reds had too much young, good competition. In those years, when you reached 30, you were old. It seemed like I was getting up there.”

Merriman played in only 73 games in 1954, 25 in the outfield. While averaging a career-best .268, Lloyd did hit a solid .289 off the bench, going 11 for 38 as a pinch hitter.

Having a set outfield going into spring training in 1955, Cincinnati sold Merriman to the Chicago White Sox. Lloyd went to spring camp with the White Sox. Later, they played an inter-city exhibition with the Cubs just before the regular season opened. Soon after, the Cubs purchased his contract from the White Sox on April 16 after he played only one game with the Sox.

Lloyd remembered seeing a trivia question in *The Sporting News*: Who is the player associated with three Chicago teams, the White Sox, Cubs, and the Bears? He chuckled and said he was that player, since the Bears had drafted him.

“I started to play pretty regular for the Cubs at first,” Lloyd recalled. “But then I jammed my left

thumb, so I was out with it for quite a while. In the meanwhile, Eddie Miksis replaced me.

Merriman played in 72 games for the Cubs. The following season the Cubs optioned the California native to Los Angeles of the Pacific Coast League. LA in turn sold him to Portland.

In 1956, Merriman opened his own insurance company. He started raising, training, and showing horses in California ring horse shows and created a horse vitamin supplement that sold well. Reaching age 65 in 1989, Lloyd retired.

In 1993 Clovis High recognized Lloyd's achievements by renaming the school's varsity diamond Lloyd Merriman Field. The organizers brought

in several of the former player's friends, and Lloyd threw out the first pitch for an evening game. He was also named a member of Stanford's Athletic Hall of Fame for baseball. Lloyd Merriman died on January 20, 2004.

*Jim Sargent is professor of history at Virginia Western Community College, Roanoke, Virginia. A SABR member for ten years, he has been interviewing former ballplayers during those years which resulted in 50 articles.*



On May 3, 1943 the Reds beat the Pirates, 7-5, at Crosley Field in a game that started at 11:30 a.m. The game was played in the morning to benefit second shift workers in wartime defense plants. The club experimented with several different starting times during the war years, but attendance sunk to all-time lows because of gas and tire rationing, a 35 mile-per-hour speed limit, and restricted train travel. Of course, many Reds fans were serving in the military all around the globe.

On August 29, 1943, a crowd of 38,017 jammed Crosley Field for a double header against the first-place St. Louis Cardinals. The Reds won the first game, 5-3, but lost the second, 3-2, in 11 innings. The twinbill attracted the largest total attendance ever recorded at Crosley Field. There were 2,125 servicemen and 417 blood donors admitted free. The record paid attendance at

Crosley was 36,961 for a doubleheader against the Pirates on April 27, 1947.

From *Redleg Journal* by Greg Rhodes and John Snyder, Roadwest Publishing, 2000.

# JIM GREENGRASS: ROOKIE THUNDER

by Bill Ballew

A broken right ankle did more than halt Jim Greengrass's progress along the basepaths during the waning days of the 1954 campaign. The injury and subsequent bout with thrombophlebitis also suspended all of the momentum the outfielder had garnered during his previous two years at the major league level.

"I got hurt sliding into second base at Forbes Field in Pittsburgh," Greengrass said. "That shortened my career, no doubt about it, and I'm not so sure the Lord didn't have a hand in that. I was kind of a wild guy, and I think he saw that I couldn't handle it. But I had my little taste and I enjoyed every minute of it."

The 2004 SABR Convention coincides with the 50th anniversary of Greengrass's short-lived ride as king of the Queen City's baseball fans. His rise occurred as quickly as his decline, and was equally unexpected. For seven seasons Greengrass had toiled unspectacularly in the Yankees' farm system, and even considered walking away from the game before his wife, Catherine, convinced him otherwise prior to the 1950 season. Signed as a 16-year-old out of Addison, New York, Greengrass's claim to fame as a minor leaguer was in 1951, when he led the Class A Central League with a .379 batting average.

A year later, Greengrass was promoted to Beaumont in the Class AA Texas League, where in 1952 where he hit .278 with 22 home runs and 101 RBIs. The Yankees, meanwhile, coveted pitcher Ewell Blackwell, a sidewinder with Cincinnati. The two teams worked out a complicated, so-called "waiver" deal that sent Blackwell to the Big Apple in exchange for \$35,000 and a handful of minor leaguers—Bob Marquis, Ernie Nevel, Johnny Schmitz and Greengrass.

Marquis was considered the most promising of the quartet, yet Greengrass had the distinction of being handpicked by Reds manager Rogers Hornsby who saw Greengrass play two games in the Texas League and convinced Cincinnati general manager

Gabe Paul that the outfielder needed to be included in the deal.

"He hit one over the center field fence down at Tulsa and showed the kind of power I like," Hornsby told *The Sporting News* in 1952, "But I was particularly interested in the drive he had, the will to win. Why, Tulsa walked the guy once and instead of just trotting down to first base, he ran. A little thing like that tells a lot about a player."

At the conclusion of Beaumont's season, Greengrass was promoted to Cincinnati at the behest of Hornsby, who was looking for new and younger players. On September 9, 1952, shortly after dressing for his first major league game during a doubleheader against Boston, the manager went up to the rookie while searching for a hitter.

"Hornsby went over to the bench to me and said, 'You ready to play, kid?' And I said, 'Hell yeah, that's what I came here for.' From then on that man loved me, and I loved him, too. He was great to me."

Greengrass was in the starting lineup for the afterpiece of the two-night twinbill. He started in left field, produced three singles in his last three trips to the plate and drove in both Cincinnati runs in a 2-0 victory over the Braves.

Five days later, on September 14, the Dodgers pitched around first baseman Ted Kluszewski to get to the rookie. Greengrass responded with his first home run in the big leagues, a grand slam into the upper deck at Ebbets Field off Brooklyn's Johnny Rutherford to give the Reds all of their runs in a 4-0 triumph. The following day he hit another home run, this time a three-run shot.

"My biggest thrill was my first major league home run," Greengrass said. "I don't think I touched the ground for three weeks after I hit that ball. Charlie Dressen was the Dodgers' manager, and he called Tulsa to get Bobby Bragan's opinion on how to pitch

to me. He called him from the dugout. I don't know what Bragan told Dressen, but he said I made a liar out of him."

Greengrass energized the Reds' lineup. In his first 12 games, the Redlegs scored 46 runs, with the rookie driving in 21. He also manned center field and his glove work was surprisingly good. Greengrass's bat was even better, resulting in 24 RBIs in his 18 September games while batting at a .309 clip to earn a spot on *The Sporting News'* All-Rookie team.

"No player has broken into the Cincinnati lineup with as much of a bang as Greengrass within our memory and that covers a lot of years, the last 37 of them, to be exact," wrote Tom Swope in the October 1, 1952 edition of *The Sporting News*.

His impressive debut earned Greengrass the starting job in left field for the Reds in 1953. Employing a unique batting stance that featured the righthanded hitter standing with his left foot in the



Jim Greengrass, Cincinnati Reds 1952-1955.  
(photo Cincinnati Reds)

bucket before stepping into pitches and taking a swing worthy of a lumberjack, Greengrass produced a .285 batting average with 20 home runs and 22 doubles. He also drove in 100 runs to become only the seventh National League rookie to reach the century mark in RBIs.

More success followed for Greengrass in 1954. He got off to an outstanding start by tying a senior circuit record with four doubles in the season opener. The outfielder added another two-bagger and a grand slam in the campaign's second contest before he drove in four runs with a single and a three-run blast in the fourth game. Greengrass had 13 RBIs in his first eight outings, all the while showing noticeable improvement with the leather in left field.

By the season's final month, Greengrass owned a .280 batting norm with 27 home runs and 95 RBIs before disaster struck while trying to break up a double play at the keystone sack against the Pirates. A winter of rest and rehab did little to improve the ankle during 1955, when the lingering pain limited Greengrass to 107 games. The Reds noticed the decline Greengrass suffered because of the injury and traded him with Glen Gorbous and Andy Seminick to Philadelphia for Smoky Burgess, Steve Ridzik and Stan Palys on April 30.

Greengrass understood why the deal was made, yet admitted leaving the Reds left a hole he never filled during the remainder of his professional career.

"Cincinnati was a great town," Greengrass said. "It was small, probably the smallest town at that time in the big leagues. You walked down the street and everybody knew you. It was, 'Hi, how you doing? How's the kids?' You knew the fans by their first names. It was great. It was like playing in your hometown; they were great, friendly people there.

"And the ballpark was the greatest park in the world. Crosley Field wasn't a pitcher's park; it was a hitter's park. I could reach all the fences. I loved it there. But there were some great parks all over the league in those days. Ebbets Field was a great park. None of the lefthanded pitchers liked to pitch against the Dodgers because they had all righthanded hitters and they could pop that ball out."

Greengrass underwent surgery on his ankle after the 1955 season in hope of reducing the constant swelling in his right leg. The operation caused the outfielder to report to spring training at 220 pounds, about 20 pounds heavier than normal for the broad-chested, six-foot-one Greengrass. The procedure did little to help Greengrass recapture his lost mobility and limited him to a platoon role in 1956, when he hit .205 with five home runs and 25 RBIs in 86 contests for the Phillies.

The 1956 campaign was Greengrass's final season in the big leagues. Outrighted to the Miami Marlins prior to the 1957 season, Greengrass toiled for nearly five years in the minors, most of them in the Pacific Coast League. Upon retiring from baseball, he scouted briefly with the Houston Colt .45s while working at Lockheed-Dobbins in Marietta, Georgia, before entering into law enforcement.

"The Coast League was a retirement league," Greengrass said. "A lot of guys that were playing there wouldn't go back to the majors because they were making more money in the Coast League. The minimum salary in the big leagues was \$5,000 and we were making as much as \$15,000."

Greengrass fell just shy of getting five full years in the major leagues. In 504 contests at the game's top level, he batted .269 with 69 home runs and 282 RBIs. While it would be easy for him to wallow in self-pity while wondering what might have happened had he stayed healthy, Greengrass prefers to enjoy his career from his side of the fence.

"Just getting to the big leagues was a big accomplishment," Greengrass said. "You're one of 100,000 people trying to get there. Back in the '40s and '50s, you had to have ability because you had 20 guys in the minors that could play as well as you. You played hurt, because you didn't want somebody else to jump in there and make you history. I was fortunate to get the opportunity, and I made the most of it when I was in there. I played baseball with the greatest players in the greatest city this game has known, and I consider myself to be very, very fortunate for that."

*A SABR member since 1988, Bill Ballew is a full-time freelance baseball writer. A correspondent with **Baseball America** since 1991, he has authored six books and more than 1,600 articles.*



*Wally Post, Cincinnati Reds 1949, 1952-1957, 1960-1963, a native of St. Henry, Ohio.  
(photo: Dick Miller collection)*

The records fell as fast as home runs landed in Crosley's Sun Deck in 1956. The Redlegs tied the major-league home run mark of 221 and established the club record. A Smokey Burgess pinch hit on September 29 in the next-to-last game of the season tied the mark. Along the way the Reds hit home runs in 21 consecutive games (accumulating 41 homers in the stretch), which remains a club record.

Fans loved the "Western Avenue Bombers" (for Western Avenue which ran behind the center field wall). The home run derby combined with the club's first serious pennant chance in 16 years and brought over one million fans to Crosley Field for the first time.

The leaders were Frank Robinson (whose 38 home runs set record for a rookie), Wally Post (36), Ted Kluszewski (35), Gus Bell (29), and Ed Bailey (28).

From *Redleg Journal* by Greg Rhodes and John Snyder, Roadwest Publishing, 2000.

# THE REDS ARE ON THE RADIO

by John Snyder

The first major league game on radio was a Pirates-Phillies clash carried on station KDKA in Pittsburgh on August 5, 1921. A year later, Cincinnati businessman Powel Crosley established WLW, Cincinnati's first radio station, carrying that fall's World Series between the New York Yankees and the New York Giants.

The first local broadcast of a Reds game occurred on April 15, 1924, from Redland Field on Opening Day against the Pirates. It was carried by simulcast on both WLW and WSAI, the latter also owned by Crosley. Arrangements were made only the night before the game with a special wire strung from the ballpark to the broadcast facilities of the stations. The announcer was Eugene Mittendorf, who called the play by play from the roof of the grandstand. The 1924 opener was also aired by KDKA, and could be heard by most sets in Cincinnati.

From 1924 through 1928, there were only six Reds games carried on local radio. Five of these were on Opening Day. The other was on September 5, 1926, for a game against St. Louis when the Reds and Cardinals were battling for first place. All were play-by-play broadcasts by the Crosley network.

Finally in 1929, Reds games were broadcast on a semi-regular basis for the first time when 40 games were carried over WLW with Bob Burdette behind the mike. But the experiment was short lived. Sidney Weil purchased the club in October 1929 and put an end to radio transmissions of Reds games, believing the broadcasts harmed attendance. In 1930, no Reds games were available on the radio, not even Opening Day.

Harry Hartman, who was the field announcer at Redland Field, convinced Weil to put the Reds back on the radio in 1931, arguing that the main audience for day games was women since all games were played in the daytime then. He felt that if women knew more about the game, they would be more like-

ly come to the ball park. Hartman also worked for WFBE (later WCPO), a small, low-wattage radio station in Cincinnati, which had its tower on the roof of a Cincinnati hotel. About half of the home games



*Walter "Red" Barber, Reds broadcaster, 1934-1938  
(photo: Cincinnati Reds)*

were broadcast in 1931 on WFBE, along with each of the away contests. The games on the road were recreated from Western Union telegraph transmissions as the results of each pitch came over the teletype.

The rotund and gregarious Hartman immediately became a hit on the dial. He developed several signature phrases, including "Bam!" and "Socko" for a hard hit ball, "Going, Going, Gone!" for the home run, "a can of corn" for an easy fly, and "the string's run out, here come the pay ball" for a 3-2 pitch. His bombastic narrations of Reds games were enthusias-

tic to say the least, even though the Reds of the early and mid-1930s lost far more often than they won. Although there are no known tapes of Hartman's broadcasts in existence today, descriptions of his style in the local and national publications of the 1930s bring Dick Vitale and the late Harry Caray to mind. Many veteran Reds fans remember Hartman's staccato play by play as an acquired taste.

There is no denying that Harry Hartman had a devoted following. *The Sporting News* in 1932 took a poll of readers to identify the most popular broadcasters in the country. Despite broadcasting for a small station that couldn't be heard much beyond a 15-mile radius from downtown Cincinnati, and providing the play by play for a Reds team buried in last place in the National League, Hartman was voted the most popular radio broadcaster in the major leagues by nearly a 2-1 margin over his nearest competitor. In 1936, *The Sporting News* repeated the poll, and Hartman won again. Among those he beat out was Ronald "Dutch" Reagan, who finished ninth in the poll for telegraphic re-creations of Chicago Cubs games for WHO in Des Moines, Iowa. Reagan fared much better in another election 44 years later.

Hartman had competition among radio listeners in the 1930s and early 1940s because the Reds allowed more than one Cincinnati station to air the games. The tenth-place finisher in the 1936 *The Sporting News* balloting was Red Barber, who had been broadcasting Cincinnati Reds games over WSAI since 1934. Crosley purchased the Reds in February of that year, and hired the 26-year-old Barber away from a station in Gainesville, Florida. Barber's style was radically different from that of Hartman. Red was softer and more polished and considered himself a reporter, and not a fan. He spent five seasons in Cincinnati and blended his natural storyteller's art with a folksy blend of southern expressions and an intense work ethic.

Barber left Cincinnati after the 1938 season and headed for New York City, where he handled play by play for the Brooklyn Dodgers until 1953 and the New York Yankees from 1954 through 1965. Along with Mel Allen, his Yankee radio and television partner, Barber was the first to be elected to the broadcaster's wing of the Hall of Fame.

Hartman's final year broadcasting for the Reds was in 1942. That season, on WKRC, Waite Hoyt began his 24-year stint as the club's play by play man. Hoyt's broadcasts were sponsored by Burger Beer during each of those 24 seasons, although stations originating the broadcasts changed frequently. Hoyt had a long playing career as a pitcher in the majors from 1918 through 1938, and earned Hall of Fame honors based upon a 237-182 lifetime record. He pitched in seven World Series, six for the powerhouse New York Yankee clubs of the 1920s, where he was a teammate of Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig, and another with the Philadelphia Athletics in 1931. Hoyt and Ruth were close friends until the Babe's death in 1948.

As a broadcaster, Hoyt became a Cincinnati institution. He regaled listeners with his crisp play by play and his straightforward reporting, as well as his knowledge of the sport. Hoyt had played on some of the best teams in history, and had high standards. He didn't hesitate to criticize a player if he felt it was necessary. Unlike most broadcasters, Hoyt spoke in the past, rather than the present tense, telling listeners that a batter "grounded to shortstop" rather than "grounds to shortstop." But it was rain delays where Hoyt really shined, when he had plenty of time to spin fascinating stories about his playing career, and especially his relationship with Ruth.

Hoyt also overcame a battle with alcoholism during his stay in Cincinnati. He disappeared for two days in 1945, and *The Cincinnati Enquirer* reported that "the disappearance of Hoyt disclosed that he was subject to spells of amnesia." When Ruth was asked about Hoyt's problems with "amnesia," Ruth responded that "amnesia must be a new brand of scotch." The Reds, the radio station, the fans, and Burger Beer management stood behind him, and Hoyt remained as popular as ever.

During Hoyt's first four seasons, he was teamed with either Dick Nesbitt or Lee Allen. For five years, Hoyt did the games alone, until late in the 1951 season when Bob Gilmore joined Waite in the booth. Later, he was paired with Jack Moran, Gene Kelly and Claude Sullivan.

There were several milestones during Hoyt's tenure. In 1945, the Reds began a policy of granting exclusive rights to the games to one station. Since then, the Reds contests have been aired on WCPO (1945-54), WSAI (1955-56), WKRC (1957-63), WCKY (1964-68) and WLW (1969-present). Beginning in 1949, all Reds games were aired for the first time. Previously, some Sunday, holiday and nights games at Crosley Field were "blacked out." In 1956, the Reds sent broadcasters on the road for the

Hoyt retired at the end of the 1965 season. Sullivan became the lead broadcaster and was teamed with Jim McIntyre in 1966. Unfortunately, Sullivan soon contracted throat cancer, which claimed his life on December 6, 1967 at the age of only 43.

Reds pitcher Joe Nuxhall went to spring training in 1967 intending to pitch in the majors at least one more year. On April 1, Nuxhall received



*Claude Sullivan joined Waite Hoyt in the broadcasting booth the last two years of Hoyt's tenure with the Reds, 1964-1965 (photo:Cincinnati Reds)*

first time, ending the telegraphed reports of the games, although they were briefly revived from 1958 through 1961 in games emanating from Los Angeles and San Francisco after the Dodgers and Giants moved west. During the years in which he re-created the games, Hoyt differed from most of his radio contemporaries, many of whom tried to create the illusion that they were actually at the ballpark instead of a radio studio, and added such sound effects such as the cheering of the crowds and the crack of the bat. Hoyt not only refused to use sound effects to enhance the broadcasts, but noise of the Western Union "ticker" which typed out the coded messages of each pitch was clearly audible in the background.

good news and bad news. He was being released as a player at the age of 37, but he was immediately hired as a broadcaster. Joe had prior radio experience in play by play by announcing Miami University basketball games.

After Sullivan's death, the broadcast team was McIntyre and Nuxhall. In 1969, the Reds began their affiliation with radio station WLW, and brought the broadcasts under the corporate umbrella, thereby making the broadcasters employees of the ball club. Previously, broadcasters received their salaries from either the station or the sponsor. McIntyre was fired by the Reds after the 1970 season and many rumors had Harry Caray moving to Cincinnati. Reds gener-

al manager Bob Howsam had worked previously with Caray when Howsam was general manager of the St. Louis Cardinals. Caray was bypassed, however, in favor of 26-year-old Al Michaels, who for three years had been the play-by-play man for the Hawaii Islanders of the Pacific Coast League. He also worked in Hollywood, picking the young women who appeared on TV's *The Dating Game*. Michaels remained in Cincinnati for three seasons. When contract negotiations over an extension of his contract broke down at the end of the 1973 season, Michaels bolted for San Francisco to do play by play for the Giants, and soon moved on to network television with ABC.

Another young broadcaster supplanted Michaels. On January 21, 1974, the Reds hired 31-year-old Marty Brennaman to handle radio play by play. He was a native of Portsmouth, Virginia, and a graduate of the University of North Carolina. Brennaman had previously done play by play for the Tidewater Tides of the International League for three seasons, and four years with the Virginia Squires of the American Basketball Association.



Marty Brennaman and Joe Nuxhall were the "voices" of the Reds from 1974-2003. (photo: Cincinnati Reds)

Brennaman and Nuxhall began their 30th season together in 2003, the longest running broadcast team in major league history. Many fans approaching middle age have no memory of anyone other than the duo of Marty and Joe providing the commentary on Reds broadcasts. In 2000, Brennaman was honored at the Hall of Fame Inductions with the Ford C. Frick Award and is now recognized as part of the "Scribes and Mikemen" Exhibit in the Library of the National Baseball Hall of Fame. Brennaman received another honor in 2003 when he was one of a rotating group of broadcasting legends who handled the play by play for nationally televised games over ESPN when he teamed with Joe Morgan on June 4 for a Reds-Yankees game from Great American Ball Park.

### Reds Regular Broadcasters

Announcer	Years	Station(s)
Bob Burdette	1929	WLW
Harry Hartman	1931-42	WFBE, WCPO
Red Barber	1934-38	WSAI
C. O. (Oatmeal) Brown	1934	WKRC
Duane Snodgrass	1935	WKRC
Dick Bray	1938-42	WSAI
Roger Baker	1939-42	WSAI
Paul Hodges	1939	WCPO
Sam Balter	1942	WCPO
Waite Hoyt	1942-65	WKRC, WCPO WSAI, WCKY
Dick Nesbitt	1942-44	WKRC
Lee Allen	1945	WCPO
Bob Gilmore	1951-54	WCPO
Jack Moran	1955-61	WSAI, WKRC
Gene Kelly	1962-63	WKRC
Claude Sullivan	1964-65	WCKY
Jim McIntyre	1966-70	WCKY, WLW
Joe Nuxhall	1967-present	WCKY, WLW
Al Michaels	1971-73	WLW
Marty Brennaman	1974-present	WLW
Dick Carlson	1980	WLW
Andy McWilliams	1987	WLW
Steve LaMarr	1991-92	WLW
George Grande	1993-present	WLW

*John Snyder is a sports historian, and author of fourteen books including **Redleg Journal** with Greg Rhodes which won **The Sporting News SABR Best Research Award** for 2001.*

# A COMMON THREAD: BLACK BASEBALL IN REDLAND

by Paul Debono

Like clam chowder in Boston, or money on Wall Street, baseball is home in Cincinnati. While Cincinnati has shared the limelight of baseball history with other cities, it is acknowledged by historians that “Porkopolis” was where professional baseball began in 1869 when the Cincinnati Red Stockings became the first salaried professional team. However, due to the large shadow cast by the Reds, the patchwork of African-American professional baseball history in Queen City is less well known.

At one point Cincinnati was considered a liberal city; a place where German immigrants fought for the right to consume beer at the ball park on Sundays, where Quakers organized the Underground Railroad, and where author Harriet Beecher Stowe was inspired to write a book that changed American history. Being just across the river from the Commonwealth of Kentucky, the City’s fortunes were also intertwined with the South. The busy river port was a gateway to Dixie; thus, a climate of racial bigotry and conservatism also has roots in the city. In 1953, during the McCarthy era, the Reds adopted the nickname the Red Legs to avoid any confusion with the dreaded “Communists.” For some folks the Reds brought to mind “red necks” rather than Russians, and understandably so—as Cincinnati was the southernmost city in big league baseball for many years. Nonetheless, Cincinnati was home to several black baseball teams.

In 1887 Cincinnati was home to a franchise known as the Browns in the “League of Colored Baseball Clubs,” which was created with an eye on developing the expanding pool of black players for the big leagues. Other cities in the league included New York, Boston, Pittsburgh, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Washington and Louisville. Had the league (which was affiliated with the Major Leagues) succeeded—the epic struggle of professional black baseball might have been shortened. Unfortunately, the league folded after just one week due to financial problems.

On an off day between games with Baltimore and Philadelphia on June 3, 1887 the Cincinnati Reds



*Charles Grant, Cincinnati native, who John McGraw attempted to sign for the New York Giants as a “full-blooded Cherokee” named “Tokohama.”  
(photo: Larry Lester collection)*

played against the Cuban Giants in Trenton, New Jersey. The Cuban Giants were the first ever salaried black team, although the players were not actually Cuban. According to *The Cincinnati Enquirer* of June 4, 1887 the Reds won the contest in Trenton by a 9-7 score; but the Cuban Giants returned the favor by visiting Cincy and beating the Reds later on that month.

At the close of the 19th Century, Ohioans Fleet Walker, Welday Walker, Sol White, Chappie Johnson, Grant “Home Run” Johnson and Charles Grant were among the most recognizable black players in organized baseball. Moses Fleetwood Walker, born in

Mount Pleasant, (East Central) Ohio, played catcher with the Toledo Blue Stockings of the American Association in 1884. The American Association was considered a major league at the time, making Fleet Walker the first African American in major league baseball—some 63 years before Jackie Robinson suited up with the Dodgers. His brother, Welday Walker, also played in a few games for Toledo.

Sol White, a native of Bellaire, (East Central) Ohio and alumnus of Wilberforce University (Xenia, OH) was one of the first movers and shakers in black baseball. Sol White played second base for the Wheeling, West Virginia team in the Ohio State league in 1887, and went on to play with top black teams at the turn of the century, including the Page Fence Giants, the Cuban Giants, Columbia Giants and Philadelphia Giants. In 1907, Sol White wrote a short book called *The History of Colored Baseball* (reprinted by University of Nebraska Press 1995) which was destined to be the single most important document of early black baseball history. George “Chappie” Johnson, also of Bellaire, Ohio, was a skilled catcher in the early days of black baseball. Like Sol White, he earned a reputation for being knowledgeable about the game and became a noted manager/mentor in black baseball. Grant “Home Run” Johnson, born in Findlay, (northwestern) Ohio hit some 60 home runs for his hometown semi-pro Findlay Sluggers in 1894 to earn his nickname. Johnson was a star player during the deadball era of black baseball and he also gained the respect of major leaguers whom he faced in numerous barnstorming games. Home Run Johnson was joined by fellow African-American John “Bud” Fowler on the otherwise all-white Findlay team. Bud Fowler was the first ever black professional player beginning his career with Chelsea, Massachusetts in 1878. Fowler grew up near Cooperstown, New York, but he traveled the country playing baseball and spent a fair amount of time in Ohio. Fowler spent the off season of 1904 Cincinnati working as a barber while he attempted to gain support for a Cincinnati team in another proposed “Colored League.” (Fowler was profiled in *The Cincinnati Enquirer* November 10, 1904.)

Fowler and “Home Run Johnson” broke off from the Findlay team following the 1894 season to form an all-black team. The team was drawn from the rich pool of talent made available due to the institution of the “color-line.” They had wanted to place the team in Findlay but could not secure sponsorship. However, just over the Northern Ohio border in Adrian,

Michigan, the Page Woven Wire Fence Company agreed to sponsor the team. The Page Fence Giants were a legendary barnstorming team travelling the country in a custom railroad coach. In their inaugural 1895 season, the Page Fence Giants met the Cincinnati Reds for two exhibition games. *The Cincinnati Enquirer* fully covered the games; reminding fans on April 9, 1895 “The Colored Giants are certainly worth seeing.” In subsequent editions, *The Enquirer* went on to describe in the frank, but insensitive, vernacular of the day how the Reds defeated Page Fence Giants:

*“It is in the nature of a coincidence that the victory should be achieved by figures that are dear in hearts of colored fold. Could have a more appropriate score for the game been made than 11 to 7? While the local team won the game, they didn't have a picnic doing it. The colored players gave them an argument right from the start. Along about the third inning when the score stood 2-0 in favor of the Page Fence Giants, you could have tossed a ripe Georgia watermelon or a fat possum, done to the last turn, down to the colored rooters in the pavilion and they would have kicked it aside and gone looking at the game . . . (Cincinnati Enquirer April 12, 1895.)”*

While *The Enquirer's* prose strayed foul; overall the coverage acknowledged the skills of the Page Fence Giants and provided a window into the world of 19th Century black baseball in the Queen City. *The Enquirer* mentioned on April 13, 1895: “(Robert) Footes, the crack colored catcher, who has played with nearly every Millcreek bottom team the past six years has been signed by the Unions, a colored professional team of Chicago.” Bob Footes was a noted catcher in the early days of black baseball, about whom precious little is known—the short item in the *Enquirer* is an important clue on his early career.

One of the most interesting players of that era was Cincinnati's own Charles Grant. Born the son of a horse trainer in 1879, Grant was raised in a Cincinnati neighborhood known as Finneytown. He grew up playing baseball alongside German immigrants and also learned to speak a bit of German. In the spring of 1901, Charles Grant went to Hot Springs, Arkansas to work as a bellman in the Eastman Hotel. Professional baseball players of that era went to Hot Springs to “boil out” and train for the upcoming season. In his free time Charles Grant also played ball at Hot Springs.

Legendary manager John McGraw, who was training with his Baltimore Orioles in Hot Springs at the time, observed Grant's snappy play and wanted to sign him. In order to get around the color line, McGraw convinced Charles Grant to take the name "Tokohama" a fictitious Cherokee name taken from a wall map, so that he could pass him off as an Indian. Since Grant had lighter skin and straight hair, the scheme was plausible. Grant went along, despite the

Muggsy McGraw's attempt to sign Grant could be considered as much a test of the color line, as it was an elaborate deception.

The signing was busted by Chicago White Stocking manager Charles Comiskey, who had seen Charles Grant play on the southside of Chicago with the black Columbia Giants. Charles Grant was the last African-American to get so close to the majors until



*The Findlay Sluggers 1894. Middle row far left Grant "Home Run" Johnson, same row far right Bud Fowler. Johnson was a Findlay native. Fowler attempted to drum up support for a Negro League in 1904 while working as a barber at 528 Plum Street in Cincinnati. (photo: Hancock County, Ohio, Historical Museum)*

fact that he was known to many baseball players as an African-American. (Oriole first baseman George Rohe grew up with Grant in Cincinnati and knew first hand of Grant's ethnicity). The signing of "Tokohama" was announced by *The Sporting News*, March 30, 1901 and Grant was set to head north with the Baltimore squad. *The Sporting News* had also printed an item two weeks earlier (March 16, 1902) about McGraw's scouting of "full-blooded Cherokee named Grant." The facts of Charles "Tokohama" Grant's true heritage were known to many; and

Jackie Robinson. After leaving baseball as a player, Grant managed semi-pro teams in Cincinnati. At the time of his death in 1932 he was working as a custodian in an apartment building in Cincinnati. Grant was sitting on the stoop of a building at the corner of Blair and Reading streets in Avondale when a passing car blew a tire, jumped a curb and killed him. Grant was buried in Spring Grove Cemetery where a number of major leaguers, including notables Heine Groh, Miller Huggins and Waite Hoyt. The climate that allowed these black Ohioans to succeed in baseball can be

traced to the tolerant attitudes fostered by Quakers and the supporters of the Underground Railroad. Unfortunately, tolerance did not carry the day. Black professional ball players were locked out of organized baseball and separate “Negro Leagues” became a fact of life.

In 1920 when the loose aggregation of black professional teams in the midwest was organized into the Negro National League, the Dayton Marcos joined teams from Chicago, Kansas City, St. Louis, Detroit and Indianapolis as charter members. The Marcos was organized by a black saloon keeper/former boxer from West Dayton named John Matthews. The Marcos began playing around 1907 and had the wherewithal to field teams into the late 1920s. In 1921, the Marcos fell out of the Negro National League, although they continued to play as an independent team.

The star of the Marcos was Cincinnati George “Chippy” Britt (dubbed Chippy, because that is what he called everyone else.) Britt started off in the Cincinnati sandlots and joined the Dayton Marcos in 1920, launching a career in the Negro Leagues that would span 22 years. Chippy pitched, caught and played every other position on the field. He played on a number of different teams, but spent the bulk of his career with the Baltimore Black Sox and the Homestead Grays. Britt had a reputation as one of the toughest men in black baseball. According to legend: in a game played at Mexico City, Britt challenged a band of armed soldiers to a fight, and the soldiers backed down. George Britt returned to Ohio to finish out his career with Cincinnati/Cleveland Buckeyes in 1942.

In 1921 the Negro National League Cuban Stars arranged to lease Redland Field to serve as their home field on the mainland, and were known as the Cincinnati-Cuban Stars. Redland Field was the only active major league facility used by the NNL. John Beckwith, of the visiting Chicago Giants, became the first player ever to hit a ball over the left field wall of Redland Field on May 21, 1921. Fans came in good numbers to see the team play, but in 1922 the Cuban Stars were not able to maintain their lease at Redland Field and Cincinnati was left out of the Negro league circuit.

Cincinnati did not give rise to a stalwart black baseball team like the American Giants of Chicago—or the Monarchs of Kansas City, but every spring black semi-pro and amateur teams organized. Newspapers of the early 20th century mentioned the Cincinnati Hiawathans, the Cincinnati Stars, the Covingtons, the Valley Tigers and Excelsior, among others. Baseball was the lingua franca in Cincinnati and sometimes brought people of different races together. The black semi-pros played against both white and black teams—sometimes in organized leagues, other times against top-flight touring black professional teams.

In the 1930s a semi-pro team known as the Cincinnati Tigers evolved into a strong independent team and a farm club for the fabled Homestead Grays. The Tigers were truly Cincy’s home team, culled from the tremendous local talent and organized in part by native William DeHart Hubbard. Hubbard was better known as the first African-American to win an Olympic Gold medal, having won the long jump in the 1924 Paris games.

In 1937, the Tigers became members of the Negro American League. They had purchased the Reds’ 1936 road uniforms and wore them proudly when they played before large crowds at Crosley Field. They traveled to away games in a refitted Studebaker church bus. Managing the Tigers was one of the most interesting people ever to put on a baseball uniform, Theodore Radcliffe—known better as Ted “Double Duty” Radcliffe. Double Duty was given his nickname by sportwriter Damon Runyon after he pitched one end of a double header, and caught the next. He might have been called “Triple Duty” with the Cincinnati Tigers as he pitched, caught and managed the team at different times. When he came to Cincinnati, Radcliffe was a rambling baseball man with nine years of experience in the Negro leagues, mostly during the Great Depression, playing wherever the jingle of coin was loudest. While Duty was a notable exception, most of the Cincinnati Tigers of ’37 were homegrown talents who had played for years in local leagues.

Cincy native Porter Moss was the Tigers’ pitching ace. Moss had a submarine-style delivery and won 35 games for the Tigers in 1936. He finished ahead of Hall of Famer Hilton Smith in the voting for the NAL West All-Star team in 1937, and pitched six

innings of relief in the All-Star game. Moss's career was cut short in 1944 when he was a shooting victim, the result of gunplay at a dice game in which he was a bystander.

Equally impressive was lefty Roy Partlow who kept his job at a Cincinnati steel factory, and pitched on the weekends. Later Partlow realized his true calling and went on to become an All-Star as an ace for the Homestead Grays. Partlow was also a .300 hitter and sometimes played outfield. At age 34, Partlow touched rarified air when he was selected by the Brooklyn Dodgers to join Jackie Robinson in Montreal. Partlow had a 2-0 record for the Montreal Royals in '46, when he was sent down to AA. Partlow, who had a fiery temperament, did not get along well with Jackie—which may have been his undoing.

Some of the Tigers also made their mark off the diamond. Shortstop Junes "Rainey" Bibbs went to the Kansas City Monarchs following the 1937 season. After Bibbs finished with baseball in 1944 he became a fabled biology teacher/coach in the Indianapolis Public School system. Tiger catcher Josh Johnson went on to play ball with the New York Black Yankees and the Brooklyn Royal Giants. After serving in World War II, Johnson earned a master's degree in education and eventually became an assistant state superintendent of education in Missouri.

Even though the Cincinnati Tigers of 1937 had excellent talent, fan support and finished respectably in third place, the team could not keep up financially and did not return to the NAL the following year. The best players on the team were co-opted by the owners of the Memphis Red Sox, and Cincinnati was again without a team in the Negro Leagues.

In the mid-1930s there was some interesting competition in the semi-pro Indiana-Ohio league including Negro league veterans, major league veterans, sprinkled in with some young prospects—such as tri-stater Tommy Turner. Turner went on to play in the Mexican League and with the American Giants. Over the last decade an articulate Tommy Turner has become an activist making many appearances locally and nationally, educating audiences on the history of the Negro leagues.

In 1942, Erie Pennsylvania hotel/nightclub owner and numbers man Earnest Wright and

Cleveland sports promoter Wilbur Hayes founded the Cincinnati Buckeyes. Wright had a nice bankroll and the '42 Cincinnati Buckeyes included star players like Chet Brewer and Willie "Sug" Cornelius. There was a rookie on the Cincinnati Buckeyes named Sam "Jet" Jethroe. Eight years later Jethroe was a rookie again, this time for the Boston Braves, where he was NL "Rookie of the Year" with 18 homers and 35 stolen bases (Jet had twice as many steals as any other player in MLB that year) In 1943, after just one season in Cincinnati, Earnest Wright moved the Buckeyes to Cleveland.

Also during the WW II era, a barnstorming team known as the Indianapolis Clowns entertained the public with a mix of baseball and comedy. In 1943 the Clowns were known as the Cincinnati Clowns of the Negro American League. The Clowns played most of their games on the road and did not have a home in the true sense. The Clowns kept fans in stitches with their baseball-comedy routine, but the team was well skilled on the diamond as well. The most famous Indianapolis Clown player was Hank Aaron, who provided a historic baseball moment in Cincinnati on opening day 1974 by tying Babe Ruth's career home run record.

Chuck Harmon, destined to be the first U.S. born African-American to play for the Cincinnati Reds, signed with the Indianapolis Clowns in 1947 under the assumed name Charlie Fine to protect his amateur status, as he was a student at the University of Toledo at the time. Harmon was only with the team for a few days, before getting a call from the Athletic Department at Toledo about a steady job in the city of Toledo's recreation department. A few weeks later Harmon was signed to a minor league contract by the St. Louis Browns. After laboring in the minor leagues six years, Harmon was signed by the Cincinnati Reds in 1954. Nino Escalera, a black Puerto Rican, also signed with the Reds in 1954. Both Escalera and Harmon played for the Reds April 17, 1954 to break the "color line" in Cincinnati.

While the Cincinnati Reds were one of the last National League teams to integrate, they had jumped into baseball's melting pot previously. As noted, the Reds played against both the Cuban Giants and the Page Fence Giants in the 19th Century. Cincinnati was among the first major league teams to travel to Cuba for winter baseball where they played against Negro

league players. In 1911, the Reds signed major league baseball's first Latin players in Armando Marsans and Rafael Almeida. (Cincinnati's baseball connection to Cuba spans the entire 20th century, including the association with AAA affiliate Cuban Sugar Kings in the 1950s and the induction of much loved Cuban Tony Perez into the Hall of Fame as a Red in 2000). In October 1913, the Reds played two games against the West Baden Sprudels, a top black team who made their home in a Southern Indiana health resort. The practice of complete major league teams sparring against Negro League teams was later banned by Kennesaw Mountain Landis, although many Reds players participated independently in postseason barnstorming throughout baseball's segregated era.

Since race and baseball have loomed so large on the landscape of Cincinnati's history—the intersection of the two is packed with significance. Various elements came together on May 13, 1947 when the Brooklyn Dodgers and Jackie Robinson came to Crosley Field. African-American fans from the South and midwest packed special trains to see Jackie play. Also present in the stands that day was a vocal contingent of fans sitting close to field who heckled and hurled racial epithets at Jackie. Dodger shortstop Pee Wee Reese was himself a Kentucky boy raised not too far from the banks of the Ohio River, near Louisville.

Pee Wee reacted to the ugly banter by walking over and putting his arm around Jackie—and the stadium drew quiet. Pee Wee's gesture symbolized a new day for race relations in baseball.

In contrast to the ballyhoo of their crimson-hosed counterparts, the story of black professional baseball in Cincinnati is obscure and filled with frustration. It is challenging to celebrate a history that came about because of grave injustice; however, Cincinnati has done just that with the opening of the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center this year. Underneath the stereotypes of a "riverboat town" is black baseball history treasure. Historical facts show that professional black baseball had a toe hold in Cincinnati going back to the 19th Century and great black ball players have come out of local sandlots ever since. Cincinnati's baseball tradition is the centerpiece as the city struggles to reinvent "Porkopolis" as a diverse 21st century metropolis.

*Paul DeBono, a SABR member since 1996 is active with the Negro League Committee and won its Robert Peterson Award in 1998. He is author of **The Indianapolis ABC'S: A Premier Team in the Negro Leagues** and is working on a forthcoming book, **Chicago American Giants: Negro League Dynasty.***



*The 1936 Cincinnati Tigers played at West End Park. (photo:Larry Lester collection)*

# HISTORY OF DAYTON BASEBALL

by Jack Carlson

It took 15 years for professional baseball to migrate 50 miles north of Cincinnati and reach Dayton, Ohio. In 1884 Dayton put their first professional team on the field. Dayton had seen amateur ball for several years and, like many other places, had moved from total amateurs to part amateur and part professional ball. That had happened in Dayton in 1883. That team, the Buckeye Baseball Club, began as an amateur team, except for a pitcher from Pottsville, PA. who was suspected of actually receiving money for his services. By the end of the 90-game season all of the players were openly being paid to play. During that season the amateurs disappeared, and it was an entirely different team at season's end. The Buckeye Club was not a financial success but it did show that Dayton could form a team, play a full season, and play well enough to compete with other nearby cities.

In early 1884 the Ohio State Association was organized with eight teams. The mid-January organizational meeting was held in Dayton's Phillips House. By the end of January the Association had shrunk to the six teams that would start the season. The cities were: Hamilton, Springfield, Portsmouth, Ironton, Chillicothe, and Dayton. Each team paid the \$25.00 entrance fee. Dayton's team would be called the Gem Citys and play in a newly built ballpark with a grandstand and a fence. The park was outside the Dayton city limits so Sunday baseball could be played. Although several prominent Dayton citizens were stockholders, the principal owner was a gambler named Ben Schade.

The first season began at home on May 1 with close rival Springfield. Dayton won 5-0 and

continued to win for nine more games. The season was a spectacular one for the Gem Citys. They led the entire season but, on the last day, Dayton had to win to finish ahead of Springfield. Dayton did win and was one game ahead of their rival. The next season was a failure and the team folded after a few games.

There was a dormant period (the first of several in Dayton's baseball history) until 1889 when Dayton played in the Tri-State League with moderate success. The 1890 team, in the same league did not do well. In July the gate for one of the games was \$43.00 which did not even pay the visitors' guarantee. The team was disbanded on July 8. Despite the failure, there were some interesting moments. Dayton signed an 18-year-old pitcher,

George Cuppy, who became the best of the staff. One of Cuppy's pitching rivals was Canton's Cy Young who went to Cleveland in August. Cuppy went to Cleveland to start the 1892 season becoming Young's teammate. The two of them won 344 games from 1892 through the 1898 seasons.

1897 began the most successful five-year period in Dayton's total baseball history. Three men from western Pennsylvania arrived in Dayton with a franchise in the Interstate League. Of the three, Bill Armour became the dominant owner and he took over the managerial duties in mid-season. With Armour in charge, the Dayton Old Soldiers finished second in '97, first in '98, seventh in '99, first in 1900, and first again in '01. Dayton has never again equaled this run of championships.



One Dayton player stood out above the others in 1897. Outfielder Elmer Flick hit .386 for Dayton and the next year became a major leaguer with Philadelphia as the first Dayton player to make the majors. He was voted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1963.

After Dayton's 1901 championship season, the league president ran away with the league funds. The impoverished teams and the league folded and there was no baseball in Dayton in 1902. Bill Armour made out somewhat better than the team that he left behind. He became the manager of the Cleveland team in the new American League. He then moved to Detroit in 1905 and became Ty Cobb's first major league manager.

Dayton resumed play in 1903 in the Central League with local ownership and remained in that league through the 1917 season. Dayton won championships in 1911 and 1914. They finished second in 1916 but beat Springfield in the playoffs and became champions again. Among the ballplayers who played for Dayton during this period were Bob Bescher, Donie Bush, and Jesse Haines.

The first World War almost put an end to minor league baseball. In 1916 there were 26 minor leagues playing under the National Agreement. In the 1918 season that number had dwindled to 10. The Central League was one of those that shut down.

Dayton remained out of baseball for 10 years. They returned to the Central League in 1928. Baseball had undergone a few changes during the interim. The farm system had become a new way of doing business. Dayton became one of the St. Louis Cardinals' many minor league teams and Branch Rickey took an active interest in the local team. Another new idea, the split season, was adopted by the Central League. Dayton finished second in each half so did not qualify for the playoffs. The 1929 team featured Billy Herman at second base. Herman hit .329 and moved to Louisville at the end of Dayton's season.

In 1932 a new era for Dayton baseball swept into town. Howard Holmes, now known as "Ducky," became Mr. Baseball in his home town. He had played minor league baseball from 1902 to 1915 when he ended his playing career catching for Dayton. He also had a short stay with the Cardinals in 1906. He became an umpire primarily in the

minors with a two-year stay in the American League. He umpired in the first game in Yankee Stadium. Now he had returned to his home town and he was ready to run a baseball team. He bought the Dayton franchise in the Central League and put his first team together. Owner Holmes was also the president of the team and named himself the manager.

Baseball with Ducky Holmes was baseball that Daytonians had never seen. In fact, very few people had seen baseball the Ducky Holmes way. He was the show. Although he had been an umpire he made life miserable for any umpire who did not make a call that Ducky approved. He was aggressive and touchy. In his first year as Dayton's boss he established a reputation with his outrageous behavior. At an August game in Ft. Wayne umpire Cleary ejected Holmes and banned him from the ballpark. Ducky, convinced only he could run his team, climbed a pole outside the fence that overlooked the park and using hand signals, directed his team to a 9-8 loss.

Just nine days later Holmes showed his love of baseball and his concern for the reputation of the Central League. His Ducks were scheduled to play a home doubleheader with Erie. Erie was managed by Chief Bender, the old Philadelphia Athletics star pitcher. The Chief got into a violent argument with the umpire. He was so enraged that he pulled his team off the field and refused to play unless the umpire changed his decision. When that did not happen, Bender then told his team to leave the park and return to the hotel. As they were leaving Holmes grabbed Bender and implored him to stay. Bender refused and was almost out of the park when Holmes threatened to take the issue all the way to Commissioner Landis and have Bender thrown out of baseball. The threat caused Bender to change his mind and bring his team back. If Bender had left it probably would have ended the Central League as Erie would have been suspended and the league would have folded. As it was, Bender was fired the next day but the league was saved thanks to Holmes's quick and forceful approach.

Ducky, early in the season, decided the ballpark must have lights if the Ducks were to survive. Since he was renting the park, he went to the owners who refused to install lights. Ducky bought the lights himself and had them installed while his team was on a road trip. Dayton played its first night game

on May 27, 1932, and its first night doubleheader at home a few days later.

Ducky's erratic actions continued during his entire time with his Ducks. He was ejected, sometimes suspended, but he always came back. Most of his suspensions were reduced at the request of the other teams, because Ducky, who coached at first, was such a draw.

Holmes's teams never won a championship, but came close many seasons. Some of the players who came through Dayton and played for Ducky were: Johnny Vander Meer, Frank McCormick, Dick Sisler, Phil Weintraub, Roger Wolff, and Harry Eisenstat. To survive he had a working agreement with the Brooklyn Dodgers for many years.

World War II nearly finished the minor leagues. Dayton and its league, by this time the Middle Atlantic League, folded after the 1942 season. Only 11 minor leagues played in 1943.

Dayton returned to baseball in 1946 without the Duck who died in 1945. The Cleveland Indians selected Dayton as one of its farm teams and chose Ival Goodman to manage the team in the Class D Ohio State League.

After two years of Class D ball, Dayton returned in 1948 to the Class A Central League, still as a Cleveland farm team with Joe Vosmik as manager. The team finished in second place and led the league in attendance. The Dayton Indians won the playoffs and became Central League champions. The Dayton team was integrated when Jose Santiago became the first black player to appear in a game. Later, in the same game, the exciting Minnie Minoso made his debut. Minoso, clearly overqualified for this league, hit about .480 during his stay.

The Indians finished in first place in 1949 for manager Oscar Mellilo and lost to Charleston in the first round of the playoffs. Dolph Camilli took over the team in 1950. The team qualified for the playoffs by finishing third and lost in the first round as they had the previous year.

The team name remained Indians in 1951 despite becoming a St. Louis Browns farm team. Bill Veeck had left Cleveland, bought the Browns and kept control of Dayton's team. Jim Crandell was the manager. One of his pitchers, Ryne Duren,

led the league in strikeouts and terrified the Central League with his fast ball as he was soon to do in the American League. Dayton, perhaps the best representative of the St. Louis Browns in baseball in 1951, won the Central League championship, finishing 2.5 games ahead of the Muskegon Reds.

The minor leagues began a long decline in 1952. It was not due to a war, a depression, nor a catastrophe: it was due to television. The Central League, and Dayton, fell victim to the new entertainment craze. There were 51 leagues in 1951. Eight folded prior to the 1952 season, and the total number decreased to 27 by 1959. There would be no baseball in Dayton for many years; almost 50.

It was the year 2000 before Dayton was again in the baseball business. A new and beautiful ball park was built in downtown Dayton, where there had never before been a ballpark. This park, Fifth Third Field, had 7,200 seats and room for another 1,500 on lawns around the outfield. The Cincinnati Reds, after all of these years, decided that Dayton would be a good place for one of their farm teams.

In April of 2000, SABR member John Schleppe became the first fan to enter the gates of Dayton's new ballpark for a game. Baseball had returned to the Gem City and it was a howling success. Dayton led all Ohio minor league cities in attendance by averaging more than 8,000 per game. Future Reds stars Austin Kearns and Adam Dunn led the Dayton Dragons that first year. Dayton qualified for the Midwest League playoffs the first three years of their existence. The Dragons led the league in attendance the first four years of their existence.

Baseball was back in Dayton.

*Jack Carlson is a longtime Pittsburgh Pirates fan and SABR member serving on the Ballparks, Biographical, Minor Leagues and 19th Century committees.*

# AMERICA'S BEST AMATEUR BASEBALL TEAM: THE MIDLAND REDSKINS

by Lonnie Wheeler

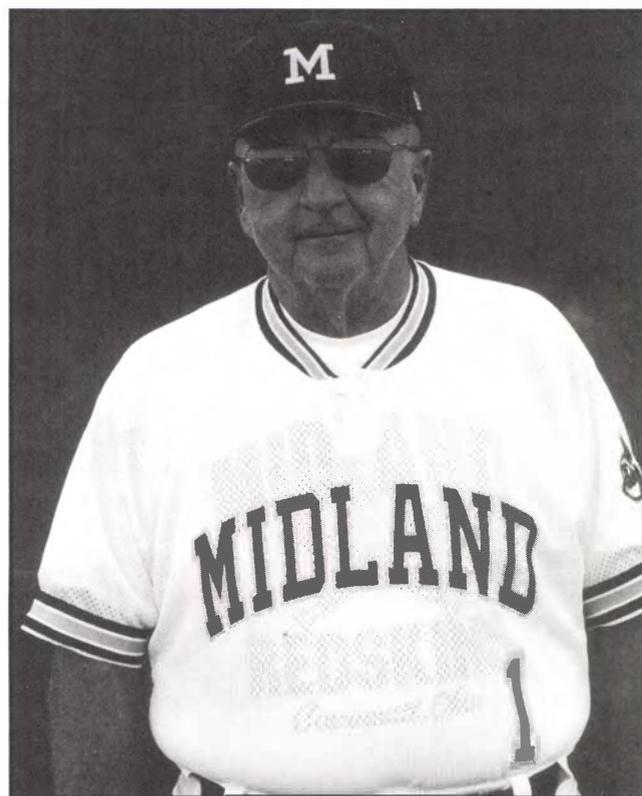
*A few miles east of Cincinnati, on the campus of an insurance company, (the Midland Co.) is the home of the Midland Redskins, hands down the best amateur baseball program in America. The Redskins are managed by legendary coach Joe Hayden, former Midland Co. chairman, now retired.*

*Over the past 19 years, the Redskins have won the Connie Mack National Championship eight times, (in 1984, 1985, 1989, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1997, and 1998). In their "off" years they finished second in five tournaments. Most players are recruited from within a 100-mile radius of Cincinnati. More than 250 graduates of the Midland program have been drafted or signed professional baseball contracts, with more than 40 reaching the major league level.*

*In August of 1988, Cincinnati Magazine published an article, "The Real Boys of Summer," on the Midland program by Lonnie Wheeler, sportswriter for The Cincinnati Post and author of many baseball books including the classic The Cincinnati Game. An abridged version of the article follows, reprinted with permission of the magazine and the author.*

What Joe Hayden has created in Clermont County is not just a baseball team but an organization; not just an organization, but a world. In his country corner he has handcrafted his own Field of Dreams, a summer utopia that measures 330 feet down the line and ushers young men into the next dimension. Most baseball dreamers do something like this only at their desks, escaping into fantasy leagues that enable them to construct a lineup and call it their own. Hayden, on the other hand—with funds from his family's foundation—built a stadium complete with an indoor batting cage, a four-bay equipment garage and a professionally maintained playing field that was designed to simulate the park in Farmington, New Mexico, where the Redskins spend a heady week every August trying to bring home yet another Connie Mack national championship. To fill the immaculate diamond and the five uniforms shirts (in four colors)

he provides each player, Hayden hand-picks more than a dozen teenagers from the best amateur baseball city leagues in the country, filling out their impressive ranks with a special few who learned the game elsewhere. As so it is that Papa Joe coached Barry Larkin and Ken Griffey, Jr. and many others who have made it to the major leagues.



*Joe Hayden, sponsor and coach, Midland Redskins.  
(photo:Midland Redskins)*

In its splendid totality, the Midland program has become a monument not to Hayden but to that which Hayden holds sacred: boys and baseball. He brings the two together in a manner that would spoil less dedicated athletes. For all that they get—air travel, nice hotels, meal money, the best equipment—the Midland players pay nary a nickel. These advantages are naturally a source of envy and even resentment

among some of the teams that have to compete with Midland on equal terms around Cincinnati and the nation, but Hayden makes no apologies for his munificence.

“If you're somewhat successful in life,” he says, “you can donate a tuba to the symphony or an ape to the zoo, pay for it, and it doesn't cost you anything but the money, which you don't miss. You're not going to really give up anything. But the guy who gives of himself—gives of his time—I think that's what it's all about. The way I see it, the greatest asset this country has is its youth.”

In 1958, Hayden and his wife, Lois, watched their son's knothole team being routed as they had in all their previous games. “How do you like it so far?” Lois asked after a couple of pitiful innings.

“This is horrible,” Hayden answered. “If I just worked with these kids on weekends, they'd be a lot better.” “That's what I thought you'd say,” countered Mrs. Hayden. “That's why I volunteer you to be the team's new manager,” Hayden ended up coaching all four sons through their knothole years. The Midland program evolved.

By 1975, Midland has begun attracting players outside its district, won a state championship and, perhaps most notably, forged the All-American identity for which it is now widely known. Bob Crable was typical of the program. After Midland he went on to captain the Notre Dame football team and star for the New York Jets. He exemplified the Midland kind of guy—disciplined, clean cut and brutally competitive. “Bob Crable could have been a professional pitcher,” says Hayden, “but we used him a lot as a 240-pound second baseman. One time a little kid went into second base and made no attempt to take Crable out of the play. The other manager came out ranting at his poor baserunner, and the kid gets up, glances over at Crable and says, ‘Coach, you wanna take him out?’”

Most of Midland's eventual major-leaguers in those days were pitchers, the likes of Charlie Leibrandt, Chris Welsh, Rich Dotson, Bill Long, Jeff Russell and Roger McDowell. An exception to that pattern was Bill Doran, a second baseman who went on to play at Miami University, in Oxford, Ohio. (Hayden is a Miami graduate, hence the Midland name, Redskins). After he retired from an All-Star career with the Houston Astros and Cincinnati Reds,

he established a volleyball and basketball complex in Cincinnati and became one of Midland's leading ambassadors. “I relate what I'm trying to do very much to what Midland does, only for different sports. Midland is already doing it for baseball. What I'd love is to someday have a kid look at me the same way I look at Joe Hayden.”

Another major leaguer from the Midland program was New Richmond's Todd Benzinger, who played with several teams including the Reds. And then there was a pretty good infielder named Barry Larkin, who played second base for the Redskins because they already had a shortstop.

Hayden and Larkin still visit often on the telephone. Largely through Hayden's connection to legendary Michigan football coach, Bo Schembechler, his roommate at Miami and best friend, Larkin became a Wolverine. Like the stars before him, Larkin was unable to take Midland to a national championship. It wasn't until 1984 that the Redskins won their first Connie Mack World Series with a team conspicuously lacking in future professionals. They repeated in 1985, by which time Hayden's boys had also established an enduring reputation for good behavior in the World Series town of Farmington, New Mexico, where visiting players are houseguests of host families. All Midland players write thank-you notes to their host families after returning home.

In 1986, Hayden was eager for Midland to become the first team to win three national championships, his hopes pinned largely on a fun-loving, 16-year-old center fielder named Ken Griffey, Jr. That year the Redskins made it to the finals, where they came up short against California.

Griffey was not yet a dominant player at age 16, but he was a uniquely gifted one. “He used to say, ‘See that tree over there?’ And then he'd hit one over the tree,” recalls George Graff, Hayden's longtime assistant. Having grown up watching his father and the Big Red Machine up close, Griffey had a big-league manner about him—and big-league ability as well. The only problem was that Hayden doesn't permit stars on his teams. Midland players are not allowed to see their statistics, and no personal awards are given. Hayden makes no special allowances for adolescents who hit ball over trees.

Hayden recalls, “One day in Farmington, Kenny came racing in for a fly ball, lost it in the sun and then at the last second reached up and caught the ball barehanded. Between innings, the other manager walks by me and says, ‘I can’t believe that son of a bitch caught the ball barehanded.’ I said, ‘Yeah, we’re trying to break him of that habit.’”

“He could also drive you crazy,” Hayden adds, “but he was really a decent, caring kid. He used to come to the ballpark with all the latest stuff from his dad—gloves, batting gloves, bats, silk underliners, everything. One of our coaches, Ralph Smith, finally told Junior he was showing up the rest of the team. I don’t think that had ever occurred to him. So the next day, Kenny arrives with batting gloves for everybody.”

After playing a few weeks for Midland when he was 17, Griffey became the first player taken in the amateur baseball draft and signed with the Seattle Mariners, who had him in big leagues two seasons later. The year after Griffey was drafted first, Midland sent Hamilton’s Mark Lewis to the Cleveland Indians as the second pick overall. After winning a national title in 1989, Midland was stopped in 1990 by Dallas, but in 1991 with Larkin’s brother Stephen at first base, the Redskins brought home their fourth championship in eight years.

The first Midland alum to break through to the big leagues was Ron Oester from the Mt. Washington suburb of Cincinnati, who reached the Reds in 1978 and became a fixture at second base. By the mid-

1970s the Midland pedigree was virtually all a player needed to qualify for some kind of baseball future. College coaches routinely send Hayden some of their top recruits to ready them for college-level competition.

“When you put on that uniform,” adds Mark Lewis, “you’re representing Midland in every way. Mr. Hayden’s team has a great reputation, and if you don’t live up to that in the way you conduct yourself, you’re not going to be around. The players respect that.” What the players respect most about Hayden is that he will go to great expense to help them win, but not to any expense. Another of his mottoes is “Respect the Game.” and even Griffey was benched when he was not meeting the manager’s expectations.

Hayden does not permit his benevolence of an all-expense-paid baseball summer to go entirely unrequited. The paybacks must come in the currency of hustle and citizenship. “Our motto is ‘Be good or be gone,’” he says.

Perhaps Midland’s success is because so many of the players are Cincinnati kids. Perhaps that is Midland’s advantage—that it plays out of Cincinnati, the only city uncool enough yet rich enough in baseball tradition that its most celebrated young jocks can actually be persuaded to do what the coach says and be grateful for the privilege; the only city whose best schoolboy athletes still believe that this is an incredible way to spend a teenage summer.

---

## From Redskins to Major Leaguers

Ron Oester	1969-1970	Karl “Tuffy” Rhodes	1984-1986
Jim Tuttle	1969-1970	David Swartsbaugh	1985-1986
Bo McLaughlin	1970-1971	Ken Griffey Jr.	1985-1987
Chris Welsh	1972-1974	Jay Owens	1985-1987
Bill Early	1973-1975	Mark Lewis	1985-1988
Charlie Leibrandt	1974-1975	Chris Hook	1986-1987
Kevin Priessman	1974-1976	Shannon Penn	1987-1988
Rick Engle	1975-1976	David Bell	1987-1990
Bill Doran	1974-1975	Adam Hyzdu	1987-1990
Scott Munninghoff	1975-1977	Steve Larkin	1988-1991
Rich Dotson	1975-1977	Mike Matheny	1989
Bill Long	1976-1978	Chris Sexton	1990
Jeff Russell	1977-1978	Mike Bell	1990-1992
Roger McDowell	1977-1979	Jason Payton	1991
Todd Benzinger	1979-1981	Ricky Stone	1991-1993
Jim Leyritz	1980-1982	Jason Johnson	1992
Steve Engle	1980-1981	Onan Masaoka	1995
Kraig Priessman	1981	Mark Mulder	1996
Barry Larkin	1981-1982	Aaron Cook	1995-1997
Andrew Denson	1984	Corey Patterson	1997-1998
Jeff Hartsock	1984-1985		

# BUCKEYE BUSH LEAGUE: THE OHIO STATE LEAGUE, 1936-41

by James P. Holl

“At game time,” according to Poody Switzer, “there were 16 paid admissions, two dogs, a cat and a fan from Fostoria.” Switzer’s May 23, 1936, newspaper column capsulized the substance of Ohio’s minor-league baseball in the waning days of the Great Depression. The minor leagues have a long and rich, if not well publicized, history in Ohio. More than 45 cities and towns have sponsored teams since the first league was formed in 1884. Today, only five remain: Columbus, Toledo, Akron, Canton, and Chillicothe. The rest, including the Ohio State League teams that Switzer covered for the *Fostoria Daily Review*, are nearly forgotten.

No organization better exemplified the obscurity of the low minors than the Ohio State League, which posted seasons from 1936 through 1941. During this six-year span, teams were fielded in Findlay, Fostoria, Fremont, Lima, Mansfield, Marion, New Philadelphia, Tiffin, and Sandusky. The league was dissolved in March 1942 with the onset of World War II, resurfacing briefly in 1944 with only Lima and Marion as holdovers. For the other towns, the war brought an end to professional baseball.

The Ohio State League was a Class D circuit, the lowest rung on the organized baseball ladder. Its team rosters were filled with raw schoolboys and over-the-hill duffers. Their fields of dreams were rock-strewn nightmares. Ballparks were under water every spring. Sudden summer windstorms blew down rickety fences. Fights erupted between players, umpires, and rowdy fans. Games were forfeited when teams failed to show up or crowds got out of control, and umpires needed police escorts to get out of town. Owners threatened to quit the league rather than pay fines or enforce players’ suspensions. Often, if the fans stopped coming out to the ballpark, they simply moved their team to another town.

In baseball parlance, the Ohio State League was pure “bush league,” plagued by inferior play and instability on and off the field. Each year seemingly brought new crises. It drew scornful laughs (if notice was taken at all) from the sporting press in the larger cities. When the league folded, few mourned.

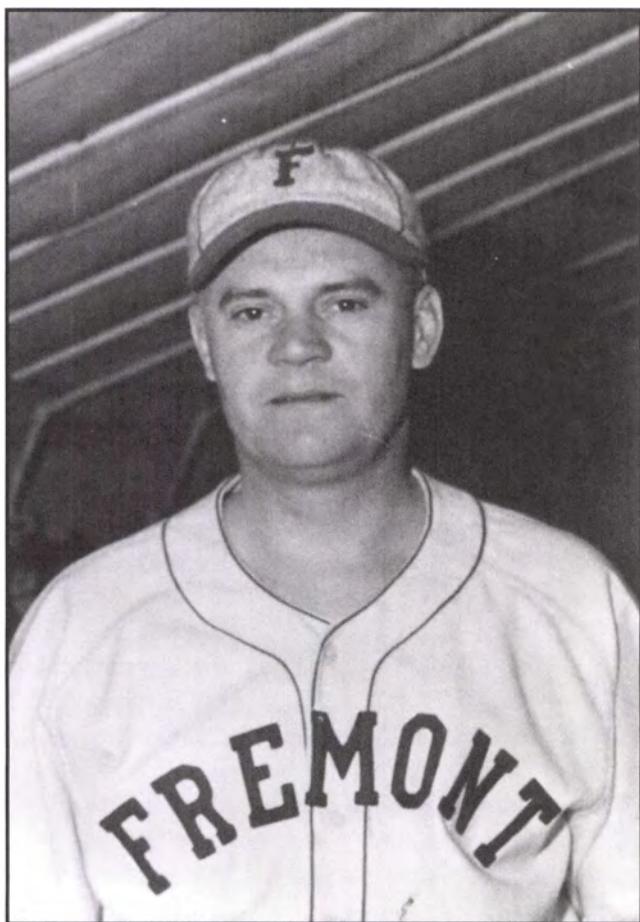
Yet, in spite of all, the league provided a welcome recreation outlet for small communities in the later Depression years. A 35-cent bleacher seat at the local ballpark was among the most affordable of entertainments. At a time when the vast majority of fans could follow major-league happenings only in the newspapers, the Ohio State League provided flesh and blood local heroes. They came from places like Pandora and Hoytville and Republic and Coldwater. When a high school star from just down the road was on the mound, lucky owners could count on extra paying customers in the stands. If the home team won the pennant, the hard times seemed a little easier for everyone.

The Ohio State League was sanctioned to begin play by the National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues, the controlling body of minor league baseball, in November 1935. Harry L. Smith of Columbus, the guiding hand behind the effort to seek national association recognition, was elected president-secretary of the new league. At an organizational meeting at the Southern Hotel in Mansfield on April 5, 1936, charter franchises were awarded to Fostoria, Fremont, Mansfield, New Philadelphia, Tiffin, and Sandusky. The owners adopted a 100-game, split-season schedule, with the first- and second-half winners to meet in a championship playoff series.

The league’s start was helped by the rapid expansion of the major-league farm-club system pioneered by Branch Rickey of the St. Louis Cardinals in the 1920s. While each team was owned and operated by local investors, working agreements with

major-league clubs provided the players to fill the rosters. The St. Louis Cardinals backed the New Philadelphia team at first and Fostoria later in the season. Other sponsors were the Cincinnati Reds in Fremont and Detroit Tigers in Tiffin. Mansfield and Sandusky elected to operate without major-league affiliation in 1936.

The eagerly awaited baseball season began to unravel almost immediately. The New Philadelphia club found itself without a home field when a prom-



*James "Chappie" Geygan, played 40 games with the Boston Red Sox, managed several Ohio State League teams.  
(photo: Author's collection)*

ised new ballpark was not built. Local backers had less than \$500 in the till, and, after playing only eight games, the team disbanded. Pete Wahonick, who played second base for New Philadelphia, recalls, "We were sitting around the hotel lobby in Tiffin wondering what was going to happen. Nobody had any money for bus tickets or anything. Finally, [Manager George] Silvey told us six of us were going to Fostoria and the rest to the Nebraska State

League." The independent Mansfield Tigers also got off to a rocky start. Owner Jack P. Orr, a Cleveland businessman, tried to put together a team of older amateurs. The home field at the old Richland County Fairgrounds was totally inadequate, and Orr managed to alienate both local journalists and businessmen. On May 26 both Mansfield and New Philadelphia dropped out of the league officially, leaving four teams to carry on.

The first year saw a number of the bizarre games typical of the lower minors. Football-type scores of 23-7 and 18-14 resulted from the avalanche of errors, walks, and botched plays by unpolished players. An experimental attempt to officiate games with one umpire led to a rash of fights, forfeits, and suspensions. The umpiring was apparently as spotty as the play, and one official was released in June, following complaints of his inability to control games and players. Tiffin and Fostoria engaged in a running feud most of the season. The Tiffin manager was hit with a ten-game suspension after a brawl on his home field, and police were needed to break up a Fostoria crowd angered by controversial calls. Pete Wahonick still remembers the Tiffin battles: "They had a pitcher by the name of Cronin who was an old semipro from somewhere down on the Ohio River. He...liked to brush the hitters back. He hit me in the arm and I still have varicose veins from it."

Games usually started around 4:00 p.m. after schools and factories closed. Numerous shortened games and ties due to darkness resulted, which pleased no one. An experiment with night baseball was tried for one game at Tiffin with a portable lighting system rented from the House of David, a barnstorming team from Benton Harbor, Michigan. Players and fans both complained of poor visibility, and night baseball games would not occur on a regular basis until 1938.

In 1937 the league again expanded to six teams, with Tiffin reigning as defending champion. Mansfield was back for another try, this time through the efforts of a group of local businessmen. The Boston Red Sox agreed to provide player help. Findlay was a new addition with Grover Hartley as part owner, business manager, and field manager, and the St. Louis Browns as major-league sponsor. Strong community support in both cities brightened hopes around the league.

Bad weather spoiled the early season. The new Mansfield team was rained out of its first seven games. By the middle of June, 45 of a scheduled 120 games had been canceled. The literal highwater mark came at Tiffin on June 21 when the Sandusky River overflowed, leaving League Park under four feet of water. Most of the canceled games were never rescheduled.

Upheaval continued with the shift of the Sandusky franchise to Marion and the unexpected death of team owner Robert Thompson six weeks later. Having averaged less than 50 fans a game at Sandusky, the club struggled through the season under the interim management of Thompson's executors.

On the field, Mansfield was practically unbeatable in 1937. Well stocked by the parent Boston club, they were in first place every day except one during the season. Red Sox player-manager Dewey Stover hit .383 to win the league batting title, and his team finished with a 59-24 record, three games ahead of Marion. Overcoming mid-season disruptions, the second-place Presidents got excellent pitching from Gordon Mann and Marion Spence, who each won 18 games, tops in the league. In a new four-team playoff format, Mansfield left no doubt about its superiority, disposing of Tiffin in two games and then sweeping three straight from the Findlay Browns, a surprising semifinal winner over Marion.

The victory celebration had barely ended when the grumbling began anew. League owners criticized President Smith for failure to complete 20 percent of the games in 1937 and for his indecisive handling of unruly players and fans. The Boston Red Sox threatened to cancel their working agreement with Mansfield because of dissatisfaction with the ballpark and indifferent community support. In mid-February they made good on the threat. The Fremont club's backers were awash in debts incurred in building their new ballpark and unhappy with the caliber of the players being supplied by Cincinnati. The ownership picture at Marion remained clouded after Thompson's death.

The spring of 1938 was perhaps the Ohio State League's darkest period. In April, Mansfield owners tried to move the franchise to Galion, where there was a new ballpark but no adequate guarantee of local financial support. When the last-minute

effort failed, Mansfield dropped out, and Marion, rather than attempt to compete in an awkward five-team arrangement, also disbanded. In desperation, league officials postponed the start of the season a week to resolve the matter.

Four teams—Findlay, Fostoria, Fremont, and Tiffin—ultimately staggered into the 1938 season. As the barrage of criticism continued over the failure to keep Mansfield and Marion in the league, Harry Smith resigned the presidency. His replacement was Paul Shank, a Toledo attorney. The turnaround began with the introduction of night games on a regular basis at Fremont on June 13. Fremont beat Tiffin 14-13 in a wild slugfest. The independent, newly rechristened Fremont Green Sox were an instant success. The hustling club under manager Chappie Geygan drew more fans in two months than it had for the previous entire year.

Lights were added for night ball in Findlay and Fostoria as well, and attendance shot up around the league. At Findlay, the club averaged 200 fans for day games and 1,000 after the lights came on. Only Tiffin remained a holdout, unconvinced the installation costs would be offset by bigger crowds.

A close second-half race kept the fans coming out. All four teams took their turn in first place. Ray Cook, a Fremont right-hander, pitched the league's first no-hitter, beating Fostoria 5-1 on August 14. Then the Red Birds went on a winning streak in the final two weeks to hold off Findlay and claim the second-half title. The best-of-five 1938 championship series, pitting Fremont hitting against Fostoria pitching, resulted in a Fremont sweep.

President Shank's aggressive off-season optimism pleased the club owners. Shank talked of expansion to six or possibly eight teams. He wanted a longer season and installation of lights in all league parks by the start of the 1939 season. In the end, two teams were added. Toledo attorney Norman Cohen bought the Mansfield franchise, made major renovations at Fairgrounds Park, and he brought back the popular Dewey Stover, the manager-hero of the 1937 champions. The new team was named Braves in recognition of a working agreement with Cleveland. A syndicate headed by another Toledo lawyer, future Ohio governor Mike DiSalle, was awarded a franchise for Lima with games to be played at Halloran

Park, used for local baseball since the early 1920s. The new club adopted the unusual nickname of Pandas. An expanded 130-game schedule was approved, with the league voting, after a one-year hiatus, to return to the four-team playoff system.

The 1939 pennant chase turned out to be the closest and most exciting in league history. Going into the final weeks of the campaign, only four games separated the top five clubs. The Findlay Browns got a boost when Barney Fletcher and Bill Prussing hurled back-to-back doubleheader wins over Mansfield on September 6-7. The following night the Browns clinched the pennant with a 6-5 win over Fremont. The Green Sox and Fostoria tied for second place, and Lima defeated Tiffin 9-6 in a tie-breaker to take the fourth playoff position. The Pandas prevailed in a grueling seven-game final series, scoring three runs in the last of the ninth inning to oust Findlay.

With the completion of the close pennant race and record-breaking attendance in every city, all six clubs were looking forward to 1940. The only uncertainty came when baseball commissioner Kennesaw M. Landis ruled against the stockpiling of players by major-league teams in their farm systems. The minor leagues objected strongly, arguing they could not survive without player and financial support. The Ohio State League was affected as major-league affiliates were dropped in Fostoria, Tiffin, and Findlay. Only Mansfield kept its big-league tie, with Cleveland, as all other teams operated as independents in 1940.

Once underway, the season brought its usual moments of minor-league madness. Frank Biscan, the ace Lima lefty, was married in a ceremony at home plate in Halloran Park on May 23 and then proceeded to celebrate with a three-hit shutout over Tiffin. Ray Caldwell, the 52-year-old Fremont manager, took the mound as a relief pitcher in an effort to inspire his team. In Mansfield on July 8, players had to come to the aid of umpires attacked by angry fans after a game with Findlay. Shank resigned abruptly as league president in a dispute with Grover Hartley over a Findlay player suspension, then changed his mind. A short-lived player revolt was triggered at Fremont when Caldwell was released as manager. Between the foul lines, it was all Lima. The Pandas shook off Findlay, their closest pursuer, in mid-season, and won the championship by 13 1/2 games,

then overpowered Findlay four games to two in the league finals.

Bad weather, the increased salary limits, and the loss of major-league support for most clubs left every Ohio State League franchise with sizable debts in 1940. Fremont backers lost \$10,000 and were rumored to be quitting unless a major-league sponsor could be found. Tiffin and Fostoria desperately tried to increase community ticket sales during the winter. Grover Hartley sought permission to sell his Findlay club to a group of Marion businessmen.

League president Paul Shank resigned permanently in October. Joe Donnelly, a Columbus sporting goods dealer, was elected as his replacement. Donnelly still hoped to expand the circuit to eight teams in 1941, but the outlook was not good. The league directors opted for a shorter season to avoid the worst spring weather and a return to a split-season format to bolster fan interest.

The first storm clouds of World War II were starting to have an impact. Fremont shortstop Marnie White was the first to go, enlisting in the army. In January, Lima outfielder Tom Flynn became the first Ohio State League player to be drafted into military service. Throughout 1941 players would be leaving for military duty or essential defense work in factories.

Although the minor leagues were being exhorted to stay in business as a wartime morale booster, the handwriting was on the wall for the Ohio State League. In February 1942, Mansfield and Fostoria indicated they could not continue. Donnelly remained optimistic, claiming the league would carry on with four teams and revert, if necessary, to twilight games to conserve electricity. The end, however, was swift in coming. When several clubs could not meet their required forfeit deposits, the National Association dissolved the league on March 22, 1942.

Deserving better, a unique baseball experience passed nearly unnoticed into Ohio sports history. Although only a handful of players reached the majors, there were scores of interesting characters. Consider Marlin "Dod" White, a veteran Fremont semipro who pitched in 1936, but never in road games because it took too much time away from his plumbing business. Or Tony Lucadello, who played in Fostoria and Tiffin between factory jobs and found

his real skill lay in judging others' baseball talent. Or Alvin "Bus" Stiewe, the Sandusky shortstop, who rode his bike to the ballpark because he was too young to have a driver's license. Or Jim Zienta, a groundskeeper at Fremont, who wangled a brief trial in the outfield with the Tiffin Mud Hens.

Managers were among the most memorable personalities. Chappie Geygan amused his players by wearing a long-sleeved sweatshirt to bed on the hottest summer nights. "We thought he was crazy, but he said, 'boys, it's to keep from getting a sore arm when the cool air hits it,' " remembers Pete Wahonick. Tony Rogala, the Tiffin manager in 1938, was a strict disciplinarian, once fining two players five dollars each for riding in a car after 6:00 p.m. At Findlay, Mrs. Grover Hartley shared her husband's job in running the team. "She would meet the team bus returning from road games," Del Wilbur recalls, "and give each player a fifty-cent piece for meal money when they got off. We would head for the Greek restaurant and get a steak sandwich for thirty-five cents."

With a salary of about \$75 a month, a player could be excused for looking for any bargain he might find. Many players doubled up in hotel rooms or boarded with families in town. Reminiscing about his year in Findlay, Wilbur remembers sharing a house with three teammates. "We paid \$7 a month rent," he recalls. If the team was playing well or won a big series, the Elks might provide a free meal. Jack White of Fremont has a nostalgic view of those times: "Players used to hang around our house quite a bit looking for free meals. The players would bring their bats to me and have me drill holes in the end to make them lighter."

As everywhere in the lower minors, the Ohio State League's existence depended heavily on a never-ending round of special events. Jesse Owens, fresh from his 1936 Olympic triumphs, appeared in nearly every league town, sometimes racing a horse around the bases. Barnstorming opponents like the Hawaiian All-Stars, featuring female pitcher Jackie Mitchell, and the bearded House of David nine were annual attractions. Baseball comedian Al Schacht always drew large crowds. There were exhibition games against the big leaguers, name-the-team com-



petitions, merchandise giveaway nights, and milking contests between the mayors of rival towns. When the war came, it brought free admissions for servicemen in uniform and housewives bringing scrap metal and aluminum cans to the ballpark. In the end, it also brought about the league's demise.

Now the old ballparks are long gone. Esmond Field in Sandusky lies under a shopping mall. A dingy warehouse marks the former site of Fremont's Anderson Field, once considered the best ballpark in the league. A For Sale sign advertises vacant acreage where Red Bird Park stood in Fostoria. The much maligned ballfield in Mansfield is now part of an industrial park. Hank Miesle, the Fremont catcher in 1941, doesn't miss it one bit. "The field was terrible. It was all dirt and ran uphill to the backstop."

Freeway traffic flows where once the Green Sox, Oilers, and Pandas paraded. The batter driving the ball to the deepest part of center field, the long arrow-straight relay to the bag ahead of the sliding runner, and the umpire's cry, "Yer out!" are like ghosts along the interstate. But, if you take a moment to look, you might still see them hit and run and slide in a timeless ballet where the game is never over.

*This article first appeared in the July/August 1999 issue of TIMELINE, published by the Ohio Historical Society, and is reprinted with their and the author's permission. Jim Holl is a retired urban planner, now free-lance writer and sports historian. A SABR member since 1986, he is an active researcher and presenter, a member of the Jack Graney (Cleveland) chapter, and a member of SABR Minor League Committee. He is author of The Canton Terriers-1936-1942 (Daring Books, 1990.)*

## Ohio State League (1936-41)

These are Ohio State League cities, dates of operations, nicknames, and affiliations with major-league clubs:

- 1. Findlay (1937-41)**  
Nicknames: Browns (1937-38), Oilers (1939-41)  
Affiliations: St. Louis Browns (1937-38),  
Independent (1939-41)
- 2. Fostoria (1936-41)**  
Nickname: Red Birds  
Affiliations: St. Louis Cardinals (1936-40),  
Independent (1941)
- 3. Fremont (1936-41)**  
Nicknames: Reds (1936-37), Green Sox (1938-41)  
Affiliations: Cincinnati Reds (1936-37),  
Independent (1938-41)
- 4. Lima (1939-41)**  
Nickname: Pandas  
Affiliation: Independent (1939-41)
- 5. Mansfield (1936-37, 1939-41)**  
Nicknames: Tigers (1936), Red Sox (1937),  
Braves (1939-41)  
Affiliations: Independent (1936), Boston Red Sox (1937),  
Cleveland Indians (1939-41)
- 6. Marion (1937)**  
Nickname: Presidents  
Affiliation: Independent (in league from June 22 until  
end of the season when the franchise was transferred  
from Sandusky).
- 7. New Philadelphia (1936)**  
Nickname: Cardinals  
Affiliation: St. Louis Cardinals (played only eight games  
before the franchise folded May 25)
- 8. Sandusky (1936-37)**  
Nicknames: Chiefs (1936), Sailors (1937)  
Affiliation: Independent (franchise moved to  
Marion June 22)
- 9. Tiffin (1936-41)**  
Nickname: Mud Hens  
Affiliations: Toledo Mud Hens (1936-39),  
Independent (1940-41)

### League Champions:

1936	Tiffin
1937	Mansfield
1938	Fremont
1939	Findlay (regular season) Lima (post-season playoffs)
1940	Lima
1941	Fremont

# AGAINST ALL ODDS EVEN POLIO COULDN'T STOP EMORY RAY MOYER FROM SUCCESS ON THE MOUND

by Mark Stang

My best friend said it had to be a fake. Shown an old wire photo from 1939, he suggested it was the kind of “staged” gag photo newspaper photographers were always arranging in those days. The yellowed paper caption on the back of the photo claimed that the young man shown lying down, dressed in a nondescript baseball uniform,

was a 17-year-old high school pitcher named Emory Ray Moyer of Germantown, Ohio. A closer look at the photo revealed that Moyer was wearing heavy steel braces on both his legs, the result of contracting polio at the age of five. Despite the claims of the caption to the contrary, neither of us could believe that it was possible to pitch without the use of your



*High school pitcher Emory Roy Moyer demonstrates his pitching motion for photographers in New York, 1939  
(photo: Author's collection)*

legs. I shrugged off my friend's doubts, filed the photo away in a drawer, and promptly forgot about it for the next five years.

In the fall of 1998, my wife and I moved to the Cincinnati area and when I unpacked boxes containing parts of my baseball memorabilia collection, I rediscovered the photo of Moyer. Realizing that Germantown, Ohio was only 40 miles north of where I now lived, I decided to try and track down someone who might be able to shed some light on Moyer. A series of phone calls led me to the editor of the town's weekly newspaper, *The Germantown Press*. Dolores Grunwald not only remembered Moyer, she put me in touch with several area residents, including Moyer's cousin, Don. Conversations with people who grew up with Moyer and information gleaned from old newspaper accounts helped piece together Moyer's story. The more I learned about Emory Ray Moyer, the more fascinated I became with the details of his life.

Emory Ray Moyer was the only child of Clifford and Mabel Moyer. Mr. Moyer worked at the Armco steel plant and his wife was a telephone operator for the local phone company. In 1926, at age five, young Emory was stricken with polio. Even six operations and two years in the hospital failed to restore the use of Emory's legs. His parents encouraged Emory's love of sports and desire to accompany his friends to the tiny town's local ballfields. Although the disease had robbed him of the use of his legs, Emory developed strong upper-body muscles. As a result, Moyer devised a unique pitching style which allowed him to continue playing the game he loved. A righthanded thrower, he would begin by sitting down on the mound with his legs outstretched in front of him, facing the batter. Then he slowly raised his left leg high above him, forcing his right arm and chest back onto the ground. In one violent rocking motion, he quickly lowering his leg, jerking himself upright and allowing his upper body to come square with the plate, before releasing the ball towards the batter. Over the years, Emory eventually perfected his unique pitching style, leading the local high school team to 18 straight victories, including throwing a pair of two-hitters. Moyer even began throwing an occasional game for the local semi-pro team sponsored by Royal Crown

Cola. But his greatest fame would come in the summer of 1939 when word of his achievements would spread all the way to New York City.

In the 1930s Robert L Ripley's *Believe It or Not* nationwide radio show on the Columbia Radio Network was among the most popular programs of the day. As part of the national pastime's celebration of the game's 100th anniversary in 1939, Moyer was invited to be guest on Ripley's show. Following a huge send-off party, Moyer and his friend, Kenneth Woodard, departed by train for New York City on April 12. During their 10-day stay, Ripley's P.R. man made sure they took in all the sites, including seeing Judy Garland perform at the Colonial Theatre followed by dinner at Jack Dempsey's restaurant (where they met the owner). Another day the boys got lost in the subway system en route to a game at Ebbets Field and had to settle for a visit to the zoo instead. Moyer later wrote that the highlight of the entire trip was catching a game at the Polo Grounds where they spent time in the dugout posing for pictures and chatting with the Giants players. Finally, it was time to make their radio debut. On Friday night, April 21, the boys joined Robert Ripley in the studio for his 10:30 PM broadcast. 40 million listeners around the nation were treated to Emory's recounting of his pitching exploits. When they returned to Germantown, Moyer found himself a celebrity much in demand for speaking engagements.

After high school, Moyer attended Miami University before going to work for Standard Register and later spending over 30 years at a local builder's supply store. He continued to be actively involved in sports of all sorts. He was a proficient swimmer, excellent golfer and even took up trap shooting; eventually serving as President of the Ohio Trap Shooting Association. His participation as a coach in area youth baseball programs continued through his adult life. His obituary noted that it was only fitting that a man with a heart as big as Emory Moyer's would die on Valentine's Day in 1998 at the age of 77.

*Mark Stang is the author of five books on major league baseball and SABR member since 1991.*

# OPENING DAY FOR CHRISTMAS

This interview with Bob Littlejohn was recorded in 1996 by David Cataneo and appeared in his book *Hornsby Hit One Over My Head: A Fan's Oral History of Baseball*. Bob, who died in 1999 was a longtime SABR member, an original member of the Cincinnati chapter, and attendee of many SABR national conventions.

My dad would hit fly balls to me in the yard. Sometime after supper, in the evenings. We would just toss in the driveway. Between Dad and me, we had two or three gloves. The first glove was a Jake Daubert model first baseman's mitt. He played with the Reds in 1919 when they won the World Series.

His name was stamped on the glove. That was a dandy. Somewhere, dad picked up a fielder's glove signed by Lew Fonseca. I think he won the batting championship with the White Sox one year. Then we had a catcher's glove. Still got them in the basement.

Opening Day here in town was always something special. The first opening game I saw was in 1932. Somebody gave my dad a couple of seats. We ended up sitting on the cold steel chairs. I can remember how chilly it was. Dad picked me up at school at noontime and it was a driving snow coming down, and I can remember in the afternoon editions of the papers, they both had a picture of Crosley Field—it was Redland Field then—and they showed the snow coming down. But they got the game in. I can remember they were playing the Cubs, and I looked out there, they had whole bag of balls, and one of the Cubs players was throwing the balls out of the bleachers.

If everyone who was excused from school went to Opening Day, there'd have been about fifty thousand people there. You'd get on the bus going to school, all the girls were writing excuses to go to opening game for all the kids. The school got wise

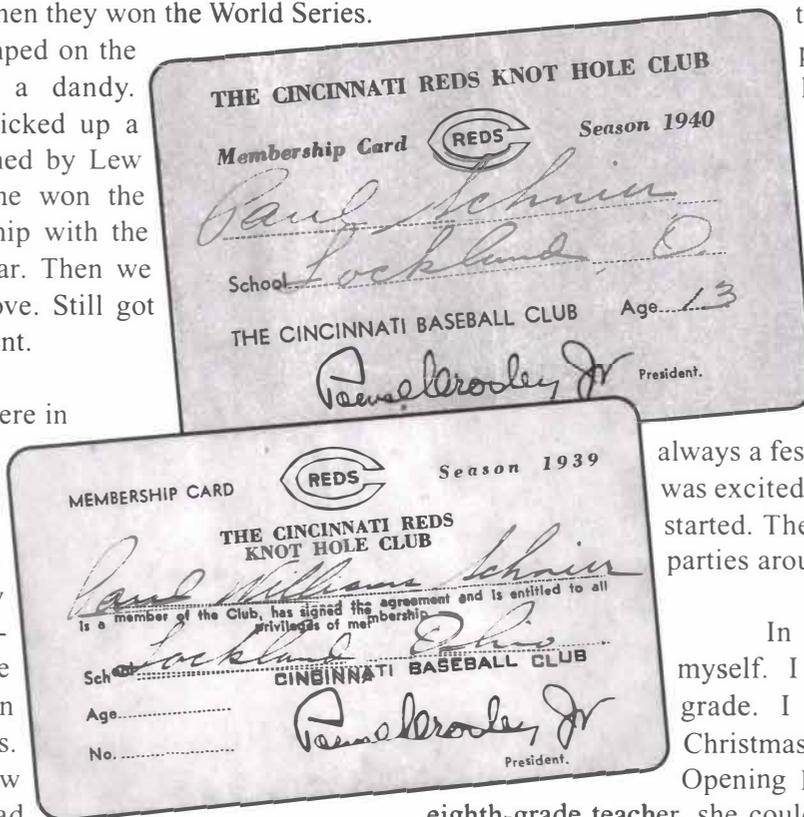
to them, so they sent postcards out. So the kids had to hurry home to waylay the postcard. They found out that was being abused, so they started school at 7:30 on Opening Day so everybody got out at one o'clock. It was

always a festive time. Everybody was excited to see the season get started. There were all kinds of parties around town.

In 1936 I went all by myself. I was in the eighth grade. I got the ticket for Christmas. I couldn't wait for Opening Day. This little-bitty

eighth-grade teacher, she couldn't wait to get hold of my mother. "Did you know he went to the ball game on Opening Day?" I went to school in the morning and then hopped on the streetcar and went to the ball game. My mother said, "Is that so? That was his Christmas present."

In 1934 Larry McPhail came in here, and started the Knothole Club. I was in the sixth grade, I guess, and everybody in school got a Knothole card and you got to see games 100 percent free. It got to



a point where you could go any days except Ladies' Day, night games, which were seven games a year at that point, and Sundays. So we could go down as many as four or five times a week.

We'd get a streetcar and go down by ourselves, show our card, and go in, and we felt we were late if we didn't get there an hour before game time to watch everything that was going on. Then after the game was over, we'd get our autograph books and wait for the players to change clothes. They didn't have these buses that were inside the park. Players would come out of the gate to get taxicabs, and you had plenty of opportunity to get autographs. I got all kinds of autographs and never paid a dime for them.

The Reds had a clubhouse over the main entrance. They were up on the third floor of this building. They had to walk all the way up the steps. So one time I was standing down below, all by myself, I'm looking up the window, I see some commotion, and here's Babe Herman leaning out the window. He dropped the ball down at my feet. All I had to do is pick it up, so I just used that to play with.

I saw the first night game. Sat in the bleachers. It wasn't a sellout. This was in '35. We got in there and the lights weren't on. President Roosevelt in Washington was supposed to press the switch and turn the lights on. They made a big to-do about that. Not anyone doubted that he was really turning the lights on. The Reds won, 2-1. I had to be in on it. It was history. At that time, the night games didn't start until 8:30. But they didn't last more than two hours. You set your watch by it.

When I got to high school, in the paper they said they were putting on ushers at the park. I ushered down there during the best years for the Reds. I started ushering there in '37 and ushered through '38, '39, and '40.

Thirty-eight was the year Vandy pitched his two no-hitters, and I saw the first one. Thirty-eight was a tremendous year. The next year they came back and won the pennant. They clinched the pennant on the 26th of September, beating the Cardinals, who were in second place. That was one of the best

games I've ever seen, because everything went on in that game. Derringer was pitching, and I think later on he said he didn't have his best stuff. They beat the Cardinals 8-6, or something like that. One of the Cardinals doubled, and Ernie Lombardi picked him off second base. The Cardinals were a fast running team. Somebody hits a line drive out to Ival Goodman in right field and got a double. He goes to try to stretch it to a triple, and Goodman threw him out.

The following year was the only time in Reds history when they won the last game of the World Series at home. Derringer won that game, 2-1, beating Buck Newsom. The Reds came from behind. It was 1-0, and they came from behind with two doubles and an outfield fly. The whole town celebrated that. That was tremendous. Our whole family was there. My folks, they were tickled to death to get seats in the bleachers.

I was working the game. We met after the game and we went out to eat. I said to Dad, "Let's all go downtown," He said, "Oh, there won't be that much going on downtown." But everyone went downtown. They rerouted all the buses and streetcars away from the heart of town, what they call Fountain Square. There was no violence. Just celebration. Everybody was just milling around. The club had a celebration at the Netherland Plaza, the biggest hotel in town. I ran with some other fellow, to see what we could see. We were inside the hotel, but they closed the hotel unless you had good reason to be in there. It wasn't open to the public anymore because there were so many people in there. It went on and on, well past midnight.

I've seen all the home World Series games in Cincinnati except 1919, and that's before my time. I've seen 58 opening games. All of them from 1936 to date, with the exception of two years I was overseas in the service. I've got tickets for the next Opening Day already. I've got tickets upstairs.

*Thanks to Harcourt Brace & Company for permission to print this interview from **Hornsby Hit One Over My Head**, David Cantaneo, 1997.*

# GEMS FROM CINCINNATI'S HISTORIAN

Bill Hugo

*Bill Hugo, SABR member since 1976 and a founder of the Cincinnati chapter, died in November of 2003 at age 81. In the early 1940s young Hugo accepted an offer from The Sporting News for a lifetime subscription for \$25. He was among the very first to accept along with Rogers Hornsby and Ty Cobb. Bill's father advised against the purchase. "If they want money upfront, they must be going out of business soon." Bill received a copy of the paper every week for some 60 years, and during 1943-46 while in the Army Air Force, he got two copies, one at his army address, another back home. For the last ten years of his life he received an annual registered letter from TSN asking, in effect, are you still alive and if so do you still want our paper.*

*In specially designed cabinets that stretched along a long wall in his basement, the papers were arranged in chronological order and became "Hugo's library," used by scores of Cincinnati baseball writers and SABR researchers. The "library" also included long runs of Reach and Spalding Guides, Baseball Magazine (red cover), and multiple other baseball research aids.*

*Bill's personal research was voluminous, exacting, reliable and published in many publications in highly readable style. From April 1985 through February 1988, he published a newsletter, **Riverfront Review: Cincinnati Baseball Yesterday & Today**, to a subscription list of some 120 SABRites and others. His columns "Retracing the Bases" and "Record Book" appeared throughout the 1970s in **Reds Alert** and **Sports Alert**.*

*A mere bit of Bill's lifetime research follows, excerpted from his newsletter.*

## **EXTRA INNINGS, SUPER PITCHING EFFORTS**

From November 25, 1985 issue.

On April 26, 1944 St. Louis Cardinal manager Billy Southworth choose to give rookie Alvin Jurisich his first major league start against the Reds

at Crosley Field. Cincinnati ace Bucky Walters was his opponent. At the end of nine innings the game was scoreless. Through 12 innings it was still a double shutout, with both starting pitchers still in the game. Frank McCormick lofted a home run over the left field wall after two men were out in the bottom of the 13th inning for a 1-0 Reds victory. Both starters went the route.

It was a typical extra-inning game for the Reds that year. Five times games of ten innings or more showed the victor winning by 1-0 or 2-1 scores, and four times the Reds were the winner. Seventeen long games were fought to a conclusion, and Cincinnati won 14. In addition to the aforementioned game, Walters went the route in two 10-inning and two 11-inning contests, and he was victor in all. Ed Heuser went 13 innings at Chicago in September and came away with a 3-2 win. It was a day when pitchers were not constantly looking to the bullpen for help.

Fourteen wins and three defeats in extra-innings contests is a fine record, but not as remarkable as the run of the 1959 Pittsburgh Pirates when they won 19 of 21 such contests, with reliever Roy Face the winner of 11 of those games.

## **DOUBLE HEADERS ONCE FREQUENT FEATURE OF TEAM'S SCHEDULES**

From December 16, 1985 issue

In today's baseball, doubleheaders occur only when demanded by making up postponed games. It was not always that way. In 1928, the Philadelphia Phillies played two games in one day 43 times. The New York Yankees won 10 games in five days by sweeping five successive twin bills from August 30-September 4, 1906.

During World War II, major league teams doubled up their games more often than any other period in the history of the game. In 1943 the Philadelphia Phillies played two games in one day 43 times. Over in the American League, the



*Joe Morgan, Cincinnati Reds, 1972-1979  
National League MVP 1975 and 1976  
(photo: Cincinnati Reds)*

Chicago White Sox did the Phillies one better with 44 twin bills. The Cincinnati Reds, in 1945, lost 17 doubleheaders, and seven to one club, the Chicago Cubs. That year the Reds participated in 41 doubleheaders, leaving only 72 single games on their season schedule.

At Riverfront Stadium the Reds have played as many as 11 doubleheaders in 1974, when they won 17 of the 22 games played. In 1984 two home twin bills were scheduled, in 1985 there are none.

#### **FIVE RUNS SCORED WITHOUT A HIT**

From September 22, 1986 issue

Last week in San Francisco, Eric Davis became the 13th player in Reds history to score five runs in one game. He hit three home runs, scored after hitting a single followed by a stolen base, and

reached first on an error by the Giants first baseman that opened the door for a three-run rally. Three home runs, four hits, a stolen base, an error equaled five runs.

But how do you score five runs without getting a hit? Joe Morgan did on June 30, 1977. For his first two runs, he coaxed walks off Giant started Ed Halilcki and promptly stole second and scored after successful singles by Dan Driessen. Run three started with another walk, followed by a walk to Ken Griffey and a George Foster double. His remaining two runs were the result of Giants errors that put him on base and his teammates gathered the hits to send him home.

If Morgan's five-run record came with the least amount of hitting production, the five-run game by Willard Marshall on July 6, 1949 resulted from an slugging abundance. Of all 13 Reds who have scored five runs in a game since 1900, his performance was the most awesome. Not only did Marshall enjoy a three-home run afternoon, he celebrated with an additional three singles. His six hits drove in ten runs during the Reds' massacre of the Chicago Cubs, 23-4. He accounted for 12 of his team's runs with seven RBIs (not counting his own three from the homers) and five runs scored. In one game he put his name in the Reds record book four ways—most runs batted in during a game (10), most runs scored (five), most home runs (three) and most hits (six).

Other Reds who scored five runs in one game are Cy Seymour (1904), Miller Huggins (1905), Beals Becker (1913), Charles Dressen (1928), Curt Walker (1930), Frank McCormick (1940), Wally Post (1955), Vada Pinson (1961), Frank Robinson (1962), George Foster (1977).

*Anthology co-editor, Dick Miller; selected the above from reams of Bill Hugo's research.*



## The "Reds" 1913



**Armando Marsans**

Right Fielder

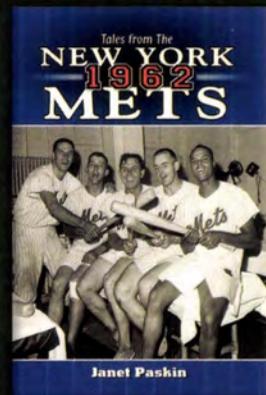
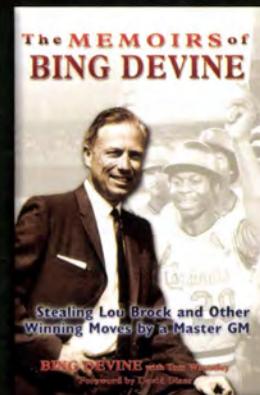
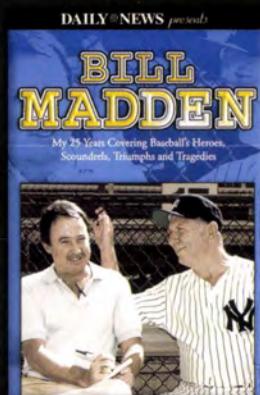
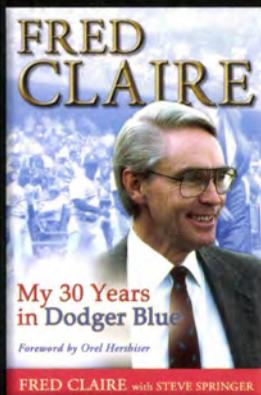
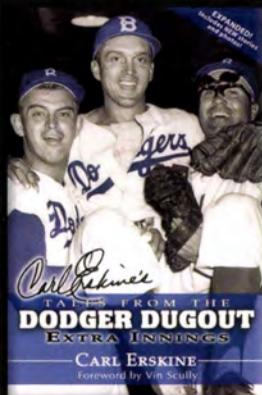
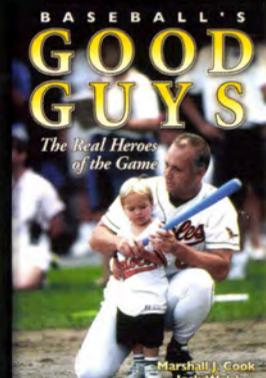
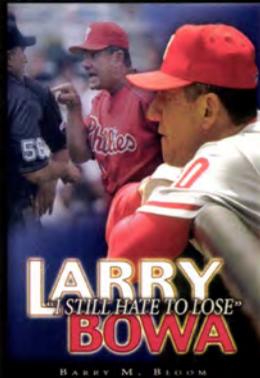
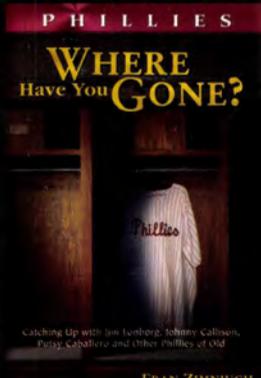
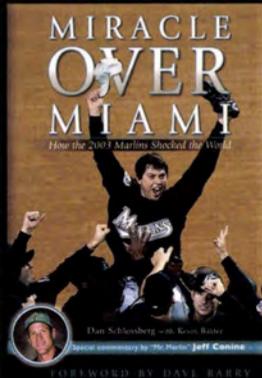
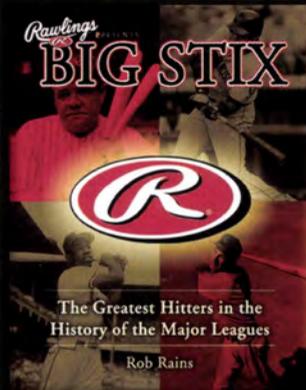
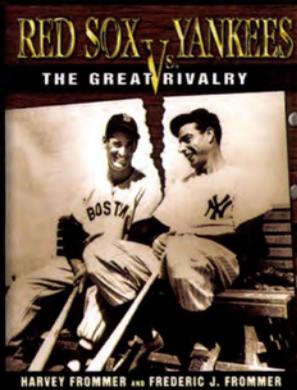
**B**ORN in Mantanzas, Cuba, October 3, 1887. He played professional ball in the United States only three seasons before he joined the Reds, and is rated one of the best outfielders in the major leagues. He joined the New Britain club of the Connecticut League in 1908 and played there three seasons before joining the Reds on the recommendation of Frank Bancroft, Red business manager. Marsans throws and bats right-handed.

This page is from the 1913 Cincinnati Reds yearbook. Marsans was the first Cuban star in the major leagues and a hero in his homeland. In 1913 he hit .297 with 37 stolen bases. *Cincinnati Reds Museum and Hall of Fame*

# Find Baseball's Best Books

— AT SPORTS PUBLISHING —

NEW RELEASES PERFECT FOR  
ANY SUMMER READING SCORECARD!



FIND THESE TITLES IN BOOKSTORES  
EVERYWHERE, OR VISIT US ONLINE:

[www.SportsPublishingLLC.com](http://www.SportsPublishingLLC.com)

