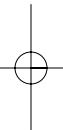
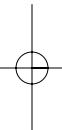


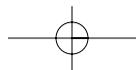
THE  
National  Pastime

A R E V I E W O F B A S E B A L L H I S T O R Y

**Volume 28**  
**2008**



**Published by**  
**the Society for American Baseball Research**



**EDITOR:** Nicholas Frankovich  
**GRAPHIC DESIGN AND PRODUCTION:** Lisa Hochstein  
**COVER DESIGN:** Clay Eals  
**COPYEDITORS:** Edward Batchelder, Gregory McNamee  
**FACT CHECKER:** Scott Flatow  
**PUBLISHING INTERN:** Benjamin A. Sattin

**FRONT COVER:** Branch Rickey (National Baseball Hall of Fame Library, Cooperstown, N.Y.)  
**BACK COVER:** Leo Durocher with the Brooklyn Dodgers and umpire at home plate  
(National Baseball Hall of Fame Library, Cooperstown, N.Y.)

**PUBLISHED BY**

The Society for American Baseball Research, Inc.  
812 Huron Road, Suite 719  
Cleveland, Ohio 44115-1165

**PHONE:** (216) 575-0500  
**FAX:** (216) 575-0502  
**EMAIL:** [info@sabr.org](mailto:info@sabr.org)  
**WEB:** [www.sabr.org](http://www.sabr.org)

Copyright © 2008  
The Society for American Baseball Research, Inc.  
Printed in the United States of America

978-1-933599-09-0

All rights reserved.  
Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission is prohibited.

Postage paid at Hanover, Pennsylvania.

## CONTENTS

<b>Note from the Editor</b>	<i>Nicholas Frankovich</i>	5
<b>The “Little World Series” of 1922</b> The Most Heartbreaking Loss in St. Louis Baseball History	<i>Steve Steinberg</i>	7
<b>Analyzing Grand Old Images</b> A Close Look at Two Photos from the Deadball Era	<i>Mark Fimoff</i>	15
<b>Henry Chadwick “The Father of Baseball” Was a Sportswriter</b>	<i>Andrew J. Schiff</i>	26
<b>British Baseball</b> How a Curious Version of the Game Survives in Parts of England and Wales	<i>Andrew Welch</i>	30
<b>The Deaf and the Origin of Hand Signals in Baseball</b>	<i>Randy Fisher / Jami N. Fisher</i>	35
<b>Jack Kerouac</b> The Beat of Fantasy Baseball	<i>Jim Reisler</i>	40
<b>Educated Yelling</b> Portrait of a Heckler	<i>Bill Nowlin</i>	45
<b>A Man of Many Faucets, All Running at Once</b> Books by and about Branch Rickey	<i>Leverett T. Smith Jr.</i>	53
<b>BASEBALL IN NEW YORK IN THE GOLDEN AGE</b>		
<b>Ten Days in August</b> A Last Chance for Brooklyn?	<i>Henry D. Fetter</i>	63
<b>But the Polo Grounds Belonged to the Giants</b> An Interview with Bobby Thomson	<i>Tom Harris</i>	68
<b>A Bitter Rivalry Recalled</b> The Cleveland Indians and the New York Yankees, 1947–1956	<i>James E. Odenkirk</i>	78
<b>BALLPLAYERS IN WORLD WAR II</b>		
<b>Ace</b> The Jake Jones Story	<i>Dick Thompson</i>	87
<b>They Served with Valor</b> Negro League Ballplayers in the Armed Forces during World War II	<i>Bill Swank</i>	94

**THIRD LEAGUES**

<b>Ed Barrow, the Federal League, and the Union League</b>	<i>Dan Levitt</i>	97
<b>Did the Federal League Have a Reserve Clause?</b>	<i>David Mandell</i>	104

**MINOR LEAGUES**

<b>Burleigh Grimes and the 1912 Eau Claire Commissioners</b>	<i>Jason Christopherson</i>	106
<b>Farmer Hal from Yoncalla</b> Hal Turpin of the Pacific Coast League	<i>Eric Salle / Dave Eskenazi / Dave Baldwin</i>	113
<b>The 1924 Junior World Series</b> The St. Paul Saints' Magnificent Comeback	<i>Roger A. Godin</i>	119

**BASEBALL IN THE ARTS**

<b>Anson in Greasepaint</b> The Vaudeville Career of Adrian C. Anson	<i>Robert H. Schaefer</i>	129
<b>I Never Get Back</b> How "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" Succeeds in Celebrating Failure	<i>Timothy A. Johnson</i>	138
<b>Contributors</b>		144

## Note from the Editor

This is the last issue of *The National Pastime* as you know it. Keep your chin up, now. There's no crying in baseball. And it's not what you think anyway.

The SABR journal that will arrive in your mailbox next summer will carry the familiar title *The Baseball Research Journal*, just like the SABR journal that will arrive in your mailbox next fall. Every year up to now you have received one issue of each of two SABR journals. Beginning in 2009, you will receive instead *two* issues of *the* SABR journal—*The Baseball Research Journal*, which began publication in 1972.

None of this means that the title *The National Pastime* is being retired. It's only being reassigned. Beginning in 2009 it will grace the cover of the annual convention journal. The subtitle is something that the editors belonging to the designated local chapter will come up with, and that will distinguish one convention journal from the next. All of them from here on will be gathered under the banner of *The National Pastime*. It will serve as a sort of series title.

Why the change? The distinction between *The National Pastime* and *The Baseball Research Journal* had begun to blur. Moreover, agreement about what the distinction should be had grown hard to pin down. The easy answer was that *TNP* was for word articles, *BRJ* for number articles, but of course no bright line separates those two categories. Even the most hardnosed sabrmetric article has words, and even the most literary-historical baseball article has a batting average or a winning percentage. The typical SABR article is neither purely sabrmetric nor "Hub Fans Bid Kid Adieu" but something that inherits from both sets of genes.

Half a century ago, C. P. Snow famously described "the two cultures," the humanistic and the scientific-technological, and variations on that dichotomy go back at least to Descartes; for Heidegger the terms were "philological-historical" and "mathematical." Some members of SABR have been too quick to assume that *our* society must conform to this model of society at large, and they declare themselves for one camp or the other. One of SABR's virtues is that it so calmly resists—not even resists, just deflects—any heated effort to make it the battleground in a larger culture war.

SABR publication is now more than thirty-six years old. Most of the baby fat has melted away, and the unique identity of what we now know as the SABR article is probably easier to discern than it was in the beginning. There really is such a thing as a characteristically SABR article. It is what it is. It dictates the character of the SABR journal, not the other way around. And it is in recognition of that reality that we hereby let go of the idea that we have to segregate our work into separate publications whose boundaries, we should allow ourselves to admit, were always a bit arbitrary.

---

John Thorn was succeeded by Paul Adomites, and Paul Adomites was succeeded by John Holway, and John Holway was succeeded by Mark Alvarez, and Mark Alvarez was succeeded by James Charlton, and James Charlton was succeeded by me. To be able to claim such a distinguished patrilineage is a high honor. In all of human history, only six people have been publications director of the Society for American Baseball Research. As a group, my forefathers have been generous with their help, advice, and time as I have settled into my new job. Jim Charlton deserves special thanks. He has been full of practical suggestions as well as encouragement. His sense of humor helps me keep things in perspective.

—Nick Frankovich

# The “Little World Series” of 1922

## The Most Heartbreaking Loss in St. Louis Baseball History

Steve Steinberg

*“How about the Browns?”*

*“Have they really a chance?”*

*“Do you think they’ll cop that old pennant?”*

*“Are they going to steam us up like this and then blow?”*

*Everywhere you go you hear such questions. The barber asks the customer, the elevator man asks the newsboy, bank tellers can’t cash a check without some gloomy or optimistic remark. The butcher boy talks so much baseball he brings you the liver meant for the neighbor’s bull pup. Caddies aren’t worth their hire. They gather under each tree and are so busy arguing about the Browns that they lose a ball on every fairway. Conductors are so busy craning their necks at sport finals that they don’t notice if you give them last week’s transfer or drop a cent into the box instead of a token.*

*Baseball and the Browns have taken hold of the city. From now until the affair is settled one way or the other everything must be relegated to the classification of nonessential industry.*

—Roy Stockton, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, September 8, 1922

In 1922, the defending American League champion New York Yankees and the St. Louis Browns battled for first place all season long. The pennant was at stake when the Yanks came to the Mound City for a three-game series in mid-September, with only a half-game lead over the Browns. The third game of what was called the “Little World Series” was played before an enormous crowd at Sportsman’s Park in St. Louis. With first place and ultimately the AL pennant at stake (the teams split the first two contests), the game and its finish had incredible drama, including five late-inning bad breaks that saw the game slip away from the Browns. It was arguably the most heartbreaking loss in St. Louis baseball history. “It was one of the most nerve-racking finishes ever flaunted before a St. Louis public,” John B. Sheridan wrote in the *Globe-Democrat*. “That one inning will remain indelible in the memory of the fans who witnessed it—to the grave. It was a nightmare.”<sup>1</sup>

In the first quarter of the twentieth century, the Browns, not the Cardinals, were usually the better and more popular St. Louis team, as reflected in their records and attendance figures. Neither team had won a pennant, though the Browns were in the pennant races of 1902 and 1908 into September, and the Cards challenged late in 1914, until the Miracle Boston Braves blew past them and the New York Giants that September.<sup>2</sup> Now in 1922, both St. Louis teams were fighting for the pennant. In early August they were both in first place for a number of days. While the Cards would fade and finish tied with the Pittsburgh Pirates for third place in the National League, the Browns would fall just one game short of the 1922 AL pennant. This Browns team was probably the strongest ever, even more so than the 1944 pennant winner. The best-hitting team in baseball in 1922—they led the majors in runs scored (867), batting average (.313), on-base percentage (.372), and slugging percentage



**A pop bottle thrown from the bleachers in Sportsman’s Park during the game of September 16, 1922, hit Yankees’ center fielder Whitney Witt, who was rendered unconscious. At the sight of the bloody Witt, the St. Louis fans were subdued, and George Sisler later commented that the incident took “the heart out of the Browns.”**

(.455)—was complemented by, surprisingly, the best pitching staff, which led the majors with the lowest earned run average (3.38) and the most strikeouts (534).

It was a see-saw race all season long, with the Browns and Yankees trading first place. The Yanks faced the first six weeks of the season without their slugging outfielders, Babe Ruth and Bob Meusel, who had been suspended by Commissioner Landis for barnstorming after the 1921 World Series, in contravention of a baseball rule. When they returned to action at the Polo Grounds on May 20, it was, ironically, against Urban Shocker and the Browns. The former Yankee pitcher, who loved besting his old team, beat the Yanks and handcuffed Ruth, who failed to get the ball out of the infield. As the season went on, the Babe was suspended a few times for arguing with umpires.

The Yankees were also fighting among themselves. On several occasions during the season, fisticuffs in their dugout were witnessed by fans. And a faction on the team was working to undermine their own beleaguered manager, Miller Huggins, whom team co-owner Til

Huston had wanted to replace ever since he was hired before the 1918 season. Yet the Yankees stayed in the race because of their pitching, primarily what they had acquired from the Boston Red Sox in trades in the past three years.<sup>3</sup> Former Boston stars Joe Bush, Waite Hoyt, Sam Jones, and Carl Mays were among baseball’s best hurlers. They would win 76 percent of the Yankees’ victories (71 of 94 wins) in 1922 and 63 percent (62 of 98 wins) in 1923.

The Yankees (and the New York Giants, for that matter) had generated a lot of criticism from their rivals for using their deep pockets to corner the market for talent and “buy” pennants. In late July 1922, the Yankees generated even more condemnation, with most of the howls emanating from St. Louis, when they acquired star third baseman Joe Dugan (along with Elmer Smith) from the Red

Sox for four lesser players and \$50,000. This shored up one position where the Yanks were really weak, with the aging Frank “Home Run” Baker slowing down and hobbled by an injury in what would be his final big-league season.<sup>4</sup> Typical was the comment of Ed Wray in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*: “The New York team, by right of present possession and future purchase, will endeavor to surround all the available stars of the big league world.”<sup>5</sup> Veteran New York sportswriter Sid Mercer captured the mood of Missourians when he wrote on the eve of the series, “The populace is aflame with civic pride and righteous resentment against the moneybags of the East as typified by the expensive cast of the Yankees.”<sup>6</sup>

As the Yankees arrived in St. Louis with their half-game lead over the Browns, the New York press was concerned about the St. Louis fans, who had a reputation for being very “demonstrative” against their teams’ opponents and umpires. “All they [the Yanks] ask for is protection from the bottle and cushion throwers, for which St. Louis is famous,” wrote the *Globe*.<sup>7</sup> Browns owner Phil Ball had additional field boxes constructed, probably figuring they would serve him well when his

COURTESY OF STEVE STEINBERG WORLD



**Throughout the 1922 season, Yankees' manager Miller Huggins endured opposition from a faction of his players as well as from co-owner Til Huston, but his moves in the game of September 18 came up aces.**

team reached the World Series. Sportsman's Park was to have a crowd of close to 30,000 for each of the games, including almost 10,000 behind ropes in the outfield, "making a farce of what should be the greatest series of the season to date."<sup>8</sup> Still, the demand for tickets was not sated. The *New York American* noted that ticket scalpers had appeared in St. Louis for the first time for this series, selling tickets "for upwards of \$15."<sup>9</sup>

Both New York and St. Louis were caught up in the excitement. The Browns had never won an AL pennant, and the Yankees had captured only their first one in 1921. "Everything else," the normally staid *New York Times* declared before this series, "was second [to these games]—war clouds, Armenian massacres, rail strikes, coal shortages."<sup>10</sup> The diminished playing field figured to make the games high-scoring affairs, with many ground-rule doubles.

St. Louis first baseman George Sisler had been on fire at the plate. He had hit safely in 39 straight games. But he had injured his shoulder in Monday's game against Detroit, reaching for an errant throw. He had not played in the four games since then and had been taking "electric treatments" to ease the pain.<sup>11</sup> When he came out for batting practice before the first game with New York, cheers rippled through the ballpark. It appeared that he would be in the lineup, though just how effective he would be remained a question.

The first game, played on Saturday afternoon, September 16, pitted Urban Shocker against the Yankees' Bob Shawkey. Shocker often insisted on starting twice against his former teammates, the Yankees, in a four-game series. After years of being known as a "Yankee jinx," he had already lost to them five times that year (against four Shocker wins), though he had already extended his win total to 23. In the bottom of the ninth, with New York clinging to a 2–1 lead, Yankee center fielder Whitey Witt was hit by a pop bottle (thrown from the bleachers) and knocked unconscious as he and Meusel were going for Eddie Foster's fly ball. For a few seconds, as fans spilled out of the stands and the Yankees came charging out of their dugout, many with bats in hand, the game seemed in danger of slipping out of control. Police were able to regain control, perhaps because the crowd was subdued at the sight of a bloody and unconscious Witt. The incident seemed to sap the hometown fans of their will to win. Many were actually rooting for Shawkey to retire Sisler and Ken Williams to end the game. He did. Sisler said afterward that the incident "had taken the heart out of the Browns."<sup>12</sup> The Browns' star, obviously bothered by his bad shoulder, did get a hit, a double, to tie Ty Cobb's AL mark of hitting safely in 40 consecutive games.<sup>13</sup> For the third time in 1922, the Yankees had beaten Shocker by the score of 2–1.

The front-page headlines in the New York newspaper the *World* proclaimed, "Rabid Fans Hurl Pop Bottles" and "Comrades Fight Mob with Bats to Reach Unconscious Player." The Yankees won the first game, wrote Monitor in the column below, "amid scenes of riot and disorder never before seen on an American ball field."<sup>14</sup> Home-plate umpire Billy Evans recalled the time

COURTESY OF STEVE STEINBERG



**Carrying a 2–1 lead into the ninth inning of the pivotal game on September 18, Dixie Davis was pulled after a couple of bad breaks. Manager Lee Fohl brought in southpaw Hub Pruett, and St. Louis fans would second-guess the move for decades to come.**

a St. Louis bottle had knocked him unconscious and fractured his skull in this ballpark, on September 15, 1907.

The Browns' team doctor, Robert Hyland, said that Witt was fortunate the injury was not more severe. "The blow from the bottle caused a severe contusion, and laceration of the forehead and slight concussion of the brain," he declared.<sup>15</sup> Phil Ball put up a \$500 reward to apprehend the bottle-thrower, saying, "Certainly it is a most deploring [*sic*] incident, the act of a rank sport." League president Ban Johnson added a \$1,000 reward. Yankees co-owner Colonel Huston called it "a dirty attack," but noted that it was "the act of an individual hoodlum and not to be blamed on the St. Louis crowd."<sup>16</sup>

He urged manager Huggins not to endanger his men: "Insist on protection for your players, and if you don't get it, withdraw your team from the field. I don't propose to have New York players risk their lives to play this game."<sup>17</sup> Ball did announce that bottled refreshments would not be sold in the bleachers for the rest of the series.

The Browns won the second game on Sunday, a 5–1 five-hitter tossed by screwball pitcher Hub Pruett, who "held the slugging Yanks in the hollow of his hand," in the words of the *New York Times*.<sup>18</sup> The rookie pitcher (who would finish the season at 7–7 and a 2.33 earned run average) had handcuffed the Babe all season long, repeatedly striking him out on that fadeaway pitch. In this game Ruth finally broke through against the screwballer with a home run that gave New York a 1–0 lead in the sixth inning. There was drama in the fifth, when Whitey Witt backed into the crowd to make a catch. In the Browns' three-run sixth, George Sisler got a hit to extend his streak to forty-one games. In the top of the eighth, umpire Billy Evans stopped play until the center-field fans tucked away their white hankies, which they had been waving, making it almost impossible for the Yankee hitters to pick up the ball. In the bottom of the inning, Ken Williams capped the Browns' scoring with a two-run shot, his thirty-eighth home run (off Sam Jones in relief of Waite Hoyt), on his way to amassing a league-leading 39. After the game, upper-grandstand fans hurled their heavy leather seat cushions onto the open New York press box below. "The St. Louis fans certainly all have good arms," wrote Sid Mercer, "and they are undoubtedly the most savage rooters on the major league circuit."<sup>19</sup>

The third game of the series would determine first place. Would the Yankees leave St. Louis with a 1½–game lead with less than two weeks remaining in the season, or would the Browns recapture the lead, albeit by only half a game? The pennant hanging in the balance, the series finale would reach its climax with a series of moves and countermoves befitting a World Series Game 7.

The Yankees started Joe Bush, going for his twenty-fifth win. The Browns were expected to start either Elam Vangilder (who was on his way to a 19-win season) or, seeing the success that the southpaw Pruett had against

the Yankee lineup, lefty Billy Bayne. But manager Lee Fohl tabbed Dixie Davis instead. Davis had made three trips to the majors without a win in the 1910s (with the 1912 Reds, 1915 White Sox, and 1918 Phillies). He joined the Browns in 1920 and won 34 games for them in 1920–21. With so much at stake, Davis responded with the game of his life.

Although a Monday game, it drew around 30,000, the biggest crowd the Browns had drawn at home all season. Long before the age of blogs and the Internet, the center-field fans somehow communicated with each other and showed up wearing white shirts. Throughout the game, they would sway back and forth, arm in arm, an effective replacement for the waving hankies.

For seven innings, Davis held the Yankees to just two hits, both of them infield hits by Witt. Bush was almost as effective; without the crowd, he too would have had a shutout. “On an open field,” New York sportswriter Frank O’Neill wrote, “Joe was never better in his long and interesting life.”<sup>20</sup> In the fourth inning, the crowd behind the outfield ropes stepped back to let Browns outfielder Baby Doll Jacobson catch Wally Pipp’s fly ball. Yankees manager Miller Huggins jumped out of the dugout and protested that Pipp should be awarded a double. But the umpires ruled that Jacobson did not go behind the outfield ropes but fell against them. Twice during the game, Ruth tried to penetrate the wall of fans, unsuccessfully.

In the fifth inning, Jacobson’s drive into the crowd was a ground-rule double, as the crowd held firm against Witt, preventing him from making a play on the ball. It was the Browns’ first hit of the game. Marty McManus singled him to third, and Jacobson scored on Hank Severeid’s fly, for which Ruth did force himself into the crowd. In the seventh inning, Ken Williams hit a line drive that would have been an easy catch for Meusel but eluded the Babe and went into the crowd to become “another St. Louis two-bagger.”<sup>21</sup> McManus then doubled



ERINIE HARWELL SPORTS COLLECTION, DETROIT PUBLIC LIBRARY

**Rookie Hub Pruett, brought in relief in the ninth inning on September 18, couldn’t find the strike zone, and the Yankees made him pay.**

him home, after Jacobson had sacrificed him to third. It would be the Browns’ final run of the game. At this point, the Yankees had scored but one run in 22 innings.

The eighth inning started well for the Browns, as for the first time that day Davis managed to retire Witt. Then Joe Dugan doubled for the first real hit of the game for New York. Davis then struck Ruth out on three pitches, including a curve for a called strike three—out number two. (Ruth went 0 for 4 that day and was not a factor.) Then came the first of five breaks—lucky breaks for the Yankees, bad breaks for the Browns. Wally Pipp singled off Davis’s glove. (*Bad break 1*) The ball dribbled to second baseman McManus, who had no chance of throwing Pipp out, and he compounded the matter by throwing to

SABR-OTTOSON PHOTO ARCHIVE



**A former Yankee who, now pitching for the Browns, usually had their number, Urban Shocker was the pitcher of record for the Browns in their 2–1 loss on September 16.**

first rather than holding onto the ball. He threw the ball away, and Dugan came in to score. (*Bad break 2*) The Yankees had closed the score to 2–1. Davis then rebounded by striking out Meusel, again with a called strike three. The Browns were now just three outs away from taking back first place, but their lead had been shaved down to one run.

After Bush retired the Browns in the bottom of the eighth, Davis returned to the mound. Improbably, Yankees catcher Wally Schang got the second infield hit in two innings off Davis’s glove. (*Bad break 3*) Miller Huggins now went to his bench and sent lefty Elmer Smith to the plate to pinch-hit for Aaron Ward. Smith was best known for his heroics in the 1920 World Series, when as an outfielder for the Cleveland Indians he became the first player to hit a grand slam in postseason play. Smith’s greatest value was actually as a pinch hitter—he would finish his career at 39 for 123, for a .317 batting aver-

age.<sup>22</sup> The first pitch to Smith got away from catcher Severeid. (*Bad break 4*) On the passed ball, Schang moved to second.

Lee Fohl then made a move that would be discussed and analyzed for years. He decided to pull Davis. According to some accounts, Davis had weakened; the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* said that Fohl had no choice, now that there was a runner in scoring position. But the Browns’ pitcher had not been hit hard. “Davis was to be pitied,” the *World* wrote. “He pitched a remarkable game, one entirely unexpected for him, but Fohl apparently had no confidence in him when things began to break badly.”<sup>23</sup> Fohl later explained that what he had in mind was something different. He went for the lefty–lefty matchup, a strategy not yet commonly used in those days.<sup>24</sup> “I took him [Davis] out because I thought we could win with the shift,” he said.<sup>25</sup>

Fohl then brought in the previous day’s pitcher, the southpaw Pruett. Roy Stockton noted that this was where most of the second-guessers were focusing: not so much on whether Davis should have been pulled but on whether Pruett was the one to have been brought in. Why not Vangilder, who won impressively on Friday, or the team’s ace, Shocker? Clearly, these observers were not considering the advantages of a lefty–lefty matchup. Vangilder and Shocker were both right-handed. Sid Keener, sports editor of the *St. Louis Times*, understood. “Fohl’s plan was to get Smith out of the game by calling for a southpaw.”<sup>26</sup> In that he succeeded. With the lefty now pitching, Huggins pulled Smith and put in the right-handed utilityman Mike McNally, who laid down a bunt. Catcher Severeid threw low and wide (to the foul side) to third, and Schang slid in safely. (*Bad break 5*) It was an aggressive move, going for the win, for the lead runner. A perfect throw would have nipped Schang at third. There were now two men on base, at the corners, and no one out. Pruett then walked Everett Scott on four pitches; the game accounts indicate that it was not intentional.<sup>27</sup>

Fohl now pulled Pruett for Urban Shocker, who had saved a number of games for the Browns in the past three seasons.<sup>28</sup> Huggins decided to let Joe Bush, a good hitter, bat for himself. (A career .253 hitter with seven home runs and 59 doubles, Bush hit .325 in 1921 and .326 in 1922.) He grounded to McManus, who threw home. The throw

NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY, COOPERSTOWN, N.Y.



**Declared “fortunate” not to have been more seriously injured in the bottle incident on September 16, outfielder Whitey Witt was back in action on September 18, when he got three of the Yankees’ six hits and drove in two of their three runs.**

was in the dirt, but Severeid got it on the first bounce to force Schang. Huggins then considered pinch-hitting the left-handed Frank Baker but stayed with Witt, another lefty. With the bandages still wrapped around his forehead, Witt stroked a clean single up the middle, scoring McNally and Scott. “Here was divine retribution, or poetic justice of the first order,” wrote Harry Schumacher.<sup>29</sup> The Yankees had taken the lead, 3–2. Shocker then retired Joe Dugan on an inning-ending double play.

Sisler, Williams, and Jacobson, the heart of the Browns’ lineup, went quietly in the bottom of the ninth. Sisler’s streak had ended at 41. He would finish the season with a .420 batting average, but late in the season the injury had begun to take its toll. In this critical series, he managed but two hits in 11 at bats.

In at least one New York newspaper, the dramatic finish was described gloatingly. “Already St. Louis had raised the brimming bowl to its lips to drink deep of the nectar. . . . Almost before they knew it, the Browns were beaten and the sounds of reverie died. The silence was sepulchral.”<sup>30</sup> Accounts given by St. Louis sportswriters were less emotional and more balanced. Roy Stockton wrote that “it took a series of unfortunate breaks to give the Yankees that lead . . . but then it took some good fortune to give the Browns the lead they had.”<sup>31</sup> Ed Wray suggested baseball institute a rule banning fans on the field during a game. “A game played with the two-base rule for hits into the crowd is manifestly not a championship contest. . . . The defending team is not permitted proper range for fielding hits.”<sup>32</sup>

John Sheridan, who wrote for the *Globe-Democrat* in addition to his weekly column in *The Sporting News*, summed up the heartache of Brown fans: “Just like the old-time story books in which we used to read about fairies vanishing, so did a one-run lead the Brownies held going into the final inning waft into oblivion.”<sup>33</sup> Years later, George Sisler “murmured nostalgically,” saying of that fateful inning: “I’ll never forget that last inning. We just couldn’t get a break and they couldn’t get the ball out of the infield until that last fatal hit by Witt.”<sup>34</sup>

The Yankees now had a record of 88–56, 1½ games ahead of the Browns, at 87–58. But the season was not over. New York had ten games remaining, all on the road, while St. Louis had nine contests left, all at home. Harry Schumacher of the *Globe* understood what the Browns were up against. “The Browns will have to be game, indeed, to rally from this jolt, and the writer, for one, doubts if they can do it.”<sup>35</sup>

St. Louis lost two to the Senators and split their first two games against the lowly Athletics, while New York swept the Tigers and won their first two games against Cleveland, to extend their streak to six. By Saturday, September 23, the Browns were 4½ games back of the Yankees and all but finished. Then they “righted the ship” and won their last four games, while the Yankees lost three straight, including two to the last-place Red Sox. Bush and Shawkey were beaten by ex-Yanks Rip Collins and Jack Quinn, 3–1 and 1–0, respectively. But the Yanks beat the Red Sox on the second-to-last day of the season, when Herb Pennock was replaced as the Boston starter by another former Yankee, Alex Ferguson. The Yankees struck for three runs in the first inning. While Pennock was effective in long relief, Waite Hoyt beat Boston, 3–1, and the Yankees held on to win the pennant by one game.

#### Postscripts

Four months later, the Yankees would make their final big deal of this era with the Red Sox, acquiring Herb Pennock.

The Browns would declare that the bottle-thrower was a youngster. Supposedly, the bottle did not hit Witt directly but rather flew up to his forehead when Whitey had stepped on it. “Everybody in St. Louis felt that the

man who made up that story deserved the \$1000 [reward money],” Robert Creamer wrote.<sup>36</sup>

In a sidebar to Dixie Davis’s obituary in *The Sporting News* on February 10, 1944, it was noted that this game of September 18, 1922, “has been the subject of more telephone inquiries than any other sports event of Mound City history,” including Grover Alexander’s dazzling performance in the 1926 World Series. ■

This article is based on a presentation the author made at the SABR National Convention in St. Louis on July 26, 2007.

## NOTES

1. *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, 19 September 1922.
2. The Browns of the American Association won four straight AA pennants between 1885 and 1888. The American League’s Browns, who began play in 1902, had no connection with that franchise other than taking its name.
3. Besides the players they traded to Boston to secure these four pitchers, the Yankees also sent \$240,000 in cash to Red Sox owner Harry Frazee. See the author’s article “The Curse of the . . . Hurlers?” in *The Baseball Research Journal* 35 (2006): 63–73.
4. Ironically, an Urban Shocker fastball to Baker’s ribs had sidelined him earlier in the season. The Browns responded on August 22 by acquiring their own third baseman from the Red Sox. However, thirty-five-year-old Eddie Foster, nearing the end of his playing career, was no Joe Dugan.
5. 20 September 1922. One result of this outcry was that, before the next season, Major League Baseball would move the trading deadline up from July 31 to June 1.
6. *New York Evening Journal*, 16 September 1922.
7. *Globe and Commercial Advertiser* (New York), 16 September 1922.
8. Ibid. The *Post-Dispatch* reported an attendance of 27,000 for the first game. While it was not uncommon for teams of this era to allow fans on the field, it was a practice neither the Giants nor the Yankees permitted at home, at the Polo Grounds, despite the considerable potential revenue that was at stake.
9. *New York American*, 17 September 1922.
10. *New York Times*, 17 September 1922.
11. *New York Times*, 19 September 1922.
12. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 17 September 1922.
13. None of the newspapers mentioned the nineteenth-century records of Willie Keeler (44 games in 1897) or Bill Dahlen (42 in 1894).
14. 17 September 1922. “Monitor” was the pseudonym of sportswriter George Daley.
15. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 17 September 1922.
16. Ibid.
17. *New York Evening Journal*, 18 September 1922.
18. *New York Times*, 18 September 1922.
19. *New York Evening Journal*, 18 September 1922.
20. *Sun* (New York), 19 September 1922.
21. *World* (New York), 19 September 1922. Yet the *New York American* said it was almost a home run. Often there were such conflicting accounts of plays in different papers. Since this was long before the advent of video, there is no way for historians to resolve these differences.
22. *The ESPN Baseball Encyclopedia*, 10 ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1996). As a pinch-hitter, Smith was 6 for 21 (.286 batting average) in 1922 and would go 11 for 21 (.524 BA) in 1923.
23. *World* (New York), 19 September 1922.
24. On Tris Speaker’s Indians, Smith had regularly platooned in the outfield with Smoky Joe Wood. Speaker had popularized the concept, which was then called a “double-batting shift” or “reversible” hitters. The word “platooning” did not even exist in baseball at the time.
25. *St. Louis Times*, 19 September 1922.
26. *St. Louis Times*, 20 September 1922.
27. *The Globe-Democrat*, for example, said that Pruett appeared rattled after McNally’s bunt, suggesting the walk was not intentional (19 September 1922).
28. From 1920 to 1922, Shocker appeared in relief 29 times and got 12 saves, which were awarded retroactively many years later. Saves were not computed as early as 1922.
29. *Globe and Commercial Advertiser* (New York), 19 September 1922.
30. *Evening Telegram* (New York), 19 September 1922.
31. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 19 September 1922.
32. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 20 September 1922.
33. *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, 19 September 1922.
34. Tom Meany, *Baseball’s Greatest Hitters* (New York: A. S. Barnes, 1950), 185–86.
35. *Globe and Commercial Advertiser* (New York), 19 September 1922.
36. Robert Creamer, *Babe: The Legend Comes to Life*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974), 266.

# Analyzing Grand Old Images

## A Close Look at Two Photos from the Deadball Era

Mark Fimoff

Joe Wallace's *Grand Old Game: 365 Days of Baseball* is a cleverly conceived book, its pages numbered according to the months and days of the year, providing 365 grand images from the archives of the National Baseball Hall of Fame.<sup>1</sup> Many of the photos featured unidentified players or events. With the help of Hall of Fame personnel, the author tried to resurrect the

story behind each image. For the most part their effort was successful. For two of the great photos, however, their interpretation missed the mark. While 363 out of 365 is pretty good, those other two images do merit further analysis. One is significant, and the other is at least highly interesting, given the identity of all the individuals depicted.

### 1. Flag Day, Somewhere in Pennsylvania

The first photo appears on page "March 2" of the book. The main points of the provided caption are parsed and listed here under the image.



NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY, COOPERSTOWN, N.Y.

From *Grand Old Game*:

- Honus (Hans) Wagner, center,
- and his Pittsburgh Pirate teammates
- raise the flag on a new season
- at Forbes Field [Pittsburgh]. . .
- Photo . . . taken about 1910.

**That surely is the Dutchman in the middle. But, beyond that, what's wrong with the list? Is any of it correct? What's missing?**

**“Wagner . . . and his Pittsburgh Pirate teammates”**

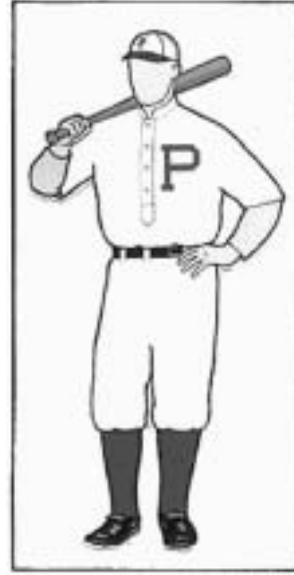
A good first step when analyzing any Deadball Era image is to check the uniforms against the uniform database at the National Baseball Hall of Fame.<sup>2</sup> This is a valuable tool for dating early baseball photos. **Note the following comparisons:**

• **Wagner: dark cap and smaller *p* on jersey**



**Pit NL 1915–1919<sup>2</sup>**

• **Others: two-tone caps, bigger *P* on jersey**



**Pit NL 1915–1919<sup>2</sup>**

Wagner and his teammates appear to be wearing Pirates uniforms circa 1915–19 (*above left*). The other team appears to be the Phillies circa 1915–20 (*above right*).

• **CONCLUSION: Two teams are present**

Now, given these two teams and the time frame derived from the uniforms, we can try to identify a few of the more significant faces. Easily picked out are Phillies’ Hall of Famers Pete Alexander and Dave Bancroft. At this point some changes to the caption can be made:

- • ~~Honus (Hans) Wagner, center,~~
- • **Hall of Famers Dave Bancroft, Honus (Hans) Wagner, Pete Alexander**
- • ~~and his Pittsburgh Pirate teammates~~
- • **and their Pirate and Philly teammates**
  - raise the flag on a new season
  - at Forbes Field [Pittsburgh]. . . .
  - Photo . . . taken about 1910.



**Pete Alexander**



**Dave Bancroft**

**"Photo . . . taken about 1910"**

Based on the uniforms, it appears to be 1915 or later.  
 Bancroft's first year in Philadelphia was 1915.

• **CONCLUSION: Earliest possible date is 1915.**

Identify more players and progressively try to narrow the date range:

**1915–1918**



**PAT MORAN**  
 Last year in Philadelphia: 1918

**1915–1917**



**BYRNE, PASKERT, and ALEXANDER**  
 Last year in Philadelphia: 1917

**1916–June 1917**



**NIXEY CALLAHAN**  
 Pittsburgh manager: 1916–June 1917

**1916**



**JIM VIOX**  
 Last year in Pittsburgh: 1916



**JIMMY SMITH**  
 Only year in Pittsburgh: 1916

So, these faces and the dates, capped off by the presence of the feisty Jimmy Smith in a Pirate uniform, newly arrived from the Chicago Federals just after the collapse of the Federal League, yield:

• **CONCLUSION: Photo taken in 1916.**

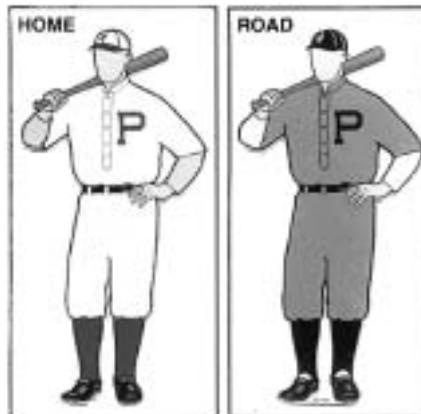
Thus the next correction:

- ~~Honus (Hans) Wagner, center,~~
- Hall of Famers Dave Bancroft, Honus (Hans) Wagner, Pete Alexander
- ~~and his Pittsburgh Pirate teammates~~
- and their Pirate and Phillies teammates . . .
- raise the flag on a new season
- at Forbes Field [Pittsburgh]. . .
- • Photo . . . taken in ~~about 1910~~ **1916.**

**"at Forbes Field"**

Noting that the two-tone caps worn by Pat Moran and his teammates match the Phillies' 1916 *home* uniform caps raises a question: **Is this Forbes Field in Pittsburgh?**

Below right we see a photo, circa 1910, of the right-field wall and flagpole at the Baker Bowl in Philadelphia. The relevant features are also listed.



Phi NL 1916<sup>2</sup>

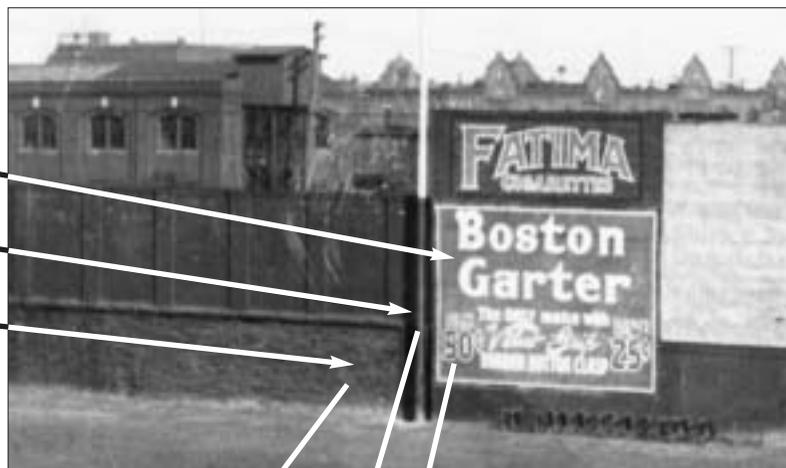
**Baker Bowl, Philadelphia, c. 1910**

**Baker Bowl right-field features:**

Billboard to right of flagpole

Flagpole in front of gap

Stone wall left of flagpole



In the photo from *Grand Old Game* we see the stone wall to the left, a repainted billboard to the right, and a flagpole in front of the gap between them. In this close-up view, we can see that the gap consists of a gate.

PHILLYHISTORY.ORG, A PROJECT OF THE PHILADELPHIA DEPARTMENT OF RECORDS



Putting it all together:

- Hall of Famers Dave Bancroft, Honus (Hans) Wagner, Pete Alexander
- and their Pirate and Phillies teammates . . .
- raise the Phillies' 1915 NL pennant
- at the Baker Bowl in Philadelphia. . . .
- Photo . . . taken on June 14, 1916.



NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY, COOPERSTOWN, NY

**Player IDs**

- (1) George Whitted, (2) Fred Luderus, (3) Dave Bancroft, (4) Ed Burns, (5) Pat Moran,  
 (6) Dode Paskert, (7) Honus Wagner, (8) Nixey Callahan, (9) Jack Adams, (10) Jim Viox,  
 (11) Bobby Byrne, (12) Pete Alexander, (13) Joe Oeschger, (14) Jimmy Smith

**Note on the Game**

The pennant-raising ceremony included a brass band and thousands of fans waving souvenir pennants. It was followed by a ballgame that measured up to the pregame hoopla. The Phillies' Eppa Rixey turned in a good 12-inning complete-game performance, with the Pirates' Elmer Jacobs pitching all of the 11½ innings before giving up the game-winning run. The Pirates took a 3–2 lead in the top of the eighth, when Rixey hit Wagner on the

foot with a pitch (one of three batters he plunked that day). Honus subsequently scored from second on a single by Joe Schultz. The Phils tied it with one out in the ninth when Jake Dugey scored from third on Bill Killefer's infield grounder. Then, in the bottom of the twelfth, Bert Niehoff sent the fans home happy with a two-out homer into the left-field seats.<sup>4</sup>

**2. Hey, His Grandson's Gonna Be on *Law and Order*.**

The second photo to be examined appears on page "April 29" of *Grand Old Game*:



CREDIT

From *Grand Old Game*:

- Umpires instruct the Highlanders and Tigers
- including Detroit manager Hughie Jennings
- superstar Ty Cobb
- and an unidentified New York player
- before a game at Hilltop Park.

"superstar Ty Cobb"

That certainly is Jennings in the above image far left, but **is that Cobb just to the right of Jennings?**



Real Cobb<sup>8</sup>



These ears do not match.  
(See page 25, "Note on Identification by Ear Matching.")



"Cobb" from above?



Conlon photo:  
George Moriarty<sup>5</sup>

ZUMA PRESS

From the comparisons above:

- **CONCLUSION: The player to the right of Jennings is George Moriarty.**

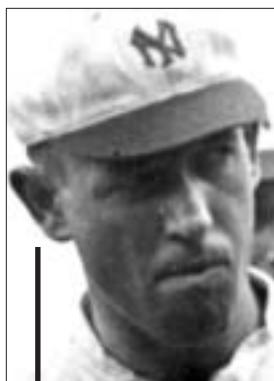
Though there is no particular resemblance, this is not the first time that the scrappy player-umpire-inventor-author-scout and AL executive Moriarty had initially been mistaken for Cobb and then later correctly identified.<sup>7</sup> With a long list of accomplishments and a well-known grandson, the TV and film actor Michael Moriarty, he merits recognition. A first correction can now be made:

- Umpires instruct the Highlanders and Tigers
- including Detroit manager Hughie Jennings
- • ~~superstar Ty Cobb~~
- • ~~3rd baseman George Moriarty~~
- and an unidentified New York player
- before a game at Hilltop Park.

**"an unidentified New York player"**

- pregame conference, could be N.Y. manager
- New York cap-uniform-socks combo unique to 1911
- New York AL manager in 1911 was Hal Chase

**So—Is this baseball's Dark Prince?**



**Hal Chase**

NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY, COOPERSTOWN, N.Y.



**bump just above earlobe**



**NY AL 1911<sup>2</sup>**

Facial comparison of this player, far left, to a known Hal Chase image, near left, shows similarity but may not fully convince everyone. However, comparison of the right ears from both photos, below left, is conclusive. Note the bump just above the earlobe and the identical shape of the outer edge of the ear. (See page 25, "A Further Note on Identification by Ear Matching.")

**CONCLUSION: It's New York manager Hal Chase in 1911.**

This yields another correction:

- Umpires instruct the Highlanders and Tigers
- including Detroit manager Hughie Jennings
- ~~superstar Ty Cobb~~
- 3rd baseman George Moriarty
- • ~~and an unidentified New York player~~
- • ~~and New York manager Hal Chase~~
- • before a **1911** game at Hilltop Park.

**"Umpires instruct . . ."**

The photo from *Grand Old Game* includes two men in suits. One is the plate umpire, who, even in profile, is easily seen to be Hall of Famer Tommy Connolly.



**Plate umpire is . . . Tommy Connolly<sup>6</sup>**

During the 1911 season Connolly worked six Detroit-at-New York games, three with Silk O'Loughlin and three with Jack Sheridan.<sup>9</sup> As to the other fellow in the suit, he is clearly neither O'Loughlin nor Sheridan, and the megaphone indicates that he is the public-address announcer.



**not O'Loughlin,  
not Sheridan,  
not an umpire**



**O'Loughlin<sup>9</sup>**



**Sheridan<sup>9</sup>**

**CONCLUSION: The plate umpire is Tommy Connolly, the other umpire is not pictured.**

This provides the final correction:

- • ~~Umpires instruct the Highlanders and Tigers~~
- • **Hall of Fame umpire Tommy Connolly instructs Highlanders and Tigers**
  - including Detroit manager Hughie Jennings
  - ~~superstar Ty Cobb~~
  - 3rd baseman George Moriarty
  - ~~and an unidentified New York player~~
  - and New York manager Hal Chase
  - before a 1911 game at Hilltop Park.

Putting it all together:

- Hall of Fame umpire Tommy Connolly instructs Highlanders and Tigers
- including Detroit manager Hughie Jennings
- 3rd baseman George Moriarty
- and New York manager Hal Chase
- before a 1911 game at Hilltop Park.

Though Ty Cobb was not present, closer scrutiny has revealed four significant people: Jennings and Connolly from the Hall of Fame; Chase, whose gambling associations have kept him out of the Hall; and George Moriarty, one of the more colorful and interesting characters of the Deadball Era.



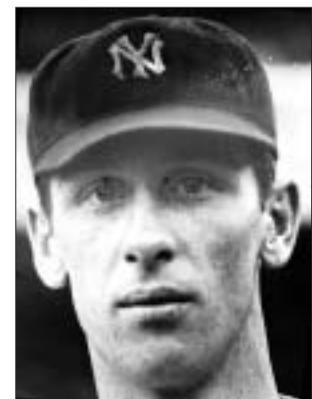
### 3. New York Knight

Some readers probably won't be able to sleep until one more question is answered: **Who is the Highlander peering over Hal Chase's shoulder?**

Though the top of mystery man's head appears to be below the top of Chase's head, the perspective in the full image seems to indicate that the mystery man is somewhat taller than Chase, who measured six feet. That brings to mind several candidates. Members of the New York Highlanders in 1911 who were taller than six feet include Jeff Sweeney, Joe Walsh, Harry Ables, Ray Caldwell, Hippo Vaughn, and John Knight. Having recently watched *The Natural* again, thinking of those New York Knights led to a first guess.



John Knight 1911<sup>7</sup>



John Knight 1913<sup>7</sup>



The following features in the *Grand Old Game* photo are good matches to the Knight photos:

- nose
- shape and contour of cheekbone area under left eye
- visible outline of left ear
- shape of left eye

**CONCLUSION: He may not be *The Natural*, but he is John Knight. ■**

## NOTES

1. Joseph Wallace, *Grand Old Game: 365 Days of Baseball: Rare and Unusual Images from the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum* (New York: Abrams, 2004).
2. National Baseball Hall of Fame, "Dressed to the Nines," Uniform Database online: [http://exhibits.baseballhalloffame.org/dressed\\_to\\_the\\_nines/database.htm](http://exhibits.baseballhalloffame.org/dressed_to_the_nines/database.htm).
3. *Chicago Tribune*, 15 June 1916.
4. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 15 June 1916.
5. Neal and Constance McCabe, *Baseball's Golden Age: The Photographs of Charles M. Conlon* (New York: Abrams, 1993).
6. George Michael, "Identifying Mystery Photos," *The Baseball Research Journal* 33 (January 2004): 43.
7. George Grantham Bain Collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.
8. Marc Okkonen, *Baseball Memories, 1900–1909* (New York: Sterling, 1992).
9. Box scores from *Retrosheet* and *New York Times*.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author wishes to acknowledge SABR members Matt Fulling and Steve Steinberg for their consultation and assistance, Matt Fulling for his help on identifying the players in the March 2 photo, Nick Frankovich for inviting me to write this article, and Joe Wallace for his excellent book and good-natured professional response to my analysis.

### Note on Identification by Ear Matching

It is well known in the field of biometrics that ear shape and structure are nearly unique to the individual.<sup>1,2,5</sup> Ears have a fingerprint-like quality. Absent severe physical injury, ear shape and structure are relatively permanent from about age eight up to about age seventy.<sup>2</sup> Not surprisingly, this has application to identification in security checks and criminal proceedings.<sup>1,3,4,5</sup> Even the concept of "ear-prints," traces left by a person leaning against a wall or window, has been introduced in court cases. Doubles for world leaders, including Mao Zedong, have been uncovered because of ear mismatch.<sup>5</sup>

Unlike some features—eyebrows, chin shape, apparent chin length, mouth shape, and nostrils, which can be altered significantly by a change in facial expression—the ears remain constant, even after weight loss or gain. If the ears in two images can clearly be seen and do not match, then it is two different people who are depicted. The likelihood of their being the same person increases proportionally to the degree to which the ears can be seen to match.

1. Alfred Iannarelli, *Ear Identification* (Fremont, Calif.: Paramount, 1989).
2. M. Burge and W. Burger, "Ear Biometrics for Machine Vision," 21st Workshop, Austrian Association for Pattern Recognition, 1997.
3. Hanna-Kaisa Lammi, *Ear Biometrics* (Lappeenranta University of Technology, Laboratory of information Processing, Lappeenranta, Finland, 2004).
4. A. Hoogstrate, H. van den Heuvel, and E. Huyben, "Ear Identification Based on Surveillance Camera's Images," *Forensic-Evidence.com* (May 2000).
5. D. A. Brigioni, *Photo Fakery: The History and Techniques of Photographic Deception and Manipulation* (Dulles, Va.: Brassey, 1999).

### Further Note on Identification by Ear Matching

If you still doubt that this is Chase, your challenge is to find another New York AL player from c. 1911 whose right ear matches the one in the Grand Old Game photo.

# Henry Chadwick

## The “Father of Baseball” Was a Sportswriter

Andrew J. Schiff

In the fall of 1856, a *New York Times* cricket journalist spotted a fascinating game of “base ball” being played across the field. Henry Chadwick knew baseball well enough but was now seeing the game in a new light, as if for the first time. He had never considered how this rudimentary game played with a ball and a bat was so fast and rugged and “suited to the American temperament.” After watching a particularly spirited contest between the Gotham and Eagle clubs of New York on the grassy grounds of Elysian Fields in Hoboken, Chadwick came away a changed man.

You might say that Chadwick, a British-born journalist, who had arrived on this side of the Atlantic Ocean nearly two decades earlier, suddenly ceased being English and became American. He never lost his love for the intricate, demanding game of cricket, but he became convinced that baseball, fast-paced and rugged—a style that suited the American temperament—was good for Americans, that it would inspire them to take to the outdoors and to exercise. Chadwick saw that the nation was shifting increasingly from an agrarian to an industrial way of life. In baseball, he saw great possibilities for the promotion of public health—and, perhaps, for his career. Was it the platform on which he might be elevated to the level of fame enjoyed by his older half-brother, Edwin Chadwick, the sanitary reformer of England who many years later would be knighted?

Why did it take so long for Chadwick to appreciate baseball? He knew of the game’s existence and had even played it from time to time. It resembled, perhaps too much, rounders, a game that he played in childhood and so may have come to feel was too simple and unscientific. Chadwick often reminisced about playing rounders in Exeter, England, where he was born on October 5, 1824. He recalled how, as youngsters, he and his friends



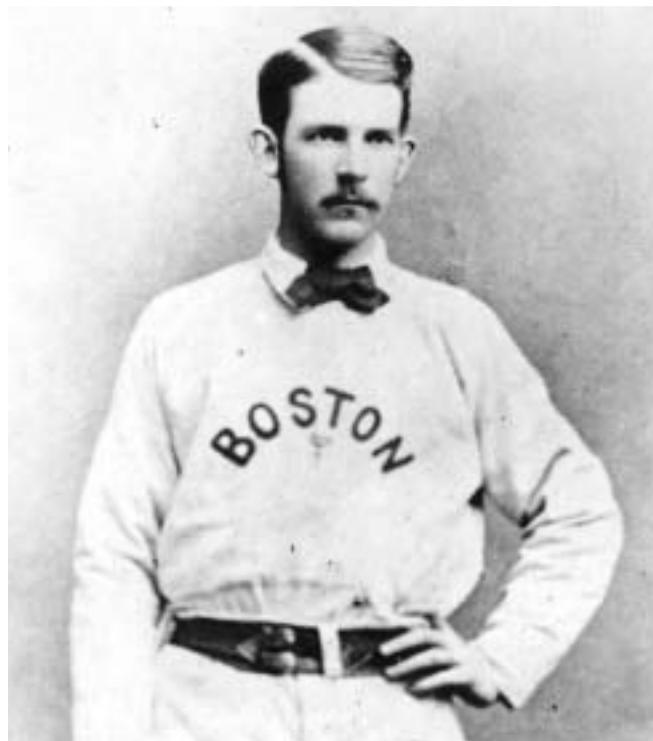
**Henry Chadwick (1824–1908) joined his journalistic career to what became his lifelong mission of promoting baseball as America’s game, earning him the title “Father of Baseball.”**

would “dig a hole in the ground for the home position, and place four stones in a circle, or nearly so, for the bases, and, choosing up sides, we went in for a lively time at what was the parent game of base ball.”

Like all good English boys, Chadwick advanced to cricket as he matured. He was not quite a teenager when his father, James Chadwick, a noted radical journalist, decided to take his new family (Henry was the product of James Chadwick’s second marriage) and emigrate to the United States. Was it his allegiance to the principles of the French revolution that drew him to this country founded on a revolution by colonists from his homeland? In any event, in September 1837, with his wife Theresa, his son Henry, and his daughter Rosa, he emigrated to the United States, and American history would be forever altered.

Soon after landing in New York, the young family moved to Brooklyn. Henry in adulthood would cherish

NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY COOPERSTOWN, N.Y.



**Albert Spalding (1850–1915), star pitcher of the 1870s and sporting-goods entrepreneur, was a protégé of Chadwick’s. They remained friends even after finding themselves on opposite sides of the debate about baseball’s origins.**

fond memories of his adolescence there; he spent his first years in Brooklyn fishing in Gowanus Canal, hunting birds, and stealing fallen apricots near a Brooklyn farm. He ice-skated in present-day downtown Brooklyn (Brooklyn Heights), on Court Street near Hamilton Avenue. It was in Brooklyn, in 1838, where he resumed his youthful interest in cricket, attending there a match between the English towns of Sheffield and Nottingham—a sporting event of a sort not so unusual in this early phase of American history, when the English sport was still the dominant sport in America. As a young adult, Chadwick made his livelihood by teaching piano. He never lost his passion for music. He even composed waltzes and quadrilles. Gradually, though, he found himself drawn to his father’s footsteps—his older brother, too, had dabbled in journalism before pursuing his career in public health.

Chadwick began reporting for Brooklyn’s *Long Island Star* in 1844. By the mid-1850s he had managed to integrate his love for cricket into his professional life, working as cricket writer for the *New York Times*. Like all enthusiasts of the sport in the New York metropolitan area,

Chadwick would frequent Elysian Fields. He would later draw on his encyclopedic knowledge of cricket in formulating his suggestions for improvements to baseball, a younger game that was still somewhat unformed and that he sought to make “more scientific” and more “manly.”

The first journalist to report on baseball regularly was actually William Cauldwell, editor of the *New York Sunday Mercury*. However, because of Chadwick’s driving ambition to publicize the game and raise it to the status of the national pastime, he soon outshone Cauldwell. Later, Cauldwell hired Chadwick to take over as baseball reporter at the *Mercury*. After several minor successes in carving out space for baseball in the dailies, Chadwick in 1857 joined the staff of the *New York Clipper*, an entertainment weekly, which, like many New York weeklies at the time, was read nationwide. And so his articles on the New York game were circulating in Boston and Philadelphia, where town ball still dominated, but would eventually give way to baseball. Chadwick’s influence on this development would be hard to measure but also hard to deny.

His standing in the baseball world by this time had earned him a place with the rules committee. On the side, he began to make improvements to the format of the box score.

By 1860 he was working for Beadle Dime, editing Beadle’s *Dime Base-Ball Player*, which he would make into the quintessential baseball guide. It was there that Chadwick developed the framework for the in-game scoring system that, while evolving somewhat over the years, has remained an enduring feature of baseball in the press box as well as among fans in the seats. Use of the letter K to indicate a strikeout, for example, dates back to Chadwick’s work in the Beadle publication. Around this time he began to tabulate hits, home runs, and total bases. This practice led to the formulation of such familiar statistical metrics as batting average and slugging percentage, although Chadwick was not directly responsible for their invention.

Chadwick’s ongoing concern about the game’s rules led him to conclude that they needed reform. Early on, he began to advocate for the elimination of the bound catch, whereby the fielder would retire the batter by catching the ball on the first bounce. In his view, the fly catch was

more manly and scientific. Moreover, it was the rule in cricket, the elder, established sport that baseball had reason to emulate. Chadwick won the argument. In 1864 the rules committee voted to eliminate the bound catch. The move from the bound to the fly catch would coincide with the growth of the New York game and its expansion across the continent in the late nineteenth century. In related developments, Chadwick helped to promote the establishment of the overhand pitch as normative and to determine the uniform distance between the pitcher's mound and home plate.

Chadwick's contribution to the game's inner workings—its rules and its systems for keeping score and keeping records—was great but should not be taken to mean that he ever lost sight of the larger social function he thought baseball should serve. In the early days of the Civil War, in 1861, he had arranged for a special baseball game, billed as the Silver Ball Match, to be played in late October—three months after the Battle of Bull Run. The Brooklyn nine defeated the New York nine, 18–6, in a contest that was welcomed as a necessary diversion from the stress experienced by a civilian population during wartime.

The great expectations that Chadwick had for this noble civic institution, as he saw it, were of a piece with his moral stand against drinking, gambling, and hippodroming (the practice of predetermining the outcome of games). He said he was moved to speak out against gambling after overhearing attempts by gamblers to fix the outcome of the Fashion Course games, an all-star series between New York and Brooklyn and an important matchup in the early years of baseball. Chadwick's subsequent campaign against gambling earned for him a reputation as the conscience of baseball. Though it is unclear when he began to speak of “the best interests of baseball,” he is among the first to use the phrase.

Much of Chadwick's hope for baseball's moral reform was finally realized when in 1871 the National Association of Professional Base Ball Players was created with the intention of cleaning up the game. In 1876 it gave way to the the National League, and Chadwick's influence in professional baseball was curtailed but not ended. He still had a voice.

In the early 1880s, Chadwick began his new position

as editor of *Spalding's Official Base Ball Guide*. The official guide of the National League, it was distributed by his friend Albert Spalding, a sporting-goods magnate and a former pitching great for Boston and Chicago. Chadwick was among Spalding's mentors, though Spalding had a special talent for marketing and a good baseball mind of his own, as the success of his sporting-goods business demonstrated.

Spalding and Chadwick remained friends despite the growing differences between them. As the business of baseball grew, so did Spalding's business, and Chadwick began to lose touch with that side of baseball's development. They found themselves divided as well on the issue of baseball's origins. Motivated by nationalism and the calculation that it was good for his business, Spalding propagated the idea, now discredited, that baseball's origin was entirely American, that it was invented in the United States and without any foreign influence. Chadwick maintained that baseball derived from the English bat-and-ball game he knew as rounders, which shared many of the same rules with baseball. Chadwick assumed, with good reason, that the English variant was parent to American baseball. Chadwick had said as much in the first Beadle guide, in 1860.

Spalding was adamant, however, and in 1907 he appointed the Mills Commission to determine baseball's “true origins.” After some deliberation, the members determined that Civil War general Abner Doubleday invented the game in Cooperstown, New York, although Doubleday never mentioned baseball in his voluminous diaries and there is no evidence that he ever even played the sport. Authoritative voices from the four corners of the baseball world chimed in to affirm the commission's finding, but Chadwick stuck to his guns, maintaining to the end that baseball's origins in rounders were undeniable. He genuinely sympathized with Spalding's wish to imagine a national pastime as a purely American game, though not at the cost of confusing fiction with historical fact.

He lost the argument, for the time being, but not his reputation. As early as the 1870s he had been carrying the title “Father of Baseball.” He had won admiration from all quarters; President Theodore Roosevelt saluted his work. In 1904, as Chadwick celebrated his eightieth

NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY, COOPERSTOWN, N.Y.



**During his long career as a sportswriter, Chadwick worked for no fewer than five New York-area newspapers, served as editor of two baseball guides, including Spalding's, and was influential in the development of the notation for scorekeeping.**

birthday, Roosevelt wrote to him: “My Dear Chadwick: I congratulate you on your eightieth year and your fiftieth year in journalism . . . and you are entitled to the good wishes of all for that part you have taken in behalf of decent sport.”

Chadwick continued to write throughout the 1880s and 1890s, working as editor of the Spalding guides, and the *Sporting Life* was a venue for his opinions on a range of topics—the Player’s Revolt of 1890, the home run (an expenditure of too much energy, he thought), the rise of the American League in 1901, and Turkish baths, which he recommended. He was a versatile sportswriter and penned numerous articles and guides on football, chess, tennis, yachting, rowing, ice skating, and bowling (specifically, lawn bowls). In his last years, though, his output began to wane. He left the *Sporting Life* and returned to write almost exclusively for the *Brooklyn Eagle*.

Chadwick caught a cold after attending two opening-day games in April 1908 and grew progressively weak. Though sick, he attempted to move some furniture from one apartment to another in his Brooklyn walkup. Overstraining his heart, he fell unconscious. His illness had

worsened to pneumonia. Chadwick died the next day on April 20, 1908, a few minutes past noon. He was 83. He is buried in Brooklyn’s Green-Wood Cemetery, his grave marked by a monument on top of which is a granite sphere carved to resemble a baseball. The four corners of the site are marked by stones etched to look like bases.

Chadwick was the most important figure in nineteenth-century baseball, according to Christopher Devine in his biography of Harry Wright. (Spalding ranked second, and Wright third.) A visionary, Chadwick saw baseball’s great potential and dreamed of the day when it would be enshrined as the national pastime, and all this at a time when it was relatively ill defined, fledgling, and under the shadow of cricket. Given the place of importance that baseball would come to occupy in American society and culture, Chadwick’s own place in American history has to be deemed high. We can only speculate whether it exceeds the aspirations he nurtured in his ambitious youth. In bringing his seriousness and reformer’s zeal to his work as a baseball journalist, he anticipated our own time, when sports news has the power to knock political news off the front page and often does. Chadwick was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1938. He is the only journalist enshrined in the player’s wing in the museum. ■

#### NOTE

This article was written for The Baseball Biography Project at <http://bioproj.sabr.org/>.

#### SOURCES

- Adelman, Melvin L. *A Sporting Time: New York City and the Rise of Modern Athletics, 1820–70*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986.
- Chadwick, Henry. *The Game of Baseball: How to Learn It, How to Play It, How to Teach It*. New York: George Munro, 1868.
- Devine, Christopher. *Harry Wright: The Father of Professional Base Ball* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2003), 10.
- Richman, Jeffrey I. *Brooklyn’s Green-Wood Cemetery: New York’s Buried Treasure*. Brooklyn: The Cemetery, 1998.
- Schiff, Andrew J. “The Father of Baseball”: *A Biography of Henry Chadwick*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2008.

# British Baseball

## How a Curious Version of the Game Survives in Parts of England and Wales

Andrew Weltch

A young man anxiously takes grip of a heavily taped bat that has seen better days, his eyes fixed on the pitcher in the sunlight of a summer evening. The ball comes toward him at a frightening speed. He swings. A hit. He runs, discarding the bat, desperate to reach first base amid the encouraging yells of supporters and teammates. He reaches out his left hand and slaps his palm against the post. He has scored his first run in adult baseball.

It may look and sound like a familiar scene, one that can be found in countless parks across America—except for that “post,” and the run awarded for reaching first base. That’s because this is not the United States, but Cardiff, Wales. And it’s not the familiar game of baseball but a curious alternate version, confined to core areas of just three cities in England and Wales.

America’s national pastime has been a part (usually a small part) of the British sporting scene for more than a century, and in the 1930s it came close to establishing itself as a genuine rival to Britain’s traditional summer bat-and-ball game, cricket.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, Britain remains in the record books as the winner of baseball’s inaugural World Cup in 1938, and the U.S. national pastime continues to be played at a minor level in the old country.

Less well known is Britain’s own indigenous version of baseball—a sport that has enjoyed and endured its own ups and downs and is now confined to parts of Cardiff and Newport in south Wales and to Liverpool in northwest England.

British baseball—often known as Welsh baseball—differs in several ways, including the number of players (11), scoring (one run for each base reached), pitching (underhand, as in softball), and the bat itself (shorter and with a flat surface).

As in cricket, there is no foul area, games have just

two innings, all 11 players on each team bat at least once in each inning, and the inning continues until all 11 are either out or stranded on base. Unlike cricket players, however, British baseball players wear soccer- or rugby-style uniforms, including colorful jerseys and shorts.

Today the sport is organized by the Welsh Baseball Union (WBU) in Cardiff and Newport and by the English Baseball Association (EBA) in Liverpool. Wales boasts a men’s league, knock-out cup competitions, and a thriving women’s scene as well as junior events. In Liverpool, on the other hand, just three adult teams survive in a small area of the city.

A common set of rules is determined by the grandly titled International Baseball Board (IBB), which was established in 1927 and involves representatives of both governing bodies.

### Origins and Development

Baseball has a long history in Britain. Literary references to it can be found in the eighteenth century and even earlier.<sup>2</sup> However, the name seems to have faded from use, and by the early nineteenth century “rounders” had become a popular bat-and-ball game, especially among children. Later that century, rounders was being played by men at a highly competitive level. There were teams in Scotland, in Gloucestershire (southwest England), south Wales, and northwest England, and probably elsewhere too. Liverpool appears to have been the most active rounders city and was home to *The Rounders Reporter*, a publication launched in 1885.

The name *baseball* for the indigenous British game was revived in 1892, when the Liverpool Rounders Association changed the name of its sport from *rounders* to *baseball*. Exactly why this happened is a matter for speculation. It is argued that the name *rounders* sug-

gested a children's game and did not reflect the manly sport played in these working-class areas.<sup>3</sup> Inspiration for the name change may have come from recent visits to Britain by U.S. professional baseball teams—the Boston Red Stockings and Philadelphia Athletics in 1874 and the Chicago White Stockings and an All-America team in 1889. Both tours included games in the rounders hotbed of Liverpool.<sup>4</sup>

Following their Liverpool counterparts, the south Wales authorities renamed their game *baseball* in the summer of 1892, and since then this peculiar British sport has shared a name with its more famous American, and increasingly global, counterpart.

The British version of baseball has never managed to spread beyond its confines in south Wales and northwest England, although exhibition games have been played in the London area, and, during a boom period of the late 1940s and early 1950s, it was reported that the sport was becoming established in the English cities of Bristol and Coventry.<sup>5</sup>

British baseball never became a professional sport, but it did attract large crowds and was the premier summer sport in the poorer parts of its host cities for many years. Several top-level soccer and rugby players played baseball to maintain their fitness through the summer.

In addition to the elite clubs, there were the teams organized by local churches, stores, factories, and bars. Especially in the blue-collar neighborhoods of Cardiff, baseball was for many years the premier summer sport.

Exactly why baseball flourished in these particular cities is a mystery. Some suggest that residents of the poorer areas of Cardiff, Newport, and Liverpool turned to baseball because they lacked the space and expensive equipment to play cricket. But that does not explain why baseball was not embraced in working-class areas in other cities. In any case, baseball needs as much space as cricket, and working-class cricket teams were flourishing in the late nineteenth century, just when rounders was becoming baseball.<sup>6</sup> It may be that this renamed version of rounders grew in Cardiff, Newport, and Liverpool because they were all major ports with significant Irish communities, and a version of rounders—similar to British baseball—remains a competitive adult game in Ireland.<sup>7</sup>

Periodic efforts have been made to “convert” these areas to the U.S. game, but the peculiar British variety survives into the twenty-first century. American and Japanese teams have even faced teams playing the British code from time to time.

In 1933, the Liverpool Amateurs challenged a Japanese ship, the *Lima Maru*, to a game under American rules. This game reportedly drew an “unusually large crowd” and was won by the Japanese 12–9. However, a year later the Amateurs won the return game. A similar game had been played in the early 1920s against a Canadian ship, but there are no records of a result.<sup>8</sup>

On August 27, 1938, the Cardiff team Penylan faced the London Americans at Cardiff Arms Park. The contest saw one inning each under “Welsh” rules, followed by three innings under U.S. rules.

In July 1969, the Newport team Alexandra Old Boys met a U.S. Army team from a military base at Caerwent in south Wales for a game of softball—a contest that the locals won 26–12, thanks to 13 runs in the eighth inning.<sup>9</sup>

### The international game

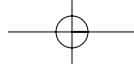
The showcase event each year is the “international” game between England (effectively Liverpool) and Wales (drawn from players in Cardiff and Newport), which alternates between venues in the two countries. The 2008 game, held at Llanrumney High School, Cardiff, in July, marked the centenary of the contest. Wales scored a comfortable victory—its tenth successive win.

Back in 1908, the first international match-up was played to a compromise set of rules. Most significantly,



**The Wales national team and officials at the first international England–Wales game, in Cardiff 1908. This is the only known surviving photograph from the game.**

COURTESY OF WELSH BASEBALL UNION



LAWRENCE HOURAHANE



**International captains Norman Parselle of Wales, left, and Paul Hughes of England, right, with referee Peter James, before the 2006 international game at Coronation Park, Newport.**

the Welsh Baseball Association (as it was then known) conceded to having two umpires—one provided by each governing body. Batters were also permitted to move both feet while “at the plate,” but the English batters tended to use their accustomed one-handed tennis-style technique of swinging the bat.

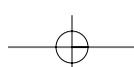
The game took place on a public holiday, Monday, August 3, at the Harlequins Ground, also known as Cardiff Intermediate School Ground, where Wales captain Lew Lewis won the toss of the coin and chose to bat first. He opened the batting himself, facing England pitcher Fred Mack of the Marsh Lane club.

Wales finished the first inning with 102—such scores are achieved because a run is awarded for each base reached, all 11 players bat, and the inning continues until all 11 are either out or stranded on base. England started badly in reply, and had two men out for only five runs at one stage before being all-out with 57. Being more than 30 runs behind, England was forced to bat again—to “follow on,” as in cricket. The visitors did little better this time around, ending the second inning with 61, putting them just 16 runs ahead of Wales, who had yet to bat in their

half of the second and last inning. W. Allen was the star for England, scoring 20 of those 61 runs, but the English batting was generally poor: “The using of one hand in batting seemed to hamper them considerably, for their hitting was not as great as that of the Welsh side.”<sup>10</sup>

Wales went back in to bat, needing 17 runs to win—a target they reached with the loss of four men. Contemporary reports highlighted several problems with this initial encounter between the two national teams—the two-umpire game was a problem, and in a later account the officials are described as “two argumentative referees . . . who wasted a good deal of time coming to decisions.” Even the venue was not ideal, because it was too small and “it was not too difficult for burly Lew Lewis . . . and Fred Wreford from Newport, to hit the ball out of bounds—either over the railway embankment or into Newport Road over the house tops.”<sup>11</sup>

No official attendance figures seem to have been published, but a report suggests that, despite other attractions on that public holiday, there were 2,000 people present half an hour before the start, and the crowd was still “steadily pouring in.”<sup>12</sup>



It took six years to arrange the second game between England and Wales. The teams met again in 1914 in Liverpool—when the English won in front of 4,000 people at Goodison Park, home of the famous Everton soccer club. Because of World War I, it was another six years before the teams met again, but since then—with the exception of the war years—the event has been played annually.

The international has visited some illustrious sporting venues over the years. As well as Goodison Park, it has been to Cardiff Arms Park, home of Welsh rugby, and to Sophia Gardens, Cardiff, now an international cricket stadium.

The 1924 international at Cardiff Arms Park drew 10,000 fans, while both the 1925 game at the Police Athletic Ground, Liverpool, and the 1926 edition, again at Cardiff Arms Park, attracted 12,000. It has often been suggested that the 1948 international game, played in the picturesque setting of Cardiff Castle, was seen by a record 16,000.<sup>13</sup> Contemporary press reports give the attendance figure as 10,000—still a significant number for an amateur event.<sup>14</sup> This was the first international since World War II, and local hero Ted Peterson—regarded as one of the sport’s all-time greats—defied doctor’s orders to lead Wales to victory.

Major club games have also attracted five-figure crowds, and for decades the sheer number of games played in city parks, especially in Cardiff—and to a lesser extent in Newport and Liverpool—ensured that baseball was a major sport in terms of spectators and participants.

In the 1970s and ’80s, BBC Wales even broadcast a highlights show on television the day after the international game. More recently, however, the game has been confined to more modest venues, such as public parks, and media interest has waned, as have attendances, which rarely reach as many as 2,000.

#### **British baseball today**

Fallen from its peaks of popularity, as a serious summer rival to cricket in some areas, British baseball is now a



LAWRENCE HOURAHANE

**Canton Cross versus Birchleaf at Heath Park, Cardiff, June 2007. British baseball survives in Cardiff and Newport in south Wales and in Liverpool in northwest England. The number of teams has declined since the height of the game’s popularity in the first half of the twentieth century, but the women’s league in Wales continues to grow, as does a smaller-scale junior program.**

minor sport, even in the three cities where it survives. A serious decline in Liverpool, the only English city where the game is played, must put the future of the international game between England and Wales in doubt.

Even in the Welsh cities of Cardiff and Newport, the sport is a shadow of its former glory. In 2007 there were only 24 men’s teams from Cardiff and Newport playing in the three-division Welsh League, though a separate women’s league continues to grow, as does a smaller-scale junior program. This contrasts with the picture in 1938, for example, when there were 40 men’s teams in Cardiff alone,<sup>15</sup> in addition to countless other recreational clubs.

On the other hand, the death of British baseball has been predicted for many years. Back in 1966, Les Aplin, chairman of the WBU, wrote: “Some pessimists have already declared baseball to be ‘dead’ and seem eager to bury the corpse. But I am certain their verdict is premature and [they] will find the ‘corpse’ to be very much alive in 1976.”<sup>16</sup>

British baseball was certainly still alive in 1976, and now in 2008—against all odds—the sport saw its centenary international game played in Cardiff in July. How much longer it will survive is a matter for debate, but it would be a brave person to bet against this unusual version of the sport continuing for many years. ■

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In addition to the sources mentioned, the author is grateful to John Day and other officials of the Welsh Baseball Union, and to Lawrence Hourahane and Matthew Yeomans for their invaluable help with this article.

## NOTES

1. The near-breakthrough of baseball in Britain in the 1930s has been explored in a number of articles and books. See: Daniel Bloyce, "John Moores and the 'Professional' Baseball Leagues in 1930s England," *Sport in History* 27, no. 1 (March 2007): 64–87; Josh Chetwynd and Brian A. Belton, *British Baseball and the West Ham Club: History of a Professional Team in East London* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2007).
2. *A Pretty Little Pocket Book of 1744* and Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (published in 1818, but drafted between 1798 and 1799) are the best-known examples. For a superb bibliography of early baseball, see David Block, *Baseball Before We Knew It* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005).
3. South Wales baseball administrator and historian Ivor Beynon and journalist Bob Evans suggest that the term *baseball* was seen as "more appropriate to the skilfull style of play being developed." Ivor Beynon and Bob Evans, *The Inside Story of Baseball* (Cardiff: publisher unknown, 1962).
4. For a British perspective on those international tours, see Daniel Bloyce, "That's Your Way of Playing Rounders, Isn't It? The Response of the English Press to American Baseball Tours to England 1874–1924," in *Sporting Traditions* 22, no. 1 (November 2005).
5. *South Wales Echo*, 16 August 1950.
6. For an examination of the rise of cricket in south Wales, including among working-class communities, see Andrew Hignell, *A 'Favourite' Game: Cricket in South Wales Before 1914* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1992).
7. For information on Irish rounders today, see <http://rounders.gaa.ie/index.html>.
8. See the Liverpool Trojans website, [www.liverpooltrojansbaseball.co.uk/History%20Merseyside.htm](http://www.liverpooltrojansbaseball.co.uk/History%20Merseyside.htm) (accessed 21 December 2007).
9. *South Wales Argus*, 21 July 1969.
10. *South Wales Daily News*, 4 August 1908.
11. Sid Rees, *Western Mail* journalist, who was at the 1908 game, writing in the program for the 1966 international.
12. *Western Mail*, 4 August 1908.
13. For example, Ivor Beynon and Bob Evans, *The Inside Story of Baseball* (Cardiff: publisher unknown, 1962), 25–26; Martin Johnes, "Poor Man's Cricket: Baseball, Class and Community in South Wales c. 1880–1950," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 17, no. 4 (December 2000); Andrew Weltch, "Ted Peterson: A Legend in Welsh Baseball," in *Cardiff Sporting Greats*, ed. Andrew Hignell and Gwyn Prescott (Stroud: Stadia, 2007).
14. *Western Mail*, 2 August 1948; *Cardiff Times*, 7 August 1948.
15. Martin Johnes, "Poor Man's Cricket: Baseball, Class and Community in South Wales c. 1880–1950," *International Journal of the History of Sport* 17, no. 4 (December 2000).
16. From an article published in the program for the 1966 international game.

# The Deaf and the Origin of Hand Signals in Baseball

Randy Fisher and Jami N. Fisher

The year 2008 has been the occasion for several retrospectives—on Fred Merkle, the only world championship (so far) owned by the Chicago Cubs, and the song “Take Me Out to the Ballgame” (see Timothy A. Johnson’s article at page 138)—but it may mark as well the centennial of a feature so ingrained into baseball as we now know it that it tends to escape our attention. It is in 1908 that, as the historical record suggests, the practice whereby the umpire raises his right hand to indicate a strike finally took lasting hold in Major League Baseball.

What is the history behind that signal and, more generally, of hand signals used by players, managers, and coaches as well as umpires?

Baseball’s popularity as the national pastime grew rapidly among hearing people in the United States beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century, but it is often not recognized that, at the same time, deaf Americans too were being introduced to the game and playing it. No understanding of baseball history can be complete without some understanding of the influence that deaf people have had on the game.

Bill Klem is often said to have pioneered the use of umpires’ hand signals,<sup>1</sup> and a connection is sometimes made between their use and Paul Hines or other late-deafened players.<sup>2</sup> In the American deaf community it tends to be accepted as fact that hand signaling in baseball can be traced simply to its widespread use by deaf players. It was natural for American Sign Language (ASL) to pervade the game of the deaf ballplayer. A deaf person will translate new experiences into the sign language that he uses in his everyday life. Arguably, it is more plausible that deaf players in professional baseball taught their managers, coaches, and even umpires the new signs, and not vice versa—although one report of

signaling among players, in 1860, does predate by five years what appears to be the earliest known playing of baseball in the deaf community.<sup>3</sup> As hand signals in baseball probably emerged from a joint effort between deaf players and hearing players and officials, it is important to recognize how the personal experiences of deaf players were involved in this development. Looking at the lives of players who translated their experience from residential schools for the deaf to the major leagues, we can begin to see more clearly the history of hand-signal usage in baseball.

First, though, it will be helpful to take a close look at a couple of the signals themselves and then a broad, bird’s-eye view of the history of baseball hand signals in general.

## Etymological evidence

The view that what are now baseball’s conventional hand signals have their origins in sign language used by the deaf is supported by the etymology of arguably the game’s two most basic signals. The signal for “out” in baseball is identical to the sign for the word *out* in ASL: *A*, or the thumbs-up handshape, is moved up and over the shoulder of the dominant hand. And the signal for “safe” bears a striking resemblance to the ASL sign for *free*—it is made with two open and flat hands with the palms down, which start crossed over one another and then move outward. The ASL sign for *free* involves the same hand placement and movement, the only difference being its two *F* handshapes (on each hand, thumb and index finger touch).

## Historical evidence

No single source is available from which we can learn in detail exactly how deaf players communicated with each other and with deaf umpires. It is reasonable to assume

they used sign language and gesturing to communicate plays, calls, and other relevant information. That such communication among umpires and players alike was mutual, and not unilaterally invented by umpires for the benefit of players (or vice versa), is important to note.

Deaf baseball began with sandlot games in 1865 at the Ohio Institution for the Deaf, in Columbus. Eventually, the players at the Ohio Institution would form the first deaf semiprofessional baseball team, the Ohio Independents, which played in baseball tours nationwide. Deaf players followed the same rules and played in the same style as did their hearing counterparts, except that they relied on sign language and gesturing to communicate.

In May 1867, the College Nine, known as the Columbia Baseball Club, made their claim as champions of the deaf-mute community.<sup>4</sup> They had played against teams including the Union and the Actives of Capitol Hill, both members of the National Association of Baseball Players (circa 1857–75), whose dissolution coincided with the formation of the National League in 1876. Games with the Columbia team were like other games except that the umpire used a red flag to indicate foul balls or strikes. The players had short expressive signals of their own, mostly between pitcher and catcher. For outfielders, the keen eyes of a deaf player were often more quickly understood than the distant voice of a nondeaf player.<sup>5</sup>

Hand signals and flags were probably used, unofficially, as early as 1865 in games involving deaf schools. By the 1870s, Henry Chadwick was describing, and prescribing, hand signals among players, and already catchers were signing to pitchers both the type and location of pitches, although initially it may have been more common for the pitcher to sign to the catcher.<sup>6</sup> David Anderson in *More Than Merkle* notes that “the umpires of 1908 were among those who had introduced the use of hand signals to communicate calls to a partner, the players, the bench, and the fans.”<sup>7</sup> Quoting *Spalding’s*, Dickson goes on to describe the impact that the use of hand signals had on spectators:

Signaling strike, safe, and out calls was an important means of adding to enjoyment of the game. . . . The signal system had been “invaluable assistance” to the umpires in “making their decisions understood when

the size of the crowd is such that it is impossible to make the human voice carry distinctly to all parts of the field.”<sup>8</sup>

And so the formal incorporation of hand signals into baseball had, in addition to its logistical value as a means of keeping players informed of calls by the umpire, the unintended advantage of signaling to fans as well what the calls were. “In my day,” Dummy Hoy observed in 1944, many years after his retirement, “there were no electric scoreboards to announce balls and strikes or outs.”<sup>9</sup> Moreover, the strain that umpires had to put on their vocal chords when their only means of communicating their calls was to bellow them was now considerably relieved.

A common and plausible assumption is that flags gave way to handkerchiefs, which eventually gave way to the hand signals. Along the way, a curious analog to that visual method of communicating calls made a short-lived appearance. Paul Dickson in *The Hidden Language of Baseball: How Signs and Sign Stealing Have Influenced the Course of Our National Pastime* offers this interesting quote from *Sporting Life* (September 14, 1901): “The umpire is to wear a red sleeve on the right arm and a white one on the left. . . . People at the far end of the park, unable to hear even Sheridan, the umpire, can see colors.” Dickson adds, however, that sleeve colors were likely intended for the benefit of spectators sitting far from the field and that there is no evidence to support the view that the colors were ever intended to signal the umpire’s calls for the benefit of the players.<sup>10</sup>

### Biographical background

We have reviewed a general history of baseball hand signals, showing how signals used in day-to-day sign communication among deaf individuals were adapted to baseball as it was played in deaf schools and eventually in the majors. We now turn to some of the individuals, deaf players and umpires alike, for a view from the inside, as it were, of their experience in baseball and of their lasting contribution to the very structure of the game.

Parley Pratt, a shoe-repair teacher and athletic coach at the Ohio Institution for the Deaf, was the first to teach baseball to deaf people, circa 1865.<sup>11</sup> He was also the

first deaf umpire. He and another deaf umpire, W. S. Lott, officiated games for deaf teams in the early 1870s. In 1871, Parley umpired his first game, between the Independents and the Crescents,<sup>12</sup> and ten days later Lott was called in to officiate a game between the Red Stars and the Crescents.<sup>13</sup>

The first deaf player to reach the big leagues was Ed “Dummy” Dundon, a pitcher for the Columbus Buckeyes of the American Association (1883–84). It was from Pratt that he had learned the signals while playing for the Ohio Institution for the Deaf in 1879. He continued to use them during his professional career—he instructed the third-base coach to signal balls and strikes to him when he was at bat. At least one author has asserted, “The universal hand signs used by umpires were developed at this time so that Dundon and school mate William ‘Dummy’ Hoy could follow the proceedings of the game despite their [deafness].”<sup>14</sup> Evidently hand signals were used by umpires for a time in the nineteenth century,

though not yet universally, and finally were established as an integral part of the game after they were revived in 1908.

Probably the best-known deaf player in history is Dummy Hoy, an outfielder who played fifteen seasons (1888–1902) in professional ball, with the Washington Senators, Buffalo Bisons, St. Louis Browns, Cincinnati Reds, Louisville Colonels, and Chicago White Sox. Hoy requested that the umpires, his coaches, and managers use hand signals during his at-bats, and he was probably the first player for whom the home-plate umpire used what is now the conventional hand signal for a strike. “Hoy,” according to Richard Marazzi in *The Rules and Lore of Baseball*, “has been credited with initiating the practice of umpires raising their right hands on a called strike. He asked the umpire to raise his right arm to signify a strike, since he had no way of knowing what the count was. The idea soon became a standard procedure.”<sup>15</sup> That Hoy initiated the practice has been criticized as an overstatement of his contribution to its eventual acceptance as the convention, but to speculate on his influence in this regard is warranted by the length of his career and the evident esteem of his peers.

In the beginning, Hoy would turn around to look at the umpire for each pitch to see what the call was. This put Hoy at a disadvantage, rushing him between having to look back at the umpire and then preparing for the next pitch. Most pitchers worked fast against him, giving him no break, and his batting average suffered.

In 1886, Hoy struggled at the plate (his exact batting average is disputed) with Oshkosh, but eventually the third-base coach remedied the situation by using hand signals to indicate the umpire’s call, the glance to third base from home plate being far less awkward. Moreover, he had the support of manager Frank Selee,<sup>16</sup> and in 1887 his batting average rose to .367.<sup>17</sup> In 1891, when Hoy was playing for the St. Louis Browns, manager Charles Comiskey, coaching third and following the plan that had worked so well for Hoy in Oshkosh, “signified a strike and ball with the index finger of both hands, the left meaning a ball and the right a strike.”<sup>18</sup>

Hoy taught sign language to his teammates, who often signed among themselves both on and off the field. It is interesting to speculate whether this team-shared sign

NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY, COOPERSTOWN, N.Y.



**Initially, Hoy when at bat had to turn around to look at the umpire’s hand signal in order to see the call, ball or strike. Opposing pitchers would rush him. In 1887, after adopting the system where he got the signals from the third-base coach, Hoy saw his batting average improve dramatically.**

NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY, COOPERSTOWN, N.Y.



**Manager Charles Comiskey, coaching third base, as was the practice for managers at the time, indicated balls and strikes to deaf player William “Dummy” Hoy by raising an index finger—the left one for a ball, the right one for a strike.**

language influenced the development of sign language for communicating in-game strategy.

Luther “Dummy” Taylor, a deaf-mute, pitched for the New York Giants (1900–8) and, briefly in 1902, for the Cleveland club of the newly formed American League. The Cleveland players were slow to learn sign language, however, and within months Taylor had been recruited back to the Giants. He taught sign language to his teammates and manager John McGraw. Taylor made use of a pad and pencil as well, which he always carried. Eventually the whole team learned to sign, with varying degrees of success—some of whom were deemed to be “all thumbs.” Hall of Fame pitcher Joe McGinnity was said to be careless with his fingerspelling.<sup>19</sup>

McGraw used various fingerspellings to communicate directions, which differed from the umpires’ hand signals for called plays. For example, while umpires might use actual signs to signal calls like “out” or “safe,” McGraw would spell out *s-t-e-a-l* for the runners to steal bases. “Hit and run” he would sign on his fingers.<sup>20</sup>

Like many deaf people, Taylor relied on facial expressions, body language, and other visual cues to a degree that others often found mystifying. Paul Dickson notes:

For his part, Taylor seemed to be able to “read” situations the others missed. His obituary in the *New York Times* commented that “sportswriters of Taylor’s time

observed that he gave up few stolen bases as he could divine a baserunner’s intention instantly by the facial expressions of the runner, the coaches and other players on the field.<sup>21</sup>

His deafness, then, insofar as it naturally led him to compensate by developing his ability to read situations, as Dickson puts it, may be considered to have actually given him distinct advantages over his opponents.

After Taylor retired, he coached the baseball team at the Illinois School for the Deaf. One of his players there was Dick Sipek, who would go on to play as an outfielder for the Cincinnati Reds in 1945. Sipek was the first deaf big-leaguer to escape the nickname “Dummy.”

Sipek, in an interview in 2003, described his experience with signs and signals in baseball. When he was at bat or on the basepaths, he would follow gestures made by the manager or his third-base coach. The manager would sign “swing the bat” to him to indicate that he was being put in as a pinch-hitter. On the bench, before Sipek’s turn at bat, Bill McKechnie, the Reds manager, would give him signals orally—Sipek reads lips well. Before the game, when the manager would meet with his players and go over the new signals for that day, Sipek had suggestions but frequently found them rejected.<sup>22</sup>

Sipek taught his teammates Bucky Walters, Frank McCormick, Kermit Wahl, and other players sign language. His roommate, Wahl, was fast to learn. Upset at being called out on a close play one day, Sipek used a sign for a profanity, which the umpire failed to comprehend while the Reds’ bench broke up in laughter.<sup>23</sup> Sipek was the last fully deaf player in the majors until Curtis Pride, approximately the eighth in major-league history, debuted for the Montreal Expos in 1993 (The other five players—William Deegan, George Leitner, Thomas Lynch, Herbert Murphy, and Reuben Stephenson—all were cup-of-coffee players in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.) In 1996 he became a free agent and signed with the Detroit Tigers. Both his third-base coach, Terry Francona, and his first-base coach, Ron Oester, used hand signals and signs to communicate with Pride during games.<sup>24</sup>

Hand signals have become integral to baseball; it is hard to imagine the game without them. Their function as the language whereby those in the game—players, coaches,

NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY, COOPERSTOWN, N.Y.



**Hoy taught his teammates sign language, which they began to use in game situations and even off the field.**

the manager, and umpires—can communicate when at least one of the parties is deaf is clear. That signing in baseball would eventually be adopted by the hearing as a superior means of communication may have been difficult to foresee back in 1865 when Parley Pratt and others at the Ohio Institution for the Deaf began to improvise. That single individual who can be designated as the one undisputed inventor of signing in baseball may be elusive, as is a definite date for its first clear appearance, and about broad assumptions that its origins lie solely in the deaf community we must exercise caution, but a look at the evidence—historical and even etymological as well as biographical and anecdotal—does indicate that the particular, highly inflected form of the language of baseball signing that is so familiar to us would have been impossible without the contributions of deaf people who have played, managed, coached, umpired, and loved the game. ■

## NOTES

1. For examples, see entries for Klem at the websites of the Baseball Hall of Fame, Bioproject (SABR's Baseball Biography Project), and Baseball Almanac:  
www.baseballhalloffame.org/hofers/detail.jsp?playerId=427281,  
http://bioproj.sabr.org/bioproj.cfm?a=v&v=l&pid=7595&bid=1221,  
http://www.baseball-almanac.com/quotes/quoklem.shtml (accessed 2 June 2008).
2. Robert L. Tiemann, "Paul A. Hines," in *Nineteenth Century Stars* (Cleveland: Society for American Baseball Research, 1989), 60.
3. *Rochester Evening Express*, 9 July 1860, quoted in *A Game of Inches: The Stories Behind the Innovations That Shaped Baseball—The Game on the Field*, by Peter Morris (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2006), 340.
4. It is important to note that, today, culturally deaf people do not embrace the term deaf-mute. The preferred term is deaf. However, culturally deaf people of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries did refer to themselves and one another as "deaf mutes."
5. *The National Deaf Mute Gazette* 1, no. 6 (June 1867).
6. Morris, *A Game of Inches*, 47–48, 341.
7. David W. Anderson, *More Than Merkle: A History of the Best and Most Exciting Baseball Season in Human History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 87.
8. *Ibid.*, 87–88.
9. Joyce Gordon McBride, *Courier*, 11 July 1987, p. 6.
10. Paul Dickson, *The Hidden Language of Baseball: How Signs and Sign Stealing Have Influenced the Course of Our National Pastime* (New York: Walker, 2003).
11. *The Ohio Chronicle* 10, no. 32, 10 March 1900, p. 1.
12. *The Mute Chronicle* (also known as *The Ohio Chronicle*), no. 3, 6 May 1871, p. 2.
13. *The Mute Chronicle*, no. 34, 13 May 1871, p. 2.
14. Joseph Santry, in *anchors Aweigh*, July 1988, p. 15.
15. Richard Marazzi, *The Rules and Lore of Baseball* (New York: Stein and Day, 1980), 21.
16. Robert L. Tiemann and Mark Rucker, *Nineteenth-Century Stars* (Kansas City, Mo.: Society for American Baseball Research, 1989), 64.
17. Randy Fisher, "William 'Dummy' Hoy and the Invention of the Umpire Hand Signals," *Herald Newspapers* (Toledo edition) 71, no. 9, 28 February 1992, pp. 1, 10.
18. *St Louis Daily Globe-Democrat*, 9 April 1891.
19. Matthew S. Moore and Robert F. Panara, *Great Deaf Americans*, 2d ed. (Silver Spring, Md.: Deaf Life Press, 1996).
20. Lawrence S. Ritter, in *Perennial* (2002), 101; originally published in *The Glory of Their Times: The Story of the Early Days of Baseball Told by the Men Who Played It* (New York: Macmillan, 1966).
21. Paul Dickson, *Signs: Baseball's Hidden Language* (New York: Walker, 2003), 74.
22. Randy Fisher, interview with Dick Sipek, via TTY, in March 2003.
23. William B. Mead, *Even the Browns (The Zany True Story of Baseball in the Early Forties)* (Chicago: Contemporary Books, 1978), 213–14.
24. Brown Syder, "A World of Silence Doesn't Slow Pride," *Baltimore Sun*, 6 June 1996, p. 5D.

# Jack Kerouac

## The Beat of Fantasy Baseball

Jim Reisler

“**B**uck Maxfield has the fastest, burnigest, whistlingest speed-ball I’ve ever seen come down the aisle,” a sportswriter calling himself Jack Lewis wrote in 1937. “He’s a big, tough, raw-boned kid, and has what it takes to lift his big leg and burn it down.”

If you don’t recognize the names Maxfield or, for that matter, Lewis, worry not. Both are creations of the future literary icon Jack Kerouac (1922–69), who wrote those lines at age 15, when he dreamed of becoming a sportswriter with a baseball beat—a path markedly different from the one he took as the writer of that landmark book of youthful restlessness, *On the Road*, and as a leading voice of the Beat Generation in the 1950s.

Buck and other fictional players, such as the base-stealer Pancho Villa and Pittsburgh slugger Frank “Pie” Tibbs—a takeoff on Pie Traynor, perhaps?—are all creations of Kerouac’s decades-long obsession with fantasy baseball. Years before anyone had ever heard of Strat-O-Matic or Rotisserie baseball, Kerouac’s New York Chevies, Cleveland Studebakers, St. Louis LaSalles, and Pittsburgh Plymouths ruled his fantasy baseball universe—revealing both the hidden passion of a great American writer and an artist in search of a style.

The evidence is a series of approximately twenty of Kerouac’s fantasy-baseball artifacts, which constituted a healthy chunk of the

exhibition *Beatific Soul: Jack Kerouac on the Road* at the New York Public Library on Fifth Avenue. The exhibition, which was on view last fall through this spring (November 9, 2007, through March 16, 2008) to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of *On the Road*, consisted of items taken from the library’s Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection of English and American Literature, which includes the Jack Kerouac archive, purchased in 2001.

### “Baseball Chatter” and More

Kerouac’s celebration of the American road is well known. His interest in fantasy baseball, which he played occasionally with fellow Beat writer Philip Whalen, is



Jack Kerouac around a corner from Tompkins Park, 1953 New York, in disguise (looking into camera door) — this is one profile of his intelligence as seen at hand, too of *Beatific Soul* writing. Allen Ginsberg

COURTESY OF THE ALLEN GINSBERG ESTATE

**Before achieving fame as a leading literary voice of the Beat Generation, Jack Kerouac aspired to be a sportswriter and already as a teenager had created a highly detailed imaginary baseball universe.**

not. Kerouac's ardor for the game emerges in the exhibition's yellowed newspapers, *Jack Lewis's Baseball Chatter*, which resemble period copies of *The Sporting News*, and cover the doings of the forty or so fantasy games each of Kerouac's six or eight teams played most years. The baseball items include detailed team rosters, explanations of his increasingly complex, self-made fantasy games, and even a fictional correspondence with Tom Yawkey, who owned the Boston Red Sox. (Kerouac, a native of Lowell, Massachusetts, was a lifelong Sox fan.)

"We knew Jack Kerouac had a strong interest in baseball—he wrote short stories about it, and *On the Road* contains scenes about playing baseball—but we weren't aware of the extent," says Isaac Gewirtz, the exhibition curator and author of its companion volume. "The young Kerouac wanted to be a sportswriter. He has a punchy style and there are flashes of originality. With baseball, he is a writer trying to find his voice."

Along with diaries, photos, and paintings of the Beats and amidst the exhibition's iconic 120-foot *On the Road* manuscript scroll, on which Kerouac composed and typed a late draft of the novel in three weeks before amending it in typescripts, are penetrating glimpses into Kerouac's emerging gift for vivid description. The teenage Kerouac typed the broadsheets on the back of racing forms taken from his father's printing business in Lowell. Some examples, taken mostly from 1938:

Of another "Buck," a fantasy player named Buck Barbara of the Philadelphia Pontiacs, Kerouac writes that "he almost drove Charley Fiskell, Boston's hot corner man, into a shambled heap in the last game with his sizzling drives through the grass."

Of Bob Chase, an accomplished pitcher for the Chevies, Kerouac claims "to be puzzled by his habit of



**Kerouac used an intricate array of cards and boxes to record the results of an at-bat. The cards on the left, circa 1936, probably reflect Kerouac's early technique of play, which involved matchsticks and a marble. The cards on the right, circa 1956, probably reflect his later technique, which yielded a range of probability outcomes that corresponded to each player's level of skill.**

excessively praising" his opponents. "The other day, [Chase] was moaning about the Pittsburgh Plymouths, saying they were the vanguard of rifted humanity, and complaining that they should not be roaming free in this great land of ours," Kerouac adds. "Yet today he defeated them by a one-sided score and smiled wanly."

Speaking of the Chryslers, Kerouac writes that the team, "by some strange[r] reason than I can think, did not join the league this season," with its former players spread to all directions.

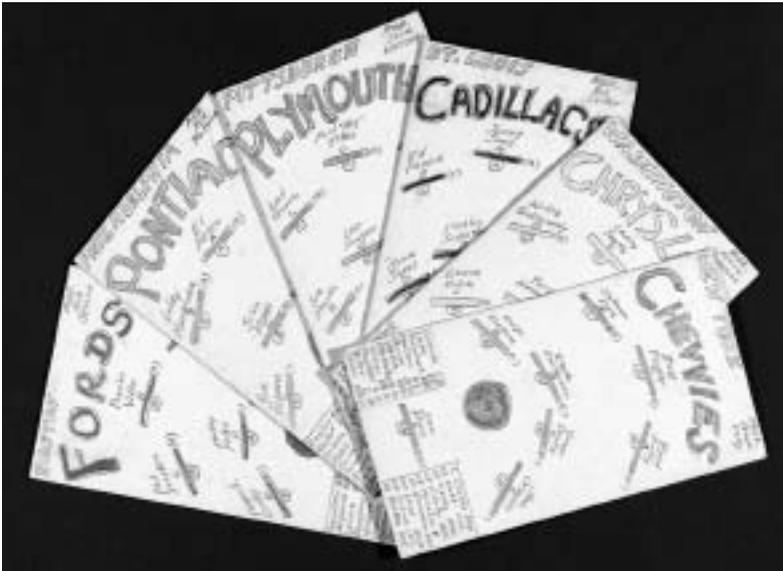
Lefty Fayne, the old southpaw, is with the LaSalles, Robin King has retired to his farm in Iowa. . . . Mike Kuzinecz, and old Sam Wyatt, also have retired. And Vic Bodwell, an old [St. Louis] Cad slugger, is playing golf. And so many more.

Frank "Pie" Tibbs's hitting "has been absolutely flawless," Kerouac writes in 1939. "He wields a long black bat, swinging from the portside, and swings in a wide, upward arc which spells distraction for every pitcher he has met this season so far."

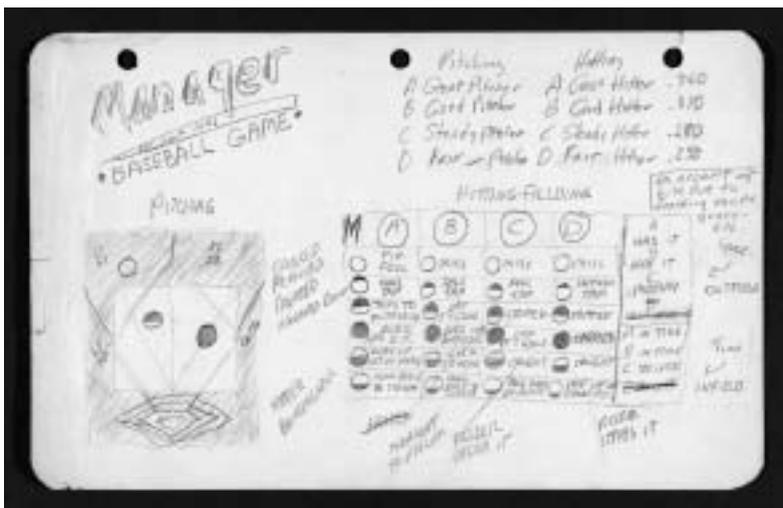
In Kerouac's teenage fantasy-baseball world, teams took the names of cars, as in the Chevies, Pontiacs, and Fords. In the 1950s and adulthood, he continued to cover this baseball universe in fictional newspapers, but

COURTESY OF JOHN G. SAMPAS, LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ESTATES OF JACK AND STELLA KEROUAC

COURTESY OF JOHN G. SAMPAS, LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ESTATES OF JACK AND STELLA KEROUAC



**Social change in Kerouac's fantasy league often mirrored, or was mirrored by, social change in real-life Major League Baseball. Coinciding with an influx of Latino players into MLB was the addition of shortstop "El Negro" and utility man Jorge Orizaba to the roster of Kerouac's Philadelphia Pontiacs.**



**This diagram of the board that Kerouac's fantasy baseball is played on comes complete with a statistical definition of four skill levels of batters, four levels of pitchers, and fielding results.**

he changed the teams' names to colors, including the appropriately named New York Greens and Chicago Blues—because, Gewirtz surmises, “he probably thought they were less childish, more realistic names.” Taking most of his players' names from listings in telephone books, Kerouac occasionally planted an inside man or two, as in Villa, the Pontiacs' center fielder and, not surprisingly, the league's fastest man.

In some cases Kerouac drafted friends and acquaintances into his league. Named as manager of Pittsburgh and later the Chicago Blues was one Seymour Wyse; the real Wyse was Kerouac's high-school classmate at Horace Mann School in New York City, and the man credited with introducing the young writer to live jazz. Riding the bench for the 1953 Plymouths is Robert Giroux, Kerouac's editor at Harcourt, Brace. Playing for the Washington Chryslers is Stanley Twardowicz, an abstract painter Kerouac admired; in the early 1960s the two men found themselves living near one another on Long Island and became friends.

In the late 1950s, Kerouac traded Villa to the Boston Fords, perhaps because by then he had appointed himself manager. Around the same time, an influx of Latino players entered the league, as Roberto Clemente, Orlando Cepeda, and others were making an impact in baseball's real world. For some reason, Kerouac made the Philadelphia Pontiacs the prime repository of Latino talent, who included a Cuban shortstop named “El Negro” and utility man Jorge Orizaba, the name of the Mexico City street where Kerouac lived in the spring of 1956.

### Stat Man

From talking to Kerouac's relatives, Gewirtz estimates that Kerouac started playing fantasy baseball at around age nine. One reason it held his interest for so long, Gewirtz adds, was Kerouac's lifelong fascination with lists and statistics. “You could write a whole book on Kerouac as a list maker,” Gewirtz says.

“Every week, it seems, he was compiling a list, from favorite foods to things to do and his favorite books.” Said Kerouac to Whalen on his zeal for the fantasy game, “I've got an obsession with statistics.”

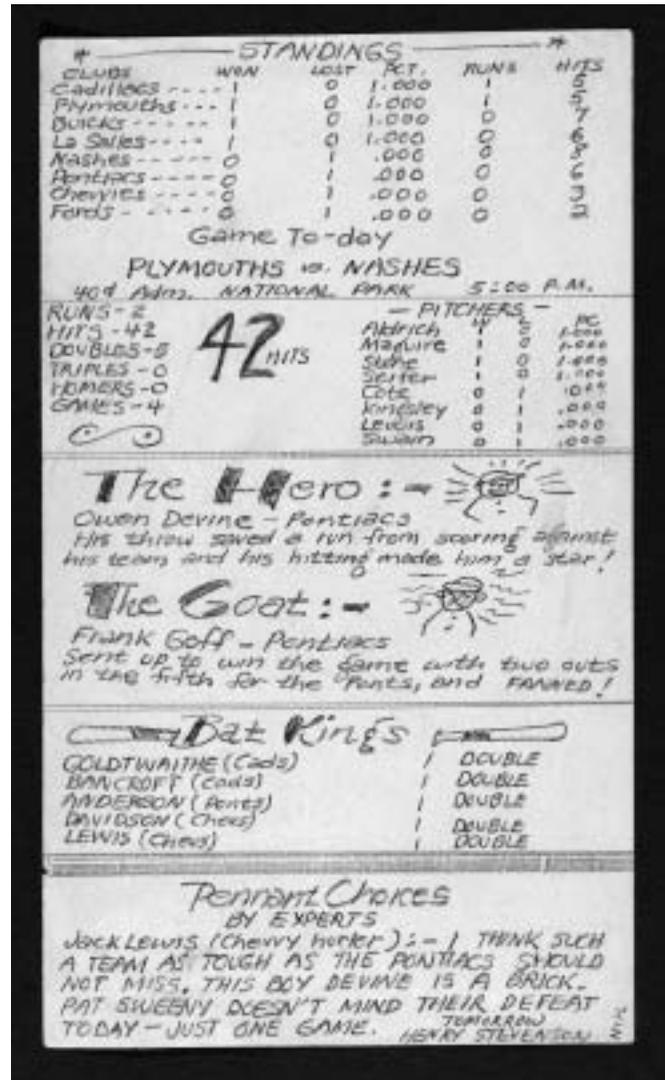
Critics might argue that, with his slangy and occasionally clichéd prose, Kerouac was satirizing the glib sportswriting style of the day. But Gewirtz thinks otherwise, maintaining that Kerouac's writing reflects a

genuine enthusiasm for sports and his teenage goal of becoming a sportswriter. A gifted athlete, Kerouac starred as a running back on the Lowell High School football team before attending Horace Mann for a year, where he played baseball—“not a particularly good hitter,” Gewirtz says of Kerouac, “but strong in the field”—and earning a football scholarship to Columbia. Soon after Kerouac’s playing days came to an abrupt end in his sophomore year in 1942, when he broke his tibia, feuded with Columbia coach Lou Little, and left school, he joined the *Lowell Sun* as a sportswriter.

Finally, Kerouac had the kind of job he had dreamed about as a teenager, but it was short-lived—he inexplicably bolted the position after a few months. He failed to show up for an interview with a local baseball coach one day. It turned out that he had skipped town. A day or so later he appeared with a construction crew building the Pentagon in Virginia. Still, he retained his love for fantasy baseball and sports, often catching big-league games in New York and listening to baseball games and boxing matches with fellow beat Neal Cassady, the inspiration for *On the Road* character Dean Moriarty. The two men also enjoyed throwing around a football.

As fantasy baseball has developed over time, so Kerouac constantly tinkered with his personal version of it. In the 1950s and ’60s, a rudimentary design—bats were matchsticks, and the ball was a marble—gradually gave way to a more complex, two-man system involving cards, complete with player-skill levels, ball/strike ratios, and game scenarios such as “infield tap” and “pop foul.” And, as Major League Baseball integrated, so did Kerouac’s fantasy league—but earlier, in 1943, the same year that Bill Veeck said he was blocked in his effort to buy the Phillies and integrate the team with stars from the Negro Leagues. Two years later, the Dodgers signed Jackie Robinson to a minor-league contract, and it was not until 1947 that he played in his first major-league game.

Gewirtz and his staff were able to piece together the broad evolution of Kerouac’s fantasy game from the writer’s unpublished memoir, *Memory Babe*, which details his interests as a teenager and how he played the game. In addition to reporting on his fantasy games, the adolescent Kerouac incorporated baseball into other early literary endeavors. “Freddy watched Lefty’s first



COURTESY OF JOHN G. SAMPAS, LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ESTATES OF JACK AND STELLA KEROUAC

“Many a youth made up such baseball cards,” baseball reporter Stan Isaacs once wrote. “The charm of Kerouac’s cards was the imagination he brought to them, creating wondrous personalities, keeping records, writing stories about the action.”

pitch come bouncing back to him,” he writes in one such novella, “hissing sibilantly as it cut towards him in wild capers.”

### Digging Mel Allen

Meanwhile, Kerouac sprinkled periodic references to baseball throughout his writing. In a 1951 letter to Cassady, Kerouac writes that he had been “digging the World Series and the tones of the various announcers”—particularly the “old reliable, southern-accent” Mel Allen. “How I dig all this,” Kerouac writes. “My mind, wrapped in wild observation of everything, is drawn

by the back-country announcer, back to the regular, brakeman things of life.”

In a 1959 magazine piece, Kerouac writes, “When Bobby Thomson hit that home run in 1951, I trembled with joy and couldn’t get over it for days and wrote poems about how it is possible for the human spirit to win after all!” (See Tom Harris’s interview with Bobby Thomson at page 70-72.)

Kerouac died on October 21, 1969, five days after the Mets won their first World Series, of an abdominal hemorrhage brought on by alcoholism; he was only 47 and living in St. Petersburg, Florida, with his third wife, Stella, and his mother. To the end, baseball was one of the few constants of an otherwise rambling, psychologically unsettled life.

In recent years, columnists and writers have begun to explore Kerouac’s interest in baseball. In 2002, Stan Isaacs, the former *Newsday* baseball reporter, penned a colorful piece for TheColumnists.com about a fantasy game he had played against Kerouac on a wintry afternoon in 1961, when the writer was living in Huntington, New York. “He conducted a running commentary about the players as the game proceeded,” Isaacs writes. In one case, Kerouac’s Chicago Blues staged a rally that started when shortstop Francis X. Cudley—“an Irishman from Boston who stood up at the plate very erect, like a Jesuit,” according to Kerouac—fumbled a grounder by Johnny Keggs.

Johnny Keggs? “An old guy; his neck is seared from the Arkansas sun,” Kerouac told Isaacs. Keggs’s brother Earl, a former player, “now is back in Texarkana, selling hardware,” Kerouac said. For the record, Isaacs’s Pittsburgh Browns were too much for the Blues, and they won easily, 9–2.

“Many a youth made up such baseball cards,” Isaacs writes. “The charm of Kerouac’s cards was the imagination he brought to them, creating wondrous personalities, keeping records, writing stories about the action.”

In 2003, the Lowell Spinners (Class A, New York–Pennsylvania League) produced an instant collectible—the Jack Kerouac bobblehead doll. Ordering one thousand of the dolls for a giveaway in a game against Williamsport, the Spinners inadvertently created a new hit Ebay item in the process. In a recent online sighting,

Kerouac bobbleheads were going for about \$100.

But nowhere are Kerouac’s passion for baseball, emerging writing style, and acute sense of humor more evident than in the ongoing fictional correspondence, in 1940, between Kerouac, purporting to represent the interests of the Detroit Tigers, and Tom Yawkey of the Red Sox, along with a character named Jack Dudworth of the Yankees.

In a letter to the Yankees, Kerouac proposes trading future Hall of Famers Hank Greenberg and Charlie Gehringer and three others for another legend, Joe DiMaggio. “Dear John,” Dudworth writes back. “I would not let go of DiMaggio for those stumblebums if you threw in city hall, the library, B&M carshop and the Ford MC of Dt [Motor Company of Detroit].”

That means Greenberg and Gehringer stayed with the Tigers, right? ■

# Educated Yelling

## Portrait of a Heckler

Bill Nowlin

Creative heckling is one of the more interesting features of a baseball game. Fans yell things at many sports events, but baseball's timing and pace make it more congenial for heckling than do other team sports; so does the focus on the individual performance. Creative heckling—educated yelling—can be entertaining, even an art form.

True, some people find heckling obnoxious, and it often is. There are drunken fans, who tend not to be amusing and often just embarrass themselves. There are fans who get their kicks showering verbal abuse on the rich and famous from the relatively safe setting of the grandstand seats, as though belittling others were the path to taking pride in themselves. There are fans who have nothing interesting to say and fans who are inarticulate, unimaginative, and just plain wrong—I'm often ashamed by the "Yankees suck" chants of some of my fellow Red Sox fans. Other fans aren't malicious but just enjoy being loud and attracting attention to themselves.

A truly clever heckle, though, can cause even the most dour and disapproving of fans to crack a smile. And for people like Robert Szasz, heckling offers engagement and involvement in the game as well as interactions with players and other fans in a way that's just plain fun.

As a fan in Boston, watching the 2003 Red Sox road telecasts from Tropicana Field in Tampa Bay, I kept hearing this one loud voice from the crowd every time Sox second baseman Todd Walker came up to bat. It took a few at-bats for me to realize there was a pattern here: Some motormouth was unloading nonstop every time Walker—and only Walker—came up to bat. I found myself looking forward to Walker's next at-bat. I called my 12-year-old son Emmet in from the other room. He's no baseball fan, but he became highly amused at the patter, and it became a bit of a ritual: Next time the Sox were in

Tampa Bay, when Todd Walker was due up, I'd call in Emmet to get ready for the heckler. He was hard to ignore. You could hear him loud and clear. After a couple of games, the Red Sox TV cameras focused in on him, and this anonymous front-row fan in a Devil Rays jersey became a minor celebrity during NESN broadcasts back to New England from Florida.

Come 2004, and the first telecast from Tampa on May 18, there he was again—the Tampa Bay Heckler—this time giving the bearded Sox center fielder Johnny Damon a hard time. I wanted to know more about this guy and, thinking there might be a story there, I telephoned the Devil Rays to learn more about the Tampa Bay Heckler. Needless to say, they knew right away who I meant, and they gave me Rob Szasz's phone number.

Szasz is a land developer and builder in the Tampa-St. Petersburg area. He grew up in Toronto but came to the United States back in 1984. He's been a baseball fan since 1977, when the Toronto Blue Jays came into major-league ball (and when hockey was indisputably the biggest show in town). The move to the Tampa area brought about a change in loyalties, and Rob now roots for the Lightning instead of the Maple Leafs, and for the Devil Rays instead of the Blue Jays.

He was one of the Devil Rays' first season ticket holders, having seen a newspaper ad that ran in the mid to late 1980s when efforts to attract a major-league franchise to Florida got under way. Rob responded with a \$100 deposit on two seats. He was one of the first thousand people to put some money down, and drew number 113 when a lottery was held among those charter applicants. He went down to the Trop and chose a couple of seats. A few seasons later, there was some mix-up and he complained to ownership; they sent him a letter saying he could sit wherever he wanted, and he took two seats

in the front row, behind home plate, just to the visitor's side of the tunnel that is directly behind the plate.

"All the tumblers fell into place, and so it worked out," he says. He was drawn to the two franchises he saw from their birth—the Blue Jays and the Devil Rays—in part because of the underdog status they inevitably held as new teams in the majors. "Being now somewhat a Tampa Bay native and seeing what the Lightning have done and also what the Buccaneers have done, it makes me that much more of a fervent fan."

Szasz has his priorities. "I hit about 80 percent of the games. I go to a lot of games. The only games I miss [are] generally when my kids have their own events—be it a soccer game or a Little League baseball game or something at the school. I've got three boys—5, 7, and 9. I always miss the games for the kids."

How did he become a heckler? Was he always this way? "I've always been boisterous and supportive of our team. The Blue Jays, too. When I was a kid, I just remember people would stand up and just yell things out. To your own team, not to the other team. Things like, 'Come on, you can do better than that. What kind of throw was that? You're not supposed to throw that pitch when you're behind in the count.' Educated yelling. I do the same thing to these guys—the other team. 'What're you reaching for? You're not going to hit the ball out there. It's going to be coming inside on you!' Of course, then they pitch outside and strike him out.

"I was always making a lot of noise. Fans are getting closer to the players than ever before. You're really close to the players, so they really pick up what you're saying. And now with the cameras and the microphones everywhere, even the media pick you up a lot too. The proximity of where I sit, with the players right there, and the microphones there—people pick up on what I say. I think that's what got me the attention.

"What got me really going on it was last year [2003], there was a series early in the year. Anaheim was in town. The first game of the series, Brad Fullmer was at third base and there was a very close play, and he was sliding into home plate to the catcher, Toby Hall. Somehow, as he was sliding home, he tried to slide around the tag and touch the plate, and he missed the plate. Toby reached over and touched him and the umpire called him out. He's a



TAMPA BAY RAYS / SKIP MILLO

**Tampa heckler and Rays fan Rob Szasz carefully researches the opposition before hitting Tropicana Field. "You have to know everything about these guys," he says. "You have to find the one button to tweak to get their attention."**

big guy, and he just jumped up and he was screaming. He was just going out of his mind, crazy, yelling at the umpire. They threw him out of the game, and a couple of players had to come out and literally drag him off the field. So the very next game, he was back in the game again and I just thought I'd have a little bit of fun with him, and say, 'Don't touch that plate, Brad. It's really hot'—in my really loud voice. I could see that he was hearing what I was saying, and everybody was kind of laughing about it. So I kept going off with a lot of little fun stuff like that. In between innings, I was sitting in my chair and my phone rings. I was there with my son and a couple of friends. My wife had called me on the phone from home and she said, 'You know, you're on TV. They have you on TV, yelling at Brad Fullmer and they think it's funny. They're really enjoying it.' I said, 'Really?'

## Ten Commandments of Heckling

### **I. Thou shalt not use profanity.**

Remember this one thing: baseball is still a family sport. Father and son, mom and dad, the whole family. Nobody wants to hear you spouting off a bunch of @\$&%!

### **II. Thou shalt not insult the mother.**

This should be obvious. What good would come from saying something about someone else's mother? Is that what we want? I don't think so. Leave Mom out of it. We don't need any of this garbage at our games. We want people to appreciate what we do, not resent us for it.

### **III. Thou shalt be intelligent.**

Do I really need to explain this? Know what you are talking about. Remember, credibility lends respect to your task.

### **IV. Thou shalt love baseball.**

Is there any doubt about this? Who in this great country would disparage America's pastime? If you don't love baseball, what are you doing here?

### **V. Thou shalt be aware of the people around you.**

This is a really touchy one. Even though some of the funniest stuff you have may be about overweight guys or bald guys, the person next to you may not think it's terribly funny.

### **VI. Thou shalt be witty.**

Only one rule to remember here: *if you are the only one laughing, it wasn't funny.*

### **VII. Thou shalt not overkill.**

Listen, if somebody does something funny in the first inning, you should not keep ragging on it in the fifth. The more you say something, the less effective it becomes. You must be aware that the same stuff gets really old after a couple of games—especially in a series against the same team. Unless something is really working on one or two guys, put it away for a couple or three games.

### **VIII. Thou shalt be friendly.**

The best way to make these guys listen to you and divert their attention from the task at hand is to be just as nice as you can be. When you look into the dugout, wave and say, "Hi guys!"

### **IX. Thou shalt not cross the line.**

That line is the line of brutality. Look, the players know that heckling is part of the game. Don't make it personal between you and the players. Remember, they have bats, you don't.

### **X. Thou shalt remember the children.**

No matter what you want to believe about role models, the children are watching and listening. They hear what you say and see what you do. Be aware of that when you sit in the stands. If you don't know whether you fit the bill, just ask yourself, would you want your best friend's kid sister or brother to sit next to you at the next ball game? Well, would you?

SOURCE: Chris Snead, *The Bleacher Bible* (Lubbock, Texas: Cotten, 1997)

"The next game I go to, people in the crowd are encouraging me, because it's kind of funny. I said, sure, what the heck. You're sitting here the whole time, listening to [other] people yell things. I've never lowered myself to the level of yelling nasty things or cursing. That's not me. I don't curse. I really try to keep it funny. I've often got the kids with me, too. I remember being a kid, yelling at the players. You yell at your own players to get their attention. I remember Dave Stieb, who was one of our pitchers for Toronto when I was little. A bunch of us would get together and go, 'Hey, Dave!' really loud. People would look over and we'd go, 'You're the greatest!' Nobody ever said, 'You suck! You stink!' I never heard that before when I was a kid. To hear it today, well, it's pretty childish when people just get drunk and yell

stupid things like that. I don't do that at all. I just thought, I'll have a little bit more fun with it, and, from that time on, people come to the stadium actually looking for me to do this stuff. It's hilarious.

"Last weekend, we had Fan Appreciation Day and I went down there early, because it's for season ticket holders and I always get some autographs. One of our pitchers, Rob Bell, said to me, 'Man, I loved your line on Ken Harvey, the 90210 line.' They know all my lines. Ken Harvey, who plays for the Kansas City Royals, he went to Beverly Hills High School. So when he comes to bat, I always say to him, 'How's Mr. 90210, Hollywood Harvey, can you get me an autograph from Tori Spelling?' All sorts of Beverly Hills jokes like that. It was really getting to him too. It was really funny. Strictly

COURTESY OF THE BOSTON RED SOX



**On hearing Szasz call him “Todd Walker Superman, hitting home runs like he never did before!” Walker laughed and had to leave the batter’s box to compose himself.**

humor. All the players from the Devil Rays, they know all my lines for all the players. It’s pretty funny. They all listen to it all the time, and they get a big kick out of it.”

Does Rob ever heckle a Ray?

“No, never heckle a Devil Ray. It doesn’t matter how bad they are, what kind of mistake they make. I might say something under my breath, bite my lip, but I totally support the team 100 percent. I support the organization. Because they know what I’m about—the organization—they don’t ever tell me to stop what I’m doing. They never frown upon it, and they actually protect me.

“You might have heard the stories about when the Yankees were in town. It was last year and I was heckling Raul Mondesi. This was shortly before he did that walking-off-the-team routine and they booted him off the team. I did some research on him and I found that, for some reason, he used to have one of the worst averages

in baseball with runners in scoring position. So I was all over him about that. He came to bat a few times with the bases loaded. Nothing. All the base hits he got were with nobody on base. It was pretty funny. It really came through, just like his numbers had shown. So I was heckling him, and during one of the games—I think it was the second game of the series—I was all over him, and it was in the third or fourth inning. I was there with my son and I see this guy come down the tunnel right next to where I sit. He’s standing there and he has a pager on his belt, and it has a Yankees logo on it. Within a minute after he shows up, the head of the Devil Rays security shows up—who I know because I always see him down there also—and a couple more security guards show up, and they’re there just sort of talking over by the side. They’re there for the majority of the game.

“Then when the seventh or eighth inning comes along, I have to get my son home for school the next day, so I get up and leave. As I walk up the tunnel from where our seats are, when you get to the top of the tunnel, off to one side is the Devil Rays locker room and on the other side is the visiting team’s locker room. When I get to the top of the tunnel, all of these security people just followed me up the tunnel. I couldn’t figure out what was going on. One group of Yankees security people walks off to one side and our guys disperse.

“As I finished walking up the tunnel, the head of our security comes up behind me and asked, ‘Do you know who that guy was?’ I said, ‘No, who was that?’ ‘That’s the head of Yankees security.’ I said, ‘No! You’re kidding!’ ‘Yeah, your heckling was getting back to New York and Brian Cashman got the word to send down the security guard to shut you up. When we heard about it, we came down here to say that no one’s going to come into our house to tell our fans what they can or can’t do.’ It was coming across on the YES Network really heavy back in New York, and they didn’t like it at all. I don’t know if it was Steinbrenner or what, but Cashman called down for the head of Yankees security to come down and shut me up.

“That was pretty big. It was on the Internet. It was in the paper when it happened. But the organization’s always been there to back me and . . . they treat me well. I get a lot of little perks around the stadium. They put me

BEN VAN HOUTEN



**During a bad night at the plate, Bret Boone indicated he wasn't amused by Szasz's running commentary on his performance, but Szasz says most players have come to know him and laugh. He doesn't get personal. "I appreciate a player who understands what I'm doing," he says.**

in a commercial for the Devil Rays during the off-season with Rocco Baldelli, our center fielder. A lot of little fun things. They like it. They know that I'm good for the team. They think I'm good for baseball. Doing my thing, the fans kind of rally around it. They get a little more into the game. They're not doing great right now. The crowds aren't the biggest, so I guess, if you have a few enthusiastic fans who give out a positive attitude, I guess they like that.

"I think it's very poor taste to go to someone else's park, just to be loud and make trouble there. People call me the tenth man on the field at the Trop. I just know that we have a winning record at home, and we have the most

atrocious road record in baseball. If I do help at home, that's great."

Did Szasz ever have a player go after him?

"Not like what happened in Oakland. I've had a few players get pretty upset with me. Bret Boone. Where I sit, you look right into the visitor's dugout. One series last year when Seattle came to town, one game he struck out twice, three times. His fourth time at bat, he actually made contact and hit the ball out to center field. Rocco Baldelli caught it and he was out. As he was running back into the dugout, I'm just harassing him all the way back into the dugout as I sometimes do, and I said, 'Nice job, Bret. At least this time you made contact.' I was just working him all the way back into the dugout. He gets to the dugout and he throws his helmet all the way across the dugout, towards the box that holds the helmets. He comes racing down towards the end of the dugout, which is close to me, and he's just yelling all kinds of profanity at me and he throws me the double bird. So he was pretty upset about that. He wasn't too happy.

"Terrence Long from Oakland, he came over and stood on the edge of the railing and he did the old slashing-the-throat routine. He tried to get the usher to throw me out, but the usher was just laughing at him. He wasn't too happy about it.

"That was last year. Most players this year know me and they all smile at me and laugh. None of them get that upset with me. This last weekend, Toronto was in town. Generally I go after Eric Hinske. He's been one of my favorites the last couple of years. They gave him a day off and I was trying to figure out who I would play with a little bit.

"I don't get personal, I don't get nasty. I've had so many players come up to me. . . . Somebody from one of the local news channels supplied me an NESN tape from when Boston was in town last time and I was wearing the Johnny Damon disciple beard. They supplied me a tape of Remy and the boys having a good time with it. There was one play when I was doing the thing with Johnny and he struck out, and he's looking back at me with a big smile on his face just laughing. That's good. He struck out, but he's a professional. He knows what I'm about. He knows it's part of the game. He's just laughing. It's not the end of the world."

## Pete Adelis's Seven Rules of Scientific Heckling

1. **No profanity.**
2. **Nothing purely personal.**
3. **Keep pouring it on.**
4. **Know your players.**
5. **Don't be shouted down.**
6. **Take it as well as give it.**
7. **Give the old-timer a chance—he was a rookie once.**

Pete Adelis enjoyed an eventful career as chief heckler for the Philadelphia Athletics in the late 1940s and early '50s. In 1948 his work had earned him a season ticket from Connie Mack, who enjoined him "not to get personal." From a photographer's box above the visitors' dugout, the six-foot, 258-pound Adelis would go to work. When Detroit was in town, he would yell advice to Skeeter Webb, the A's utility infielder, about the Tigers manager. "Tear into him, Skeeter," he would say. "He's only your father-in-law," which he was. "If you weighed what you hit, you'd be a skeleton" was his offering to Tigers outfielder Dick Wakefield. An opposing player might threaten him or throw dirt at him, but he refused to be distracted from his job, which was to distract them from theirs.

In May 1948 he traveled with the team to New York to heckle the Yankees, who were so impressed that they recruited him to come back to heckle the Indians when they were in town. Remembering that Lou Boudreau had earlier tried to have him banned from Shibe Park, he brought his A game, wearing a World War I German helmet on which was painted "Hey, Dopey," "Dopey" being his name for Larry Doby, and the helmet a reference to the last time Doby had faced the A's, when, having lost a ball in the sun, it bounced off his head and into the stands in a game-deciding play. Whether Adelis's taunt had racial overtones is a question that J. G. Taylor Spink in his article about him in *The Sporting News* passed over in silence. The claim that Adelis was recruited by the Phillies in the early 1950s to go after Jackie Robinson and other African American players has been made but not documented.

SOURCE: *The Sporting News*, 8 September 1948.

What about Todd Walker?

"Todd Walker was a great sport. He came into town, it was shortly after that series with the Marlins. I got onto him because he tagged up and tried to score when you guys [Red Sox] were winning like 20–1. It was a bizarre score. A total blowout. It was a pretty big deal at the time. I called him the 'Tag 'em Up Kid.' It was funny. He came into town and he was batting very well, like .320 or something, so I was heckling him and I don't think he got a hit the entire series. I was going '0 for 1, 0 for 2,' and so forth. By the time he left town, it was like 0 for 15 or 0 for 16. At the very end of the season, when he came back, he'd been hitting home runs a lot. I used one line on him, and he actually had to back out of the box—I got a laugh out of him—I went, 'You got Batman, you got Rod-man, now we got Todd Walker Superman, hitting home runs like he never did before!' He backed out of the box and started laughing. He had to compose himself. One of his last at-bats—he was on deck—I called over and said, 'Hey, Todd, you've been a great sport this year. Good luck in the postseason.' He turned to me and tipped his cap and said thank you and then went back to doing his business. He was a very good guy.

"I appreciate a player who understands what I'm doing. It's funny. Usually the second or third time around, it's hard to heckle the same guy, because he's expecting it. By that time, he's already through it. The shock value is the best. When you can get someone when they're not expecting it, then they have a hard time dealing with it. I think Todd, the first time, when I had the countdown, he didn't know what was going on. When he came back and I was calling him Superman, I think he put one in the seats. He was with it.

"I wouldn't even try to touch Johnny [Damon] this time. I think he'd be so ready for it, it wouldn't be worth it to try to go after him. Mark Bellhorn, I'm not going to touch him. I touched him the beginning of the season and it was just so boring. You're yelling at the guy and he doesn't even move. He didn't even acknowledge me. Just stands there with a bat on his shoulders. He just stands there and dares you to pitch to him.

"My power was out yesterday, and I was going to do my research last night, but I think I'm going to go after Cabrera, the shortstop from Montreal. Maybe I can use my French Canadian jokes on him. 'What do you miss



**The Rays organization supports Szasz in his heckling efforts, protecting him from pressure that opposing teams might try to put on him to stop. They give him “a lot of little perks” around the ballpark. “They know that I’m good for the team,” he said. “They think I’m good for baseball.”**

most from Montreal? The French fries, the French toast, French women, oo la la!’

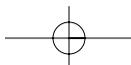
“There are certain people you can’t touch. I wouldn’t touch Manny [Ramirez]. He’s untouchable. He’s just a machine, a wrecking machine. I won’t even attempt it. A guy like him, he’s just untouchable. I heckled Barry Bonds when he was in town, during interleague. He didn’t do anything. He didn’t get anything when he was here. The first game, I think he got two walks but no hits. The second game, I think he got two strikeouts. I enjoyed that one. That was a little bit of fun going on with him. He gave me a smile.

“I don’t mind the challenge. I’ll go after the best of them if I can. Sosa would be fun. I want to see Pujols. I think I can get to him. It would be a challenge, but I think I could get to him. Definitely Sosa, I’d like to get onto Sosa. No question about it.

“Who won’t I heckle? If I have a lot of respect for a player, like I think he’s a really, really good guy, or he’s a local person from the Tampa Bay area who does a lot of charity work, sometimes I’ll have a little fun with them while they’re on deck, but I won’t actually heckle them in the batter’s box. There’s nobody I don’t heckle. Well, let’s put it this way. I won’t touch somebody who’s really

controversial. Somebody who has a lot of controversy around them and there’s a lot of material there, I won’t touch it. Like with Giambi, before they found out about he had all the problems with the tumor that he had, they always talked about all the steroid stuff. This group was sitting at this game, yelling ‘Steroid’ and things at him. That’s something I wouldn’t touch. It’s not funny. It’s not humorous. It may be true or it may not be true. Who knows? But it’s the kind of thing that I consider to be taboo and I won’t address. I’ll stay away from something like that.

“Anaheim was in town late last year, and I was on Troy Glaus. He came out of the game and Shawn Wooten came in to replace him, so I was saying, ‘Taking Troy Glaus’s place’ and all this stuff like that. Afterward, there was an article about me in the [St. Petersburg] *Times*, and this reporter went in the locker room and asked if anybody heard me. Shawn Wooten said, Oh yeah—he heard everything I said. The reporter told me this afterward. I don’t know if you are familiar with Shawn. He’s a very short, stout player. Very, very short and stout. He said most people harass him because of his height and his weight. When I was harassing him, I never brought up anything about his height or his weight or his stature.



Because I never touched that, he said, he paid attention to what I was saying and he heard everything that I said. He said he heard everything; he thought it was pretty funny. They hear it. The players all hear it.

“With Toronto, I always have a good time with Carlos Delgado and Vernon Wells. Two really good-quality players. Whenever they come up . . . usually a player I like, I’ll talk with them while they’re on deck. I’ll say, ‘Hey, Carlos, how’s it going?’ He waves at me. Same thing with Vernon Wells. I generally wouldn’t heckle them if I just had a little fun with them while they’re on deck.

“This weekend, I was on this guy Guillermo Quiroz, some kind of Triple A catcher from Syracuse, for Toronto. I was having a little bit of fun with him, and he turned to me and says, ‘Kiss my a-s-s!’ I’m like, ‘You’ve got to be kidding.’ That hasn’t happened since Bret Boone last year, that someone would cuss at me. So Vernon Wells came on deck. I was yelling at him, ‘Hey Vernon’ and he looks at me and goes, ‘Yeah, what do you want?’ I said, ‘You got to tell your boy Guillermo to watch his language out here. He’s yelling and cussing out here. Doesn’t he know this is a family sport? You’ve got to tell him to watch his language.’ He says to me, ‘You tell him! I think he can hear everything you say.’ He starts laughing and goes back to swinging his bat.

“This guy Quiroz, I wasn’t even heckling him in the batter’s box. Just a little bit on deck, and he swears at me. Everybody starts laughing, and says, ‘Oh my God, are you going to let him get away with that?’ I said, ‘No way!’ So I was all over him every time he went to bat. I don’t think he’d ever heard of me—he’d just come up from Syracuse—so I gave him a bit of a welcome.

“I don’t think anybody truly hates me, but I have heard [that] people who come down and ask for tickets ask not to sit close to me. They don’t want to get the headaches and stuff. One of my boys—the middle one—gets kind of embarrassed by it, but the other two love it. The youngest one loves it the most. The older one, he just sits there and laughs about it and tries to feed me lines all the time. Little-kid lines.”

So does Szasz do research beforehand, for better-informed heckling?

“Absolutely. You have to know everything about these guys. You have to find the one button to tweak to get their

attention. Without pissing them off, obviously, but you want to get their attention.

“A lot of people ask if I script my stuff before I get there. I never script it. It just comes to me as I’m sitting there. I’ll play off how they react and what they’re doing at the time. It’s impossible to script heckling. It’s really difficult to do.

“I get a lot of messages through the fan forum from other cities, that there are a lot of other people who try to do what I do. I got a message from someone in Oakland asking me if I’m going to come out and watch the Rays play out in Oakland, because they have their own heckler that they want me to see. I get that from people all over the place—Cincinnati, St. Louis, San Francisco. Everybody has their own hecklers that they want me to see.

“I don’t want people to think I’m doing this for attention, or doing it for this or for that. I didn’t go there looking to heckle. I go there looking to watch a baseball game. I’m there as a fan. I am a fan. I understand the game. I research my stuff, what I do. It’s part of the game.” ■

# A Man of Many Faucets, All Running at Once

## Books by and about Branch Rickey

Leverett T. Smith Jr.

- Lee Lowenfish. *Branch Rickey: Baseball's Ferocious Gentleman*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007. 683 pp. Notes, bibliography, index, photographs.
- Branch Rickey. *Branch Rickey's Little Blue Book*. Edited by John J. Monteleone. Preface by Stan Musial. New York: Macmillan, 1995. 142 pp. Index.
- Murray Polner. *Branch Rickey: A Biography. Revised Edition. Foreword by Branch B. Rickey*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2007. 274 pp. Bibliographic note, index, photographs.
- Andrew O'Toole. *Branch Rickey in Pittsburgh: Baseball's Trailblazing General Manager for the Pirates, 1950–1955*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2000. 213 pp. Notes, index, photographs.
- Branch Rickey, with Robert Riger. *The American Diamond: A Documentary of the Game of Baseball*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965. 204 pp. Photographs and drawings by Robert Riger.
- Arthur Mann. *Branch Rickey: American in Action*. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1957. 312 pp. Photographs.

Lee Lowenfish's recent *Branch Rickey: Baseball's Ferocious Gentleman* establishes itself as the place where future studies of Branch Rickey can begin. With backgrounds in both journalism and academic history, Lowenfish has produced a thoroughly researched, extensively documented, and clearly written version of Rickey's life, equally valuable for the general reader and the serious researcher. It clearly establishes the Mahatma as a major figure in baseball in the first three quarters of the twentieth century. It's not surprising to learn that Lowenfish's Rickey has won the Seymour Medal for 2008.

Branch Rickey lived a life as busy as it was long. Lowenfish focuses his account on "the man who had revolutionized [baseball] not once but three times" (1). These are the development of the farm system while he worked in St. Louis, the reintegration of baseball while in Brooklyn, and the expansion of baseball, which he helped inspire as president of the Continental League. As extraordinary as these changes are in themselves, Lowenfish keeps his focus—and the reader's interest—on the man involved in making them.



**His life defined by his faith in God, family, and baseball, Rickey was "a most unusual conservative revolutionary," ready to entertain and even encourage ideas and points of view that were not initially his own.**

NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY, COOPERSTOWN, N.Y.

The reader gets a full account of Rickey's family heritage, youth, and education in rural Ohio, his involvement in college athletics, his own playing career, and his work for the St. Louis Browns. After his stints with the Cardinals and Dodgers, there are also accounts of Rickey's difficult years in Pittsburgh and his last "senior consultant" position with the August Busch-owned Cardinals in the early 1960s. An executive, Rickey was in an owner's role only in Brooklyn, and even there has had other owners to answer to. In effect, he was fired from all these positions—by Sam Breadon in St. Louis, by John Galbreath in Pittsburgh, and he was eased out by Walter O'Malley in Brooklyn. Lowenfish wonders if this isn't one reason for his neglect by baseball historians (although one might argue and ask which baseball executive has been written about more).

Lowenfish does this in an inspired prologue, in the first half of which he describes Rickey's last speech and his funeral. In the second half, he explains the nature of Rickey's character and why historians don't give him more notice. For Lowenfish, "it is past time to bring him back to life in the fullness of his passions and his intellect" (8). He concludes by characterizing Rickey as "a man of astounding energy and radical individualism, a most unusual conservative revolutionary" (9). In his prologue he focuses not on the three revolutions but on who Rickey is: his oratorical style, his busyness (Lowenfish calls it his "remorseless Protestant ethic to resist idleness" [6]), his collegiality, his loyalty, his respect for physical and spiritual courage, his Christian faith, his concern for social justice, his belief in the American capitalist system, his "genuine warmth, humor, and compassion" (9), and his love of family.

A member of what Lowenfish calls "the conservative inner sanctum of baseball's managerial elite" (453), Rickey was, in fact, a conservative businessman, and a remarkable one at that. Yes, he valued home, family, church, and country above all else. Lowenfish speaks of his "faith in God, family, and baseball," the last being an embodiment of national values (299). This included, in the postwar years, a cold-war anticommunism that enabled him to find some good even in Senator Joseph McCarthy's excesses. As Lowenfish reports, Rickey felt McCarthy had "a good fastball, but no control" (518). In



NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY, COOPERSTOWN, N.Y.

**Rickey and Dizzy Dean could get lost for hours in conversation with each other, despite differences of background. "Tell me why," Rickey once said affectionately, "I spent four mortal hours today conversing with a person named Dizzy Dean."**

these beliefs, he was not unlike most baseball executives. What made Rickey unusual was his readiness to acknowledge other points of view and to encourage them if they could help him achieve his goals. Consider some of his protégés: executive Larry MacPhail, manager Leo Durocher, player Jay "Dizzy" Dean.

And consider the reserve clause, the cornerstone of baseball during Rickey's lifetime. Lowenfish deals with the reserve clause in the player contract only briefly, but tellingly. As a member of baseball's establishment, Rickey could be expected to regard it as essential to the game. Lowenfish describes him as "always consistent about the need for a reserve clause in any kind of professional baseball" (367). But as president of the Continental League, Rickey had to do something to relax the reserve system so that the league's clubs would have access to players (555). He also used the threat of congressional action in his negotiations with Major League Baseball, despite his Republican wariness of government intervention in business (568). Finally, he supported the bill proposed by Estes Kefauver (eventually voted down) that

NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY, COOPERSTOWN, N.Y.



**Rickey, a light-hitting catcher in his playing days, shown here with a fungo bat.**

would limit to one hundred the number of players reserved by any one club (568).

Rickey had never been inflexible about the reserve clause, it turns out. As Lowenfish reminds us, Rickey “had made individual exceptions in the past in the case of such star players as George Sisler and Rogers Hornsby” even though “he had been . . . uncompromising in defense of the strict restrictions on virtually every other player” (547). This, it seems to me, is what fascinates Lowenfish about Rickey: He is a conservative willing to be an innovator.

There are ten chapters on his St. Louis years, Rickey commenting on his ambition there: “I must make a great ball club, successful artistically and financially in a town where there is every handicap under the sun against my making good” (128). The material in the nine chapters on his Brooklyn years is more familiar material but examined from a different perspective. One motif that runs throughout the book but is most prominent here is Rickey’s language, his manner of speaking, and its effect on the press. A Brooklyn fan once remarked, memorably, that “he is a man of many faucets, all running at once” (324). Lowenfish speaks of Rickey’s “inevitable circumlocutions of speech” (319), adding that his grudges against sportswriters were “his least attractive character quirk” (400).

Rickey and Jackie Robinson were certainly two of a kind, “ferocious gentlemen” to be sure, but perhaps Leo Durocher and Rickey were the oddest couple of them all. Rickey felt Durocher “had the right kind of competitive smarts and leadership skills” (240). They shared, as Rickey said of Durocher, “a great will to win.” Their differences were stark.

As for Leo’s aggressive, almost delinquent behavior off the field, Rickey was used to dealing with such types from his earliest days as a country schoolteacher. It probably wasn’t a shock to him when he learned that Durocher had been expelled from high school for punching a mathematics teacher. Rickey was always confident that he could reason, inspire, and straighten out the wayward member of any flock. (228)

Alas, Rickey’s plans for Durocher to be Jackie Robinson’s manager went awry when Durocher was suspended for Robinson’s rookie season. Worse, when Durocher returned the following year, Robinson was out of shape: “He was thin for Shotton, but he’s fat for me,” as Durocher put it. The animosity between him and Robinson became a feature of the great Giant–Dodger rivalry in the fifties after Durocher moved from Ebbets Field to the Polo Grounds.

Lowenfish keeps Rickey’s life beyond baseball in focus. His politics were enthusiastically Republican: “Herbert Hoover possessed, in Branch Rickey’s opinion, the finest attributes of an American leader, a man who combined belief in capitalist enterprise with a genuine

sense of social service” (188). An anticommunist and cold warrior, Rickey was in the audience when Winston Churchill gave his famous “Iron Curtain” speech (390). Finally, it is the sheer frenetic energy with which Rickey approached life that impresses the reader:

When he wasn’t visiting family, scouting farm teams and young prospects, speaking to church groups, or drumming up support for Republican candidates for office, Branch Rickey made time for an annual postseason duck hunting expedition with friends in rural Missouri and Illinois. (290)

So large a study of so large a man still must leave some things out, and this reader missed any treatment of Rickey’s relationship with Dodger statistician Allan Roth, who is mentioned only twice. The first time it is in an aside to a description of the statistical work that Travis Hoke, a young St. Louis reporter, did for the Browns. The second time is an acknowledgment that Roth helped Rickey prepare a *Life* magazine article that appeared under Rickey’s name in 1954 (74, 527). It’s odd that there’s nothing about Roth’s years with the Dodgers. There are the inevitable few errors, typographical and otherwise. My own favorite is the imputation that John Mize of the Giants led the league in home runs in 1942; it was Mel Ott who led, with 30, the Big Cat and Dolph Camilli tying for second place, with 26.

Lowenfish provides extensive documentation. I miss only an introductory description of the nature and location of unpublished papers, interviews, and other materials. Though much of this information is available in his acknowledgments, it might have been better to present it more formally here. Even so, Lowenfish’s endnotes and bibliography will be the best place to begin a study of Rickey from now on, at least until new information about the man is discovered. I learned about several earlier books involving Rickey as subject or author and was enthusiastic about going on to read them.

Arthur Mann’s *Branch Rickey: American in Action* appeared in 1957, and his relation to Rickey and Rickey’s involvement in the book make it interesting reading still. According to Lowenfish, Rickey felt Mann was no biographer and never read the book (Lowenfish 593). On the other hand, having served as a kind of personal secretary

to Rickey, Mann presumably had privileged information, and it’s clear that Rickey had extensive input into the book. In addition to being its subject, the Rickey of 1957 is often invoked in such phrases as “Rickey said in describing” or “Rickey laughed in recollection” or Rickey “calling the occasion to memory” (60, 108, 123). It’s almost as if Mann wanted his narrative to be as close to an autobiography as possible.

Two things seem especially interesting about Mann’s portrait. The first is Rickey’s language and its relation to his character. Mann acknowledges the many negative assessments of Rickey, particularly in the press. There are complaints about his “evasive phraseology” (132). He was considered a bad manager because he “talked over his players’ heads, was too theoretical” (78). In Brooklyn, fans

picked up derisive nicknames for Rickey from the press—“Mahatma” and “Deacon” and “hard shelled Methodist” . . . Rickey was called the “Old Woman in the Shoe” and a violator of child labor laws. . . . When he tried to explain [his trading Dolph Camilli, his] . . . erudite explanations were dismissed as double talk and his office was called “The Cave of the Winds.” (228)

Out of material such as this, Bernard Malamud was to fashion the villainous Judge Goodwill Banner in his 1952 novel *The Natural*.

Mann wants us to understand all this differently. At the outset, he tells readers about “the simplicity of Rickey’s nature” (4) and then, on the next page, that “there have been many times over the years when Branch Rickey preferred not to be understood.” This is quite a picture. Something of it emerges in Lowenfish too. The tension between these conflicting qualities is something Mann returns to late in the book, in a paragraph about Rickey’s decision to sign African American players. Interpretations of his motivation vary. Mann contends that

most of them fall short, because they are based on the assumption that his nature and thinking are deep and complex. Actually his erudition and easy command of a polysyllabic vocabulary cloak thinking that is, more often than not, simple and basic. (215)

This version of Rickey is directly related to Mann’s treatment of Rickey’s relations with the press. He met with incomprehension in St. Louis (66, 132), and in New

York his efforts to win reporters over were largely useless (126). We get a detailed report of Rickey's public encounter with Dick Young in 1948 (129–32). Mann is somewhat less forthcoming about Joe Williams's accusation in 1946 that Rickey didn't want the Dodgers to win the pennant and about Rickey's relationship with columnist Jimmy Powers (238–39).

But there is no mistaking whose side Mann is on. In many ways the book is a defense of Rickey against his detractors. Mann covers thoroughly Rickey's years in St. Louis and the development of the farm system, an innovation that, in Rickey's mind, had its genesis in 1913, when he worked for Browns' owner Robert Hedges (63). Mann's account of the Brooklyn Dodger years takes on added importance when the reader bears in mind that Mann was there and an active participant in the introduction of Jackie Robinson into Organized Baseball. That Rickey's tenure in Pittsburgh is reviewed only briefly may be understandable in a book intended to bring out his virtues and achievements.

The only book by Rickey that appeared in his lifetime, *The American Diamond*, was published in 1965, the year of his death. Lowenfish remarks that Rickey, ever the man of action, "hated to write." *The American Diamond* is autobiographical in an unusual way—much of it is devoted to "homage to the baseball people whose life and work he had shared," as Lowenfish puts it (593, 594). In the introduction, Rickey explains his reason for writing:

I had good intentions about writing two or three books when I received a book called *The Pros* one day from a stranger. It was on pro football—and magnificent. I spent several days studying this work and realized it was a powerful piece of propaganda on football. (3)

What Rickey means but doesn't say is that *The American Diamond* is to be a powerful piece of propaganda on baseball.

It's a large, coffee-table-size book, and much of it consists of Rickey's comments on Robert Riger's photographs. But his involvement in the book is much more than that. The first part of the book is "Immortals," "the sixteen men who have made the most significant contributions to the game over the years." Here Rickey's writing is primary, while Robert Riger's drawings are secondary,



NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY, COOPERSTOWN, N.Y.

**Branch Rickey identified baseball with American values which led Rickey to approach baseball with the same fervor he used for religion and family.**

illustrative. Seven of the immortals are players: Honus Wagner, George Sisler, Christy Mathewson, Grover Cleveland Alexander, Ty Cobb, Babe Ruth, and Jackie Robinson. Two more played but were chosen more for their managerial careers: John McGraw and Connie Mack. Four are executives: Charles Comiskey, Ban Johnson, Judge Landis, and Ed Barrow (though Comiskey, like McGraw and Mack, played and managed as well). Two journalists, Henry Chadwick and Taylor Spink, make the cut. The "number one immortal" is Alexander Cartwright.

In the second part of the book, "The Game," Rickey's words take a back seat to Riger's images, although Rickey's fingerprints can be found in the emphasis (in 1965!) on the Brooklyn Dodgers. In "The Game," Riger's photographs start with youth and neighborhood baseball and work their way up to the professional game and then through the professional season from spring training to the World Series. Occasionally there are sections without

pictures, as in “Courage,” which reads like the text of a Rickey talk. In the section on Brooklyn, Rickey writes, “My eight years in Brooklyn gave me a new vision of America, or rather America gave me a new vision of a part of itself, Brooklyn.” He goes on to add that “it was a crime against a community of 3,000,000 people to move the Dodgers” (166)—a sentiment that may have been genuine, although in his manner of expressing it the reader may hear echoes of the longstanding animosity between him and Walter O’Malley.

Rickey runs through the Dodgers’ starting lineup in the 1955 World Series, commenting on each player. His discussion of Snider, Hodges, and Campanella includes an argument that runs batted in is not a significant measure of a player’s value. “Reverse the [fifth and sixth batters] in the hitting order and you will frequently reverse their RBI total” (173). Elsewhere, he offers that the hit-and-run play is “much overused” (43).

In Rickey’s essay on courage, we get a brief glimpse of a youthful Enos Slaughter. Rickey had made the point that “sometimes it is a great quality in men to show modesty even to the point of timidity or apparent lack of courage” (96). His illustration is that “Enos Slaughter was afraid to say his name.” Slaughter, as everyone who has encountered him knows, got over this. His assessment of Rickey, comprising equal parts anger and admiration, is reported in Murray Polner’s biography of Rickey: “He noticed everything, that son of a gun” (Polner 92). In my experience, Slaughter was not always so pithy. In the mid-1970s, he appeared in a class in baseball history I was team-teaching with a member of the history department—his daughter was attending our college at the time—and talked nonstop, far beyond the 90-minute class period. We were all in thrall. Nobody dared leave.

Finally, Riger’s photographs step aside for Rickey’s meditations in the section titled “The Future of the Game.” He saw three problems that needed to be solved.

He hoped for something that we now call “parity” and that many of us despair of achieving. Remember that, while Rickey was writing this in 1965, the players were busy hiring Marvin Miller, a move that would eventuate in player salaries (and owner profits) beyond even Rickey’s powers of imagination.

He understood the inevitability of expansion, although it has proceeded along lines he deplored in 1965, the motive being “not one of nationalization but of prospective profits at the gate” (202).

Rickey saw television as a threat and hoped for a screen that would be friendlier to baseball.

More than once, he mentions his fear that professional football would surpass baseball in popularity. In the four decades since the book was published, all professional team sports have mushroomed and grown into gigantic industries, greatly blunting any tendency on the part of baseball people to look over their shoulder at the NFL or any other league. *The American Diamond*, Lowenfish reports, is “long out of print and,” he comments, “worthy of republication” (594). He is right.

*Branch Rickey’s Little Blue Book* is a collection of Rickey’s writings and sayings edited by John J. Monteleone “from private and public writings,” as we read on the title page. Monteleone went to the Rickey archives at the Library of Congress and found a treasure, which he lists:

131 containers of Mr. Rickey’s writing, correspondence, and speeches. . . . employment contracts, award certificates, and receipts (along with fabric swatches) from his personal tailor . . . scores of scouting reports on every conceivable level of players, from future hall of famers to anonymous bushers; hundreds of lectures on how to play, how to scout and judge talent, and more; scores of speeches on pressing political and social issues of the day; dozens of comments on character traits that yield success, and many memos, notes and articles on legal, administrative and business issues of baseball. (xv)

From such a treasure, Monteleone has organized his sampling into nine sections, with Rickey’s scouting reports “sprinkled throughout.” They deal with character; luck; various baseball subjects, concluding with a section on Jackie Robinson; “musings on various subjects”; Rickey’s spirituality, and finally, others’ remembrances. Monteleone has compiled and organized the quotations masterfully. This reader especially enjoyed the assemblage of Rickey’s comments on pitching (25–38), which begin with this:

NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY, COOPERSTOWN, N.Y.



**Rickey greatly admired Dean's resourcefulness, marveling at his "ability to see another pitcher throw a certain pitch and go right out and duplicate it to his own benefit."**

In pitching we want to produce delusions, practice deceptions, make a man misjudge. We fool him—that's the purpose of the game. The ethics of the game of baseball would be violated if man did not practice to become proficient in deception. (25)

That last sentence in particular has the sound of Rickey. According to Rickey, New York Giants' pitcher Carl Hubbell "produced perfect deception. He was a 'change of speed' pitcher who continually presented the problem of timing to the batsman" (27).

A pitcher who appears and reappears throughout the book is Dizzy Dean, one of Rickey's favorite players. He shows up twice in the section on pitching, first as the sort of pitcher who has "the ability to see another pitcher throw a certain pitch and go right out and duplicate it to his own benefit" (26). A few pages later he's being lauded as a pitcher who was unbeatable in his prime: "About all the scoring off Dizzy Dean in his heyday was due to his jocularly, his carelessness, his momentary indifference, his knowing he 'had 'em beat'" (36).

Rickey rated Dean's character high, as high as he rated Ty Cobb's desire to excel. "Dizzy Dean . . . never saw a man throwing a ball that he didn't have an uncon-

trollable yen to do it, and beat him at it" (3). Later in the book, we get glimpses of Dean and Rickey together, surely an odd association. Monteleone cites this Rickey meditation:

I completed college in three years. I was in the top ten percent of my class in law school. I'm a Doctor of Jurisprudence. I am an honorary Doctor of Law. Tell me why I spent four mortal hours today conversing with a person named Dizzy Dean. (105)

These conversations must have been something. Monteleone describes one as follows: He imagined Dean, "his huge feet on the boss's desk, lean[ing] back and talk[ing] country style." After their conversation, Rickey had to meet the press in an unusually disheveled condition. "'By Judas Priest,' he began. 'By Judas Priest! If there were more like him in baseball, just one, as God is my judge, I'd get out of the game'" (117).

This little blue book leaves us with a picture of a very large man. I found myself, because I especially enjoy hearing Rickey's voice, wanting a section on obfuscation, in which there would be some examples of Rickey's purposeful unintelligibility. Perhaps the best comment on

NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY, COOPERSTOWN, N.Y.



**In his rookie days, Enos Slaughter was intimidated by the Cardinals' eloquent general manager. "I didn't know what he was talking about half the time," he once said of Rickey, "but it sure sounded beautiful."**

this aspect of his language comes, once again, from Enos Slaughter, who remarked that "I didn't know what he was talking about half the time, but it sure sounded beautiful" (126). And we do get some negative comments about Rickey along the way, especially about his parsimony.

The original edition of *Murray Polner's Branch Rickey: A Biography* was published by Atheneum in 1982. A glance through both editions suggests that little of the text was revised for the 2007 edition. There is some re-paragraphing, and divisions within chapters are sometimes retained, sometimes not. There is a new foreword by Rickey's grandson Branch B. Rickey and a brief preface to the revised edition by Polner. Some forty-two titles have been added to the bibliographic note, including not only Arthur Mann's 1957 *Branch Rickey: American in Action* (surely its omission in the 1982 edition was inadvertent, given Polner's citation there of "material [Polner] did not include in his [Rickey]") but also Lowenfish's

*Branch Rickey: Baseball's Ferocious Gentleman*. The photo gallery in the 1982 edition has been dropped and replaced by a new set of photos scattered through the text.

Polner says in his preface to the 1982 edition that he saw Rickey as "a genuine American hero. . . the son of poor, rural southern Ohio farmers, who taught . . . the worth of an ethical and moral way of life grounded in religious faith" (7). In the preface to the revised edition, he's more specific. "One of the larger questions I wanted to know was why a conservative evangelical Christian could become so obsessed in fostering racial equality" (9). Polner concludes that "his religious faith was as decisive a factor as his well-known business acumen" (10). This interpretation has the effect of putting the Brooklyn Dodgers at the center of his biography of the man.

Polner cites Rickey's "sense of adventure," a quality seen in his leadership of college teams, and in his demonstration "of derring-do on the bases, of constantly attacking . . . opponents' weaknesses" (60). Jackie Robinson, for example, Rickey described as "an adventurer," "a man after my own heart" (183).

And in this light Rickey's dealings with outfielder Gus Bell, as detailed by Andrew O'Toole, grow more intelligible. Rickey never liked Bell as a ballplayer and finally traded him to Cincinnati, where he had a fine career. Bell, as O'Toole reports, seemed bewildered.

I couldn't seem to do anything to please Mr. Rickey. . . The more I hustled, the more he'd get me for something. Why, he'd find things wrong with me that I never knew existed. He used to say I didn't run in from the field fast enough at the end of an inning. Can you imagine that?" (O'Toole 81)

"He had no adventure," Rickey said of him. In fairness to Bell, we should note that Rickey said much the same even about the young Roberto Clemente (O'Toole 135, 146).

This intense competitiveness, coupled with an equally intense piety, provoked intense responses from those who found themselves opposed to this man who believed so strongly in what he believed. As Polner sees it, journalists were alienated by Rickey's circumlocution and aggressive rhetorical style, but the reasons for Jimmy Powers's

animus are never accounted for (90, 121–22). Polner allows Judge Landis to speak for the anti-Rickeyists. In private, Landis called him “that hypocritical preacher” and “that Protestant bastard [who’s] always masquerading with a minister’s robe” (137). In his interview with O’Toole, Tom Johnson, a member of the Pirates ownership, uses similarly intemperate language when describing Rickey, calling him “the old bastard” and lapsing into profanity to refer to his talent for evasive wordiness (O’Toole 54).

There comes a moment in Polner’s biography when he articulates the meaning of Rickey’s career, as he juxtaposes the values he finds in Rickey with those of Walter O’Malley. He compares

Rickey’s baseball—a nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century, slower, bucolic and pastoral sport, constant, tranquil, uninterrupted, a sentimental mirror of a world now gone—and O’Malley’s vision of change and technology, of jet travel, of the surge in population and hedonism, of amoral shifts of franchises lured by more and more revenue, and of the voracious appetites of television advertising. To Rickey, baseball remained a

civil religion which acted out public functions organized religion was unable to perform; O’Malley’s faith rested on balance sheets and dividends (196).

Surely a good part of this vision of Rickey involves myth rather than reality, and he remains better understood as an adventurer. As Rickey sets forth on the Continental League enterprise, he wonders whether

[William A. Shea, who would eventually spearhead the formation of the New York Mets] and the committee want him to find a franchise for [New York City] or might they be interested in an utterly unorthodox approach requiring risk and courage? (232).

“A new and uncharted adventure,” a leitmotif in Rickey’s life, is what he envisioned this to be, the enterprise of forming a legitimate, lasting third league (233). (On third leagues, see the articles by Dan Levitt at page 97, and by David Mandell at page 104.)

O’Toole’s *Branch Rickey in Pittsburgh* is a more focused book than Mann’s or Polner’s and is largely dedicated to a view of Rickey the general manager. The author relies

COURTESY OF THE PITTSBURGH PIRATES



**As general manager of the struggling Pittsburgh Pirates in the early 1950s, Rickey, fighting adversity (the franchise “was effectively broke”), helped assemble the nucleus of the 1960 championship team.**

on fewer sources than do his peers: newspapers, Rickey's own papers, some interviews, and a few secondary sources, mainly Polner. All told, the book offers a great deal of Rickey in the first person, quoted from the newspaper sources and his papers. In addition, O'Toole includes some thirty pages of Rickey's memos to other Pirate officials, including many player evaluations and a long memo arguing for Ralph Kiner to be traded. These are fascinating.

O'Toole acknowledges "the wondrous Rickey" right away, even though Rickey's years in Pittsburgh were disappointing for all concerned (vii). He is also quick, though, to quote part-owner Tom Johnson's unflattering opinion—"the old phony" (15). Much of the book tells the story of the obstacles Rickey had to overcome to build a winning team in Pittsburgh. O'Toole characterizes it as "hindered from the start. . . . The conflict in Korea was taking young men from professional baseball at a rapid rate." Moreover, and what made his job even more difficult, the Pirates "were effectively broke" (4). He devotes much of the book to detailing this sorry condition.

Rickey himself, O'Toole acknowledges, was part of the problem. He writes that Rickey "had vastly underestimated the job that awaited him. . . . In addition to a major league roster that deservedly finished in last place, the farm system was almost totally void of talent" (35). O'Toole argues that Rickey

was still the brilliant man that had built the dynasties in St. Louis and Brooklyn, but circumstances and times change. Few critics publicly recognized the financial constraints Rickey endured in Pittsburgh. The farm system was no longer a novelty. (156)

Rickey was no longer ahead of the curve, as he had been in St. Louis and Brooklyn. As a consequence, his time in Pittsburgh appears a failure. In fact, his methods seem to have worked, they just took more time. The nucleus of the 1960 championship team was in place when Rickey left in 1955.

A particularly odd moment in the book stands out. O'Toole gives the arrival of the first African American and Latino players in Pittsburgh during these years a special look. His narrative strategy entails a rehearsal of Rickey's experience in Brooklyn, and for that he relies on Polner's account. He goes back to Rickey's experience

with Charles "Tommy" Thomas, an African American on his Ohio Wesleyan team. O'Toole calls him "Tommy Thompson" throughout his account (117–18). It's odd that neither the author nor anyone at McFarland caught this error.

Each of these books is valuable, but Lowenfish's *Rickey* is now the place to begin for anyone looking to understand—how would you describe him? The father of the farm system? The man who integrated baseball? The epithets, honorific and disparaging alike, could easily be multiplied, and they have been. What Lowenfish accomplishes is a broadening, deepening, and enrichment of the picture, and his meticulous acknowledgment of his sources enables fellow researchers to evaluate and either build on or question his judgments. ■

Parts of this review originally appeared in SABR's *Bibliography Committee Newsletter* (August 2007).

# Ten Days in August

## A Last Chance for Brooklyn?

Henry D. Fetter

**H**ard as it may be to believe, the Brooklyn Dodgers have been the Los Angeles Dodgers for half a century—and have now played more seasons in Chavez Ravine than in Ebbets Field. By August 5, 1957, the storied history of the Brooklyn Dodgers was fast approaching its final days. But as the Dodgers, who were just 3½ games out of first place, prepared to play seven games against their archrival New York Giants over the next ten days, one sliver of hope, however thin, for the future of the Dodgers in Brooklyn remained: Would even the most mercenary, avaricious, and unsentimental owner really pull a team out of its long-time home if they had just won the National League pennant—and, who knows, the World Series as well?

Although those games are scarcely remembered today, none of the memorable Dodger–Giant confrontations over the years, not even Bobby Thomson’s pennant playoff–winning “shot heard round the world” in 1951, was played for higher stakes—the fate of the franchise itself. As the two crosstown rivals squared off, everything, except for the signed and sealed documentation and formal announcement, appeared to be in place to move the Dodgers to Los Angeles and the Giants to San Francisco. Dodger owner Walter O’Malley had met with Los Angeles officials in Florida in March and in Los Angeles in May to negotiate the acquisition of a site, in centrally located Chavez Ravine, on which to build the privately owned stadium he had been unable to build in Brooklyn. New York Giants’ owner Horace Stoneham, under O’Malley’s guidance, had worked out a stadium deal with the San Francisco mayor at a meeting in May in New York City. The National League had approved the franchise shifts at the end of that month. Testifying before a congressional antitrust committee in late June, O’Malley would not make any commitment to stay in

Brooklyn and charged that any chance to do so had been “sabotaged” by city officials. In his own testimony a few weeks later, Stoneham more forthrightly signaled that an announcement of the Giants’ move to San Francisco was imminent.<sup>1</sup>

Despite these forebodings, not everyone had abandoned hope for the Brooklyn Dodgers. O’Malley’s artful dodging of any direct question about his future plans for the team kept Brooklyn hopes alive. Amidst the gathering evidence of betrayal, attendance at Dodger home games through the end of July had kept pace, somewhat surprisingly, with that in recent seasons.<sup>2</sup> Milton Gross, a *New York Post* sports columnist close enough to O’Malley to have been tapped as his biographer, ventured an early August wager that “for my money the Brooklyn Dodgers are far from becoming the LA Dodgers.”<sup>3</sup> Perhaps Dodger success on the playing field could derail the franchise-shifting machinations in the executive suite.

On August 5, 1957, Brooklyn was in third place in the National League, 3 games behind first-place St. Louis, fully engaged in a tight pennant race with the Cardinals, the second-place Milwaukee Braves, and the fourth-place Cincinnati Reds. True, the veteran team that had won four out of the last five National League pennants was beginning to unravel. Jackie Robinson had been traded into retirement the previous winter. Team captain Pee Wee Reese, hobbled by back and leg trouble at the plate and in the field, had given way to Charley Neal as starting shortstop. Three-time league MVP catcher Roy Campanella was batting .233, with little of his former power. Pitching ace Don Newcombe, fighting a losing battle with alcohol (a battle intensified by his shellacking in the seventh game of the 1956 World Series), had lost the stuff—and confidence—that had brought him 27

NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY, COOPERSTOWN, N.Y.



**Just embarking on his Hall of Fame career, pitcher Don Drysdale and his 17–9 record with a 2.69 ERA in 1957 were not enough to keep the Dodgers in Brooklyn.**

wins, along with the MVP and (first ever) Cy Young awards the year before.<sup>4</sup> But first baseman Gil Hodges, center-field slugger Duke Snider (headed toward his fifth consecutive 40-home-run season to tie a league record),<sup>5</sup> and right fielder Carl Furillo were enjoying productive seasons. Don Drysdale had emerged as a new pitching star, and second-year outfielder Gino Cimolli was batting over .300. After briefly holding and then slipping out of first place in early June, the Dodgers had managed to stay close to the league lead, never falling more than five games back thereafter.

As August began, Arch Murray, the *New York Post* Dodger-beat writer, reported, “In the dugouts and front offices of the National League the general consensus of opinion remains unchanged. The Dodgers, the feeling is, still are the team to beat and both the odds and the sentiment are that they’ll eventually pull another pennant out of the wild scramble that moved into August today with five teams refusing to be counted out.”<sup>6</sup> And the

National League schedule now handed the Dodgers an opening. From August 5 to August 15, the Dodgers would play seven games against the sixth-place New York Giants and four against the even more hapless last-place Pirates, while their three rivals locked horns in an internecine shootout. “They’re going to play the Giants and the Pirates for two solid weeks,” Cincinnati manager Birdie Tebbetts said of Brooklyn, “while we, the Braves and the Cardinals have to battle each other. That certainly should put them out in front.”<sup>7</sup>

On the night of August 5, things got off to a good start for the Dodgers—and for Brooklyn—although Duke Snider was sitting out the series with a bad knee and Pee Wee Reese had been benched after bobbling a ground ball and then throwing it away for a costly error before being pulled for a pinch-hitter in the ninth inning of a tough 1–0 loss to the Braves in Milwaukee a few days earlier. Before an Ebbets Field crowd of 15,070, the Dodgers “harvested a little pennant hay while the moon shone,” beating the Giants 5–2, with Clem Labine relieving Don Drysdale in the ninth inning to pitch to Willie Mays with two on and two out. Drysdale had given up 10 hits, including a home run to Mays, but Labine got him to ground out on a 3-and-2 count to save the game.<sup>8</sup> “Gaining Ground,” the *New York Post* headlined the game’s box score as the Dodgers closed to within 2½ games of the idle Cardinals, two games behind the second-place Braves.<sup>9</sup> Recent history lent support to the belief that a Dodger drive for the 1957 pennant was about to kick into high gear. With 60 wins, Brooklyn had now matched the number of wins the team had in hand on August 5, 1956, when that year’s eventual pennant winners were in second place and only two games off the pace.

The next night the Dodgers continued to roll, loading the bases with no outs in the bottom of the first inning. But Gil Hodges, Carl Furillo, and Roy Campanella went hitless that game against Giants’ rookie starter Curt Barclay, who breezed to a 5–0 win over Brooklyn’s 1955 World Series hero Johnny Podres. It was none other than Bobby Thomson, recently returned to the Giants after a stint with the Braves, who broke up a scoreless pitchers’ duel in the sixth, with a run-scoring triple that forced Podres out for a pinch-hitter in the Dodgers’ half of that

inning. He then compounded the damage by driving in two more runs with another triple in the eighth; Thomson's successes only made the hurt worse for the 18,202 Ebbets Field faithful who witnessed the setback.<sup>10</sup>

Another familiar nemesis struck the next night at the Dodgers' part-time "home" in Jersey City. Tagged, unfairly or not, with a reputation for not being able to win big games, Don Newcombe went to the mound in quest of his tenth victory for the year and his first in almost a month. In front of a season-high Roosevelt Stadium crowd of 25,913, Newcombe held a 5–3 lead going into the ninth inning but then served up a three-run home run to 40-year-old pinch-hitter Hank Sauer, as the Giants came from behind to win 8–5. As he headed off the field, Big Newk apparently spat at the fans behind the dugout and was gone from the clubhouse when the game ended, a reprise of his disappearing act after being knocked out of the box by the Yankees in the seventh game of the 1956 World Series.<sup>11</sup>

Back at Ebbets Field the following evening, and with a midnight train to catch to Pittsburgh, manager Walter Alston told reporters before the game, "We'll try to take care of that by getting ten in the first two innings." But it was the Giants who scored four in the first and five in the second as they blasted their former teammate—and Dodger killer—Sal Maglie out of the box en route to a 12–3 rout that left even the Dodger diehards among the 18,753 in attendance badly shaken.<sup>12</sup>

Staggered by losing three out of four to the Giants, Brooklyn took little relief from the quick weekend road trip to Pittsburgh. Although Duke Snider returned to the lineup and promptly belted a home run in each of the first three games in Pittsburgh, Furillo—who had recently been hitting at a .500 clip—replaced the Duke on the injury list with a sore elbow after the first Forbes Field contest. The Dodgers won the first two games but were swept in the series-concluding Sunday double-header, earning only a split of the four games against the worst team in baseball, before returning to New York.

Facing the Giants once again, this time for a three-game series starting on August 13 at the Polo Grounds, the Dodgers lost two out of the three, snuffing out the last lingering hope that they might yet contend for the pennant. In the August 15 finale, played before fewer



**Dodger ace Don Newcombe appeared to have lost his confidence, and his dominating pitching repertoire, after being hit hard in Game 7 of the 1956 World Series against the Yankees. Newcombe lost his stuff at the worst time for the Dodgers and failed to win a single game during the critical 10 days in August.**

than 8,000 fans—"the smallest Giant–Dodger crowd in recent memory"<sup>13</sup>—the Giants staged another late-inning rally (they scored the go-ahead run in the sixth and then piled on three more in the ninth), this time against Don Drysdale, and beat the Dodgers 9–4, driving "another spike into the pennant hopes of their transpontine rivals."<sup>14</sup> "The Dodgers look more and more like a tired, fading ball club," the *Post's* Arch Murray concluded, as he witnessed the "sad decline of the Dodgers whose glory seems to be running out along with their tenure in Brooklyn."<sup>15</sup> The Dodgers—and the future of baseball in Brooklyn itself—were now clearly "on the brink of disaster."<sup>16</sup>

While the Dodgers floundered, the Braves reeled off nine straight wins against the Reds and the Cardinals to move into undisputed possession of first place. "The pennant race," Murray wrote after the first series with the Giants, "is fast losing all semblance of the wild scramble

NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY, COOPERSTOWN, N.Y.



**The Dodgers may have floundered in August, but it was not Duke Snider's fault as he had a .286 batting average with three home-runs, seven runs scored, and a 1.105 OPS during the critical 10 day period after missing the first series against the Giants with a knee injury.**

it was only a week or ten days ago.”<sup>17</sup> Losing seven out of eleven games to two of the worst clubs in the league, including five out of seven to the Giants, the Dodgers fell 8½ games behind Milwaukee by August 15. “They’re just not good enough in every way,” one rival veteran told the *Post*’s Leonard Koppett.<sup>18</sup>

Although Dodger pitching had been touted as their advantage in the race, neither Newcombe nor Podres nor Maglie had been able to record a win during that ten-day stretch.<sup>19</sup> Newcombe had left the nightcap of the August 11 doubleheader against the Pirates with a sore arm after three innings. He would not start again until August 21 (when he finally won his tenth game after six failed efforts) and then pitched only three more times without recording a victory the rest of the way. Maglie, who had won two games, including a no-hitter, in the final week of the 1956 season as the Dodgers pushed past the Braves into first place and held off the Reds, was gone on waivers (to the Yankees) at the beginning of September. Except for Gil Hodges, who played in every game

against the Giants and the Pirates during that stretch, hitting .325 (13 for 40) and driving in seven runs, the lineup, laden with future Hall of Famers, that had dominated the National League for the past decade had finally broken down. Injuries had kept Snider out of the first series with the Giants and Furillo out of the second one. Campanella was solid, going 6 for 20 in the six games he played, but Reese was dismal, 3 for 25, after his return to the starting lineup (playing third base) on August 8.<sup>20</sup>

Not that the Dodgers, the defending league champions, after all, went into free fall. They kept pace with the Braves over the next month, splitting their remaining six games with Milwaukee, and even making up 2½ games of that mid-August deficit by mid-September. But there was just too much ground to make up. Six losses in the last ten games left the Dodgers in third place, 11 games back, at season’s end. By then the Dodgers were playing before row upon row of empty seats in a largely deserted Ebbets Field, as Brooklyn’s fans finally realized that the team was leaving and that no reprieve would be forthcoming.<sup>21</sup>

All of the hard evidence suggests that, no matter what the Dodger players accomplished on the playing field over those final two months of the 1957 season, the team was going to move to Los Angeles. As the Giants and Dodgers had faced off at Ebbets Field during the first week of August, New York officials had publicly acknowledged what they—and Walter O’Malley—had known for months: that financing the construction of a new Dodger stadium in Brooklyn was economically unfeasible.<sup>22</sup> Even while O’Malley remained coy about his future plans, Giants’ owner Horace Stoneham had announced in mid-August that his team was headed to San Francisco, a move that was clearly part of a package that included a Dodger move to Los Angeles.<sup>23</sup> The National League had prepared a tentative schedule for the 1958 season that included Los Angeles and San Francisco but not Brooklyn and New York. And yet one cannot help but ask the question: Had the Dodgers, the “team to beat” for the National League pennant at the beginning of August, been able to go the distance, would they have left Brooklyn as and when they did? If Walter O’Malley actually pulled a world-championship team out of its

NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY, COOPERSTOWN, N.Y.



**Smelling greener pastures in California, Dodger owner Walter O'Malley brokered a deal to move to Los Angeles after the 1957 season and open the privately owned stadium in Chavez Ravine that he could not build in Brooklyn.**

hometown right after such a triumph, he would have been the first team owner in a major sport to make such a move—and to date the only one.<sup>24</sup>

Thanks to the Giants, O'Malley was spared such a dilemma, if dilemma it would have been. The Dodgers' swoon in the first half of August had taken him off the hook, with the California-bound Giants delivering the coup de grace. And so it was that, on the afternoon of October 8, 1957, while the Milwaukee Braves were preparing to battle the Yankees the next day in Game 6 of the World Series, the Dodgers officially announced that the team was moving to Los Angeles. For this loss, the traditional rallying cry of the Dodger fan in defeat provided no solace. Next year would never come for Brooklyn. ■

## NOTES

1. U.S. House of Representatives, *Hearings before the Antitrust Subcommittee of the Committee on the Judiciary, Organized Professional Team Sports*, 85th Cong., 2d sess., 1957, 1,850–1,885 (O'Malley), 1,939–1,958 (Stoneham); Henry D. Fetter, *Taking on the Yankees: Winning and Losing in the Business of Baseball* (New York: Norton, 2003), 226–80.
2. Through the end of July 1957, Dodger paid home attendance was 689,578, compared to 656,357 in 1956 and 710,595 in 1955. Average home attendance for each game date through July was 16,036 in 1957, compared to 17,272 in 1956, and 15,791 in 1955.
3. Milton Gross, *New York Post*, 7 August 1957.
4. On Newcombe, see Peter Golenbock, *Bums: An Oral History of the Brooklyn Dodgers* (Chicago: Contemporary Books, 2000), 457–62.
5. The record was later broken by Sammy Sosa, 1998–2003.
6. Arch Murray, "Working Press," *New York Post*, 1 August 1957.
7. *New York Post*, 20 August 1957.
8. *New York Times*, 6 August 1957.
9. *New York Post*, 6 August 1957.
10. Taking note of the smallish size of the crowd "in ideal weather and with strong representation from assorted groups who had bought blocks of tickets in advance," Joseph M. Sheehan of the *Times* commented that "the franchise-moving talk surrounding both teams apparently has squelched much of the once-keen public interest in the Dodger–Giant rivalry" (*New York Times*, 7 August 1957). However, the crowds were only slightly lower than what they had been for the counterpart series with the Giants a year before in August 1956 (and more likely reflected a dulling, at least temporarily, of the rivalry in light of the Giants' lackluster showing in the standings. 1956 Dodger–Giant series attendance: August 14 (18,567); August 15 at Jersey City (26,385); August 16 (18,978). All were night games, as were the games in 1957.
11. *New York Post*, 8 August 1957; Milton Gross, "The Long Ride Home with Don Newcombe," *New York Post*, 11 October 1956.
12. *New York Post*, 9 August 1957.
13. *New York Times*, 16 August 1957.
14. *Ibid.*
15. *New York Times*, 14 August 1957.
16. *New York Times*, 20 August 1957.
17. *New York Post*, 9 August 1957.
18. *New York Post*, 20 August 1957.
19. As Cubs General Manager John Holland told Arch Murray at the beginning of August, "Day after day . . . game after game they can throw a real good one at you. . . . Pitching has to pay off in the long run and I can't see any reason why it won't this time. . . . There just isn't any club in the league that can match the Dodger pitching in quality or depth." *New York Post*, 1 August 1957.
20. Player records calculated from *Retrosheet*.
21. In their last four games at Ebbets Field, played on September 20, 21, 22, and 24, the Dodgers attracted a total of only 25,231 fans, including 6,702 for their Brooklyn finale. Even so, total attendance for 1957 was 1,026,258, just shy of the 1,033,589 drawn by the 1955 World Champions, although well below the 1956 mark of 1,213,562 attributable to that season's down-to-the-wire pennant race.
22. *New York Times*, 7 August 1957; *New York Post*, 6 August 1957, 7 August 1957; Fetter, *Taking on the Yankees*, 244–46, 255, 278.
23. On the Giants' decision, *New York Post*, 7 August 1957, 8 August 1957; *New York Times*, 20 August 1957. On May 28, 1957, the National League had granted the Giants and the Dodgers the right to move to San Francisco and Los Angeles upon request to do so. *U.S. House of Representatives, Hearings*, 1,404–1,406; *New York Times*, 28 May 1957, 29 May 1957. For a more complete discussion, see Fetter, *Taking on the Yankees*, 226–80.
24. Had the 1957 Dodgers won the pennant but not the World Series, the only comparable example in any major professional sport, before or since, would have been the move of the Boston Redskins of the National Football League to Washington after the 1936 season. That year, the Redskins won the NFL's Eastern Division title before losing to Green Bay in the league championship game, although that was at a time when professional football lagged well behind major league baseball in popularity and impact.

# But the Polo Grounds Belonged to the Giants

## An Interview with Bobby Thomson

Tom Harris

*Tom Harris interviewed Bobby Thomson at his home in New Jersey on September 26, 1993. Some text in the original transcript has been omitted here and, for clarity, some portions have been transposed.*

**Bobby Thomson:** I was born in Glasgow, Scotland, back on October 25, 1923. I was the youngest of six children. I have four sisters and a brother. We came over to this country, I imagine, when I was just between 2 and 2½ years old. Of course, my older brother was nine years older than I and, when I look back at it, I'm sure that he was the one that got me started playing with a baseball in the backyard. . . . I remember he bought me my first glove. He was working at Sears, Roebuck at the time, and he came home with a glove for me and, boy, that was just like Christmas. You know, I was really thrilled to get this brand-new glove. So really, that was the beginning of it—getting me out on the sandlots with a bat and a ball and a glove. Of course my dad, he was used to the soccer or, as they call it over there, football. But he came to this country and he took to baseball right away. He was a Dodger fan. . . .

As it turned out, my brother was a Yankee fan, and I took to the Giants. I guess I started playing, getting out and throwing the ball around, when I was 7, 8 years old. You know, when you first pick up a bat and it's too heavy for you . . . Around that time was when I started, and it just went on from there. I continued to play Police Athletics League ball and then, as I got into high school and played for the team and kind of played what they called semipro ball on Staten Island—this was all on Staten Island because that's where we landed in New York. . . . I was brought up in Staten Island for I guess, up until—how old was I? I was probably 32 years old when I finally moved to New Jersey. . . .

I never did go and watch the Giants play, but I followed them on the radio, and my dad, I remember, he took me to a couple of games over at Ebbets Field. He was a great Dolph Camilli fan. He was a typical Scot, not a very demonstrative type of a person, but I'll always remember when Dolph Camilli hit a home run this day. He jumped up and raised his fist in the air, and I really got a kick out of it. I may as well throw this in for what it's worth—at this time I lost him, before I graduated from high school. So, as much as he was right there with me at all the ballgames and loved to go to ballgames, he never did live long enough to see me play in the big leagues, which was a little bit of a tough one. But, as a youngster, on Sundays at Staten Island, there was always a ballgame someplace, and he and I would walk for miles. We didn't have a car when we first came over to this country. We walked for miles just to see a ballgame. . . .

### First contract

After high school, the day after I graduated, I signed a contract with the Giants—to go to Class D, playing Class D baseball. I signed for a hundred dollars a month. Of course, . . . the Dodgers were very much interested in me. In fact they showed more interest in me than the Giants did. . . . I guess I told them I wanted to go to the Giants, because they asked me not to sign with the Giants before talking to them. They said they'd top any offer the Giants made. You know, as a young kid, back then, money was no object. I just said I was a Giant and that was going to be it. . . .

George Mack actually signed me, but there was a fellow from Staten Island that had a lot to do with my getting into baseball, professional baseball, and that was Jim Molinelli. Of course, unfortunately he was killed earlier this year in an automobile accident, he and his



THE CLEVELAND PRESS COLLECTION, CLEVELAND STATE UNIVERSITY

**By the time Bobby Thomson debuted with the New York Giants in 1947, the Polo Grounds, the team's home since 1883, were full of tradition, conjuring up memories of John McGraw and Bill Terry. Noted for the unusual dimensions of its outfield—about 500 feet to dead center, about 250 feet to left—it featured a short porch overhanging the left-field line. Thomson's home run in the 1951 playoff game was a line drive that fell in under the porch and landed in the lower deck.**

wife, down in Florida. George Mack was the guy that first saw me playing on a Sunday afternoon when I was playing in this semipro league. I was just a high-school kid, but they were all older people. You might say, for my age, I was better than the average guy my age.

I went to their Class D club and, really, they had a good ballclub, and I was just a scared, nervous kid and didn't get a chance to play much. I played in a few games, but basically I really wasn't playing that much. Bill Terry happened to be in the front office at the time, and apparently they needed a third baseman in Rocky Mount, North Carolina. So they shipped me out to Rocky Mount, North Carolina, where I thought I'd get a better chance to play. Well, I didn't. They had a good third baseman there, but he was called into the army. So then I moved into third and I finished out the season. But,

actually, I probably didn't play in more than fifteen or twenty games my first year away, 1942.

### **Breaking in with the Giants**

I went to spring training in 1947 to play third base. Now, they just happened to have a new rookie, Jack Lohrke, that they had signed. So [we had] Jack Lohrke, the veteran Sid Gordon, the holdover [Bill Rigney], and myself. And Mel Ott had given each of us a chance to play every third day. Well, heck, we were barnstorming back east with the Indians. A week out of New York, where we were going . . . to play a weekend series with the Indians, Mel Ott apparently was dissatisfied with the play of our second baseman, Buddy Blattner, and asked me if I'd try second. Heck, I wanted to play ball, and that's the toughest position for an inexperienced guy to play. But

anyway, I opened up the season there. I missed a double play the first time around, my first opportunity, but I started to feel my way around and felt comfortable at second. But then I was moved to center field because they were having problems in center field. . . . I played center . . . in 1951; I played center field until they brought up Willie Mays. Durocher immediately put him into center field and moved me to third. Again, I was just happy to stay in the lineup and play someplace. I didn't have a problem with it. You know, I hadn't had the experience fielding balls and making plays, but I was a natural and a ballplayer. I remember Durocher hitting me ground balls just to try me out there. He hit me about eighteen or twenty ground balls, and I just jumped around and fielded them, and I remember his remark. He says, "You can't play third any better than that. Don't worry about him. He's all right."

I think Durocher worked on my stance. He had me crouching over, in other words, to make me more aggressive. I was always pretty much of a standup guy at the plate—you know, without crouching. So I think that crouching just got me more aggressive and got me into the ball more. I had pretty good success with it that year. . . .

When a young guy first steps onto a big-league ballfield in a big-league uniform—you know, it could be any field and you'd be thrilled. But the Polo Grounds belonged to the Giants, and so, to me, it was a unique ballpark. It was built more to play polo or football, really, so obviously it had short foul lines, and then it stretched out in left and right center and dead center a long way, much further than the average ballparks. But you had to learn how to play those caroms off the outfield walls in right and left. . . . There was a lot of Giant tradition going back to John McGraw's time and Bill Terry. You know, I just felt very good and very happy to be there.

My first game was the year before. In 1946 they had brought me up—my first full year in Organized Baseball. I had been in the army for two years, and I made the Jersey City Giants Triple A team in '46, and the Giants brought me up at the end of that year in the last month of the season. I hit a couple of home runs. I don't really remember my first time at bat with the Giants. I think I hit a home run, but frankly I don't remember that, whether it's true or not. [Editor's note: Thomson's first home run

was nine days after his debut.] But opening day in 1947, I hit a home run besides missing a double-play ball at second. We won that game; that's what counts.

#### 1951

Well, we thought our club looked pretty good. We had some very strong, dependable players—strong down the middle. You know, I was able to do a job in center field, and [Eddie] Stanky and [Al] Dark were a very experienced double-play combination. We had a big, strong guy in left in Monte Irvin and [also] Whitey Lockman. I guess Whitey was in the outfield at the time when Irvin was on first base. I think there were a lot of changes that year. They all seemed to work. So anyway, we had enough good players, and we had some good pitching with [Larry] Jansen and [Sal] Maglie, among others, [like Dave] Koslo, and we just felt we were strong enough to make a good run for it.

Of course we started off—we won the first game and then lost about the next eight or nine in a row [Editor's note: The Giants won the first and third games of the season but then dropped the next eleven], but then we finally got it going. Yeah, we did get on that winning streak, which made an awfully big difference.

#### **The Giants win the pennant! The Giants win the pennant! The Giants win the pennant! The Giants win the pennant!**

Well, the powers that be in baseball, I guess, decided that there was going to be a three-game playoff [in 1951] . . . I thought we had won the pennant on Sunday up in Boston, because we beat the Braves, and the Dodgers were playing down in Philly and they were losing. So, gee whiz, they ended up winning, and we were going to have to play the Dodgers in a three-game playoff, but I didn't like the sound of that at all. We feared them. We respected them. Going into that first game, we were losing one to nothing, and I got up and hit a home run with a man on and made it two to one. And Monte Irvin later hit another home run, so it was three to one. You know, you get out there and you're nervous, but once the game starts you're totally determined, and you're doing your best, and that's all you can do. This was at Ebbets Field . . . the home run wouldn't have been a home run in the Polo Grounds. I hit it over the 360-foot

mark and maybe hit the ball 380 feet, but that was an easy out in the Polo Grounds.

So, now we move to the Polo Grounds, and now we're one game up on them, so we felt pretty good about ourselves. Except Clem Labine shut us out. He was just unhittable, and 10–0. That was a terrible feeling, to get beat that badly. Hey, look. The Dodgers had a great team from top to bottom. You know, they were better than our team in the golden decade of the fifties. . . .

[Don Newcombe] was a great pitcher. He had very strong stuff. You know, he wasn't an easy guy to hit against. . . . I had some hits off him, but he got me out a lot of times. We had been through the whole season and had plenty of pep talks before. We knew what we had to do. There was nothing to say. We were professionals. Dark and Stanky and Lockman and Irvin—oh, Don Mueller and all these guys. We felt we had a good ballclub. But it's funny. That day, what was the first time for a lot of things, what I found myself doing that final game warming up before going out to take infield practice—I found myself looking around at our guys. Maybe I was looking for support. I don't know. I looked at Dark and I knew he was as good a competitor as anybody. And, boy, I'm glad he's on my team—and Stanky. And I remember looking at Lockman. You know, maybe I'm just trying to build up strength within myself. But I had never done that before. I looked at my guys over [there] and thought, "We're ready. Let's get 'em." But I'd never done that before.

There were a lot of things that happened that day and, rationalizing, and going back over and asking, . . . You know what it boils down to is, we're professionals and we get down the fundamentals and the important things: Total concentration and total determination. That's what it was that day, and, of course, the way it turned out, I guess some things were just meant to be. And that's the only way I look at it.

Of course, we were losing 4–1 going into the last of the ninth, and I never felt more dejected in my life. I threw the glove down in the dugout and I felt terrible. And I remember thinking that we weren't good enough to go beyond this point. Those Dodgers were too tough for us. What a letdown. And I also realized that I was the fifth hitter that inning. I'm dead. I don't even get a chance to

hit because Newcombe mowed us down in the eighth inning. He just looked unbeatable. But pretty soon, though, we got a couple of ground-ball base hits and, wow, things were looking up. Monte Irvin popped up. Here's our big, strong guy all year . . . and they just throw that and he popped up, which anybody could do against Newcombe.

But then . . . Lockman hit a double to left and we scored a run, and it's now 4–2 and I'm up. I get a chance to hit. But of course, that's when Mueller slid into third and hurt his ankle severely and, looking back on that and rationalizing the whole thing—they stopped the ballgame. It stopped the tension, broke the tension of the ballgame, because really I was down at third very much concerned about Mueller. You know, he was lying there in pain and I felt badly for him. It wasn't until they carried him off the field that I got back in the baseball game again. In the meantime, they had made a pitching change. I wasn't even aware of it.

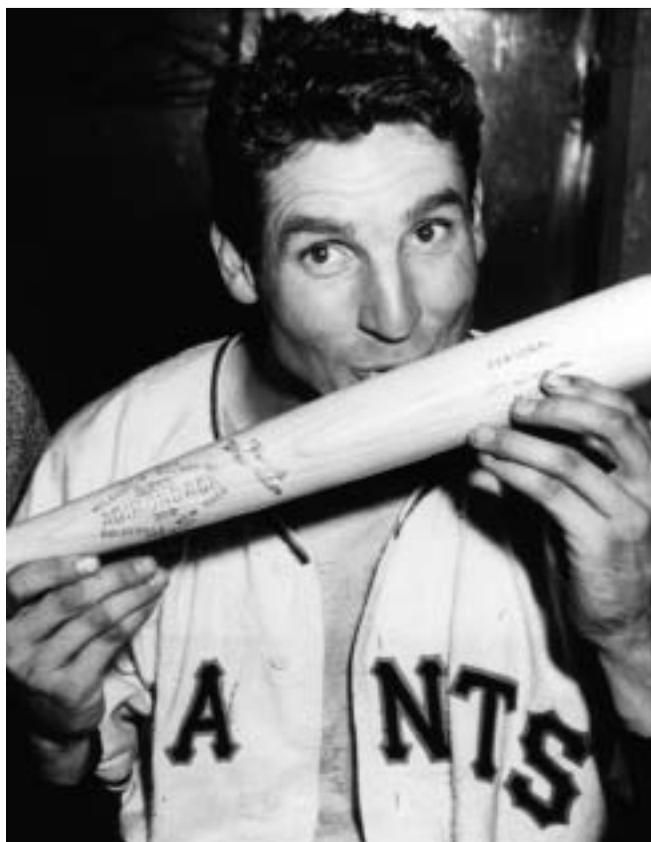
I didn't realize, and so now I'm heading to home plate with a bat in my hand all the time and I realize, Hey, I'm the next hitter, and I'd never done it before, approaching home plate from third base. . . . Then, psyching myself up, telling myself to wake up and give yourself a chance to hit, swearing at myself. . . . Wait and watch. Give yourself a chance to hit. Do a good job. All those things are what I'm saying to myself. I never talked to myself like that before. Basically it was wait and watch. Wait and watch. Don't get overanxious. As soon as you commit yourself and you're a ways out on your front foot, you know, you've got nothing left. So, wait and watch, wait and watch. And really psych myself up and swearing at myself to just give myself a chance to hit. So, I got in the batter's box and of course I realized Branca was out there, but it didn't faze me. . . .

You're up there and you're just concentrating on the ball. Of course, he threw the first pitch right through the middle of the plate, which was the way he pitched, and of course he'd played for Durocher quite a bit and that was Durocher's—you'd come in, you don't nibble at the corners, you get a strike on the guy, and then go to work. Of course, I took the first one. The only thing I can think of was I was so determined [about] waiting and watching I watched the thing right over the middle of the plate. I

later found out the guys wanted to kill me on the bench for taking that pitch.

But now, he's going to come inside on me with a bad pitch, because I get to figuring he'd come inside and get me back a little bit and then come back with a breaking ball away from the plate. Of course, in the Polo Grounds I could hit his breaking ball away from the plate out to center, right, left-center, 400 feet, you know, 450 feet, and Snider would have been out there waiting for it. But he just didn't get it in there far enough . . . and I was quick with my hands anyway. I just jumped right on it. I remember getting a glimpse of it coming in and jumping on it. That was it. I immediately thought it was a home run. I thought home run right up in my mind, but then I thought it starts to sink so obviously I got a little bit on top of it. It had to have tremendous topspin.

NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY, COOPERSTOWN, N.Y.



After taking a called strike down the middle of the plate ("I later found out the guys wanted to kill me on the bench for taking that pitch"), Thomson swung at Ralph Branca's second offering and connected for the Shot Heard Round the World, the three-run home run that won the game, 5-4, the third and deciding playoff game with the Dodgers, on October 3, 1951. The Miracle of Coogan's Bluff, the Giants' remarkable comeback of late summer 1951, was now complete: The Giants win the pennant.

I'm halfway to first and I'm watching it. I couldn't get my eyes off it, and then I saw it disappear. "Well," I thought, "it's not a home run," when it started to sink. "It's just a base hit." That's all I wanted was a base hit. Because I had hit it hard enough, it had to be off the wall. Then it disappeared and that was it. And then there was excitement that I'd never experienced before. And of course all it meant was that we'd beat those guys, and never in the world did we think they'd still be talking about it.

I've become used to it, but I've been surprised over the years that they still think and talk about this. Of course, the world of sports has become so commercialized, with baseball cards and this and that. Heck, I get mail from all over the country and these kids telling me about the home run and talking about the home run, and these are young kids! But I guess they see it on TV. . . . And actually, wherever I go, anyplace, people meet me and that's what they want to talk about.

#### 1951 World Series

That was a tough one. That hurt not being able to finish off the year with a win against the Yankees. . . . [That winter I got] a lot of mail and phone calls and a lot of stuff like that. But, of course, back then, it wasn't like today, where they'd get you on television and you'd be on all the shows and this and that. I was invited to do a lot of speaking, which I didn't do. You know, it was just phone calls and, in a sense, it was quiet, because I had to go to a few banquets, but it wasn't an everyday thing.

#### 1954: Traded to Milwaukee

You know, apparently I was an every-other-year player. I mean I was inconsistent. So after the 1953 season, you know, I didn't live up to expectations, although I think I recall my statistics a little bit, and today the same statistics would be worth three or four million dollars. I knocked in 106 runs. Somewhere around there. I just happened to listen and discuss, but I don't remember. I hit something like .272 and knocked out 26 homers or something like that, but it just wasn't what the Giants were looking for. [Editor's note: .288, 26 HRs, 106 RBIs.] So, I began hearing through the media, "Thomson's days

are coming to an end with the Giants”—of course, with a young Willie Mays to look forward to playing center field for the Giants. They had the opportunity. They needed some help in pitching and they thought I was worth something to other teams in the marketplace. They made a smart move, and they used me to get a pitcher, without whom they’d never have won it all the way they did, beating Cleveland in the World Series—Johnny Antonelli. He had a great year for them and he made the difference. . . .

So now the Giants go on and win the pennant that year. Sure, it was tough. I look back and I got traded off a World Championship team. I’d like to have been there, but I was kind of realistic. I’d like to have been there, but that’s baseball. I couldn’t blame anybody but myself. . . .

You know, the Giants treated me very well. You know, I couldn’t ask for any more, and I remember I wrote Leo Durocher a letter and told him it was a pleasure playing for him. I’ve got stories where Leo and I had our run-ins. We had our little things off and on, but Leo was the kind of guy, you know, that would open up his mouth and shoot right from the hip, and, if you had something to say, you were allowed to say it, but then it was over the next day. We didn’t hold grudges or anything like that. If you had something to say, you got it off your chest. You know, Leo was quite a guy to play for.

I had just been married and was living on Staten Island [when I was traded]. Well, I didn’t own the home; I was renting it. It was almost like a honeymoon cottage on Staten Island. Well, what my wife and I did was, we put all our stuff in storage and we moved out and we spent a year in Milwaukee—we rented homes out there. When I heard the news—I felt [Milwaukee] had a very good team. They had a big guy named Gene Conley, and I thought, “Gee, I’m glad I’m on his side,” because he was a hard-throwing basketball player, six-foot-eight, whatever it was. He had struck me once on the side of my leg, and I thought he was a guy that threw from the side. You know, you had to hang in there against him, and, if he got a little wild inside, well, it was too bad. . . .

I went on to Milwaukee. It’s part of baseball. And I disappointed myself there. I never really felt comfortable there. It wasn’t until the last year I was there that I

just started, for the first time—well, I broke my leg, of course, in spring training [in 1954]. Then I came back too soon and, heck, it bothered me through the next season, ’55. . . .

#### **1957: Back to the Giants**

It’s funny, I started off slowly [in 1957], but I just started to find myself, and I was hitting the ball well in Philadelphia when I got the news I was traded [back to the Giants]. Then again, the Braves made a good move. They needed a second baseman to kind of anchor down their infield, and [Red Schoendienst] was just the man they were looking for. So I say I helped the Braves win a World Championship too, by getting traded! . . .

I’d lost all that early, young-person feeling—excitement—about playing for the New York Giants. I’d lost that. I had grown up and married, and baseball had now become a business. It wasn’t a plaything like it was when I started.

#### **Cubs, Red Sox, Orioles . . . and life after baseball**

They really surprised me and traded me to the Cubs, and that was a bit of a shocker—right in spring training—because my wife certainly was looking forward to going out to San Francisco. I was looking forward to going out to San Francisco too—a change of scenery, certainly. . . . But of course, you know, I went over to the Cubs and spent two of the most fun years of my life in baseball. For one thing, Al Dark had been traded that same year, but the Cubs had been finishing in last place, and that’s the part that didn’t sound so hot. But, anyway, Al Dark and I went over there, and we felt we contributed pretty well to help them get into fifth place the following year. And, of course, it was . . . playing day baseball and living like a human being, going home and having dinner at night. It was a great thing. I enjoyed Chicago very much. The fans were great. . . .

Then I agreed to a contract for the Cubs and they traded me off in the winter for a guy that was never heard of. I don’t know what went on there. Maybe I signed for too much money that year, but nowadays it wouldn’t be anything.

The Orioles retired me. Oh, I was coming down to the end of the line. I didn’t look forward. We had just bought

a home in New Jersey. We bought a home and had moved to New Jersey, and we left Milwaukee after spending one year out there. We realized that we were really easterners, and we wanted to get back to this area. . . . I didn't look forward to leaving for spring training—which is always a bad sign. So I just went up to Boston, and they could feel the end coming down, and they got rid of me. Obviously, I wasn't performing well enough. Then I got to Baltimore, and that didn't work out, and so [they released me].

I came home and sat down and had a talk with my wife about where do we think we ought to go from here, and she said, "Bob, it's been baseball all of our lives. That's all we've talked about and worked at. Why don't we try to find out what else is going on in the world?" That's what I wanted to do, so I went out and looked for a job. Well, first of all, I had only had a high-school education. So I went to Stevens Institute and took a lot of aptitude tests, and they pointed out sales. That's what I've been doing. . . . I interviewed at a lot of different companies and I had a lot of interesting experiences . . . and had quite a few job offers, but I finally settled down in the paper business, and that was it. I didn't have any feelings to stay in baseball.

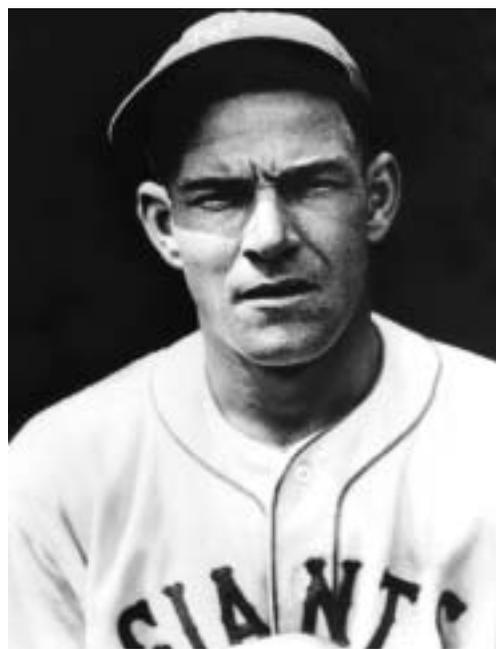
I was offered to play out in the Coast League, and I had an offer . . . to go over and play in Japan. I guess my wife and I talked about it and, of course, she was ready. She liked to travel. . . . But I guess I thought that we were just putting off the inevitable, so I never really considered it.

### **Favorite ballparks**

I enjoyed playing in Philadelphia [and Chicago]. I had some success there. . . . Other than that, there weren't any particularly great parks that I looked forward to playing in. I wouldn't be able to tell you which park I did best in, but I enjoyed going to Chicago and playing in Wrigley Field, especially on weekends.

### **Mentors**

. . . When I played for the Giants, of course, back in the days before we were flying around the country, to me people like Dark or Stanky or Larry Jansen or Whitey Lockman—we'd sit around and we'd talk baseball. So, I would say those fellows had as much of an effect on me as just anybody.



NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY, COOPERSTOWN, N.Y.

**Mel Ott, "Mr. Giant," spent his entire Hall of Fame career with the Giants, as an outfielder and occasional third baseman (1926–47) and as manager (1942–48). In the middle of the 1948 season he lost the manager's job to Durocher, who, referring to Ott, once famously commented about the cost of being nice. Thomson described Ott as "a gentleman," a hard-working, hustling player, who, however, "wasn't a tough manager" like his successor.**

### **Toughest pitchers**

Ewell Blackwell, I've always said, is the toughest pitcher. You know, Drysdale in later years, he was tough, but Ewell Blackwell, he had a snakelike delivery—all moves and, you know, he had a wicked sinker and a good changeup, curveball. There was a whole bunch of them that were tough.

### **Mel Ott, Johnny Mize, Ernie Lombardi**

Mel Ott was like I am. He was a gentleman. He wasn't a tough manager like Durocher, but he was just a ballplayer that I rooted for and kind of an idol type of guy, and that was it. He was Mr. Giant.

Big John[ny Mize], he could sit and he had great eyes. You know, he could take a ball an inch off the plate for ball four. As for me, I'd have to swing at it or else they were apt to call me out. He was a great hitter and had a great eye for the baseball and for the strike zone. And of course, he could pump those home runs out there.

Ernie [Lombardi] used to sit on the bench with his catcher's glove just like a big pancake. He'd roll it up and

he'd sit on the bench. He was just pinch-hitting then, and he'd just sit on the bench with that under his arm, and his shoes were always untied, and sometimes he had them off, I guess. We used to watch Mel Ott, when he was looking for a pinch-hitter, come down on the bench, and all he would say was, "Hey Lom." That's all. He would just nod at him and say, "Hey Lom." He didn't have to say anything else. Lom knew he was a pinch-hitter, and he always was just very relaxed. He'd bend over and tie his shoelaces and go over to the bat rack and grab a bat and just drag it up to home plate. He wouldn't even swing it sometimes, you know, like a lot of guys want to do, to get loosened up. . . . He was just a very nonchalant guy.

#### **Monte Irvin, Hank Thompson, and integration**

I do remember about Monte and Hank. I remember we took a train out to Chicago this one time and we got to Chicago and got off the train, and we all got on a bus, and Monte and Hank Thompson got in a cab and went to wherever they stayed, and I thought, "Geez, that isn't right." You know, I talked to some of the guys about it. I thought that, if they were playing on our ballclub, they ought to be able to stay with us, but that changed. . . . That would be probably '48. [Editor's note: Irvin's first game with the Giants was July 8, 1949.] I respected [Monte] as much as anybody on the ball team.

#### **Rigney, Whitey, Stanky, Maglie**

[Bill Rigney] was another Durocher man. He was a utility player, a good hitter, and a great utility player. He was a student of the game. Obviously, he learned a lot from Durocher, because he became a manager for a good number of years himself. He was a very successful man in baseball.

Whitey [Lockman] was a very low-key guy. I remember him most as a first baseman. He was an outfielder, a good outfielder. He could run and get the ball, but he broke his leg in spring training, and I don't think that leg ever—I think he lost some of his speed, but he could still run above average. But as a first baseman, he was great. He was always overshadowed in New York by Gil Hodges, but Whitey was as good a glove man as any of them—and he hit the ball.

[Eddie Stanky,] "The Brat"—there was a great guy to



NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY, COOPERSTOWN, N.Y.

**Monte Irvin, outfielder for the Giants from 1949 through 1955, played in two World Series in his eight-year major-league career, hitting .458 (11 for 24) in 1951 against the Yankees. Thomson recalls that, early on, Irvin and Hank Thompson would have to stay at a different hotel from the rest of the team when they were on the road.**

have on your ballclub if you played with him. Of course, if you played against him, you hated him. He was that type of guy. He was a cocky guy, and he was into the game. I remember when I was playing center field and a pitcher would get two strikes on a batter. [Stanky] would turn around and stand there like a general, with his arms folded, and just stare at me to see what I was going to do. Well, naturally, on our team, if Jansen was pitching and he got two strikes on a hitter, we felt we knew what he was going to do with certain hitters. So, obviously, you'd move around. So, what I'm saying is, I didn't need Stanky to turn around and wonder if I'm going to move around. . . . Freddie Fitzsimmons used to have a saying: If you're moving around you're killing the grass. You know, these pitchers weren't running around enough. So I'd holler back at him a few choice words—you know, "You play second base and I'll take care of center field." . . .

"The Barber," [Sal Maglie]—the media painted him to be such a mean guy, and of course he had a heavy

beard, but he was a very easy-going guy. He used to laugh at the reputation that they gave him. Of course, he was a tough pitcher. He did come inside on hitters, but he wasn't any kind of mean guy at all.

**Mays**

I would imagine we felt he was a great talent because he did the job in the field right away. He made some great plays, but he struggled at bat. But Leo kept him in there and, you know, he wasn't Willie Mays with the bat that year. It took him a little while before the real Willie Mays showed up with the bat. . . . He was a young kid that loved to play baseball. The good Lord put him on earth to play baseball, and he was just like a little kid—innocent little kid—who loved every minute that he was on the ball field.

**Ott as manager**

Well, we weren't a winning team [in 1948], and Mel Ott wasn't a guy who would run a tight ship. He was just a nice guy, a great ballplayer, and, given the ballplayers who could go out and do the job—because he let them go out and do his thing, do their thing, just like he did. Nobody [ever] had to manage him. He just went out and hustled and played his game of baseball. So I guess they

felt we needed somebody who was going to shake us up, give us a little more clout. And, of course, Durocher had a lot of clout.

**Durocher**

Leo was that kind of manager. If he had something to say, he wouldn't hold back. No, heck. I liked playing for Leo, because he played ball. As long as you were out there hustling and giving 110 percent, making an error had nothing to do with it. Really, I don't remember what it was that he got teed off at me for. I think it might have been in Cincinnati. I'd been sick all night long, and the next day I showed up—it was a Sunday morning. I don't know whether I'd just had a virus or something, but, whatever it was, I really felt terrible. It was a hot day in Cincinnati and I was playing center field, and I didn't catch a ball that he felt I should have caught, and I think he jumped on me for that. I forget what I said—"I did the best I could" or whatever it was—but anyway I think that was what it was all about. . . . Back then, we didn't get out of a ballgame because something was wrong with us. He probably never knew that I was in terrible shape. I agreed with him that I probably should have had the ball, but it wasn't the usual effort—some little thing like that. So, really, it wasn't much more than that. So, as I

NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY, COOPERSTOWN, N.Y.



**Giants' manager Leo Durocher had a reputation for driving his players. Despite his run-ins with Durocher, Thomson admired him. "We didn't hold grudges," he said. "You know, Leo was quite the guy to play for."**

said, I wrote a letter to him. I wouldn't have written a letter to him if I didn't feel the way I did about him.

**Spahn, Mathews, Aaron, Banks**

Oh, Spahn—he was great. . . . He was not only a great pitcher. He could hit, he could field, so he helped himself win a lot of ballgames. Eddie [Mathews] was strong and had a good swing and could really rip that ball. He was just very strong. He showed up every day—not say, a whole lot around the clubhouse. Just went out there and played ball—a tough man and a great glove man.

[Hank Aaron] was a young kid. He showed up, like Willie. He wasn't as excitable as Willie; he was quieter and low-key. You wouldn't hear him in the clubhouse. Willie had that high-pitched voice, and guys would kid him, and you'd hear him yakking away. But Hank was a low-key guy. He just went out and swung the bat.

Ernie [Banks] I always thought hit more three-run homers than anybody I'd ever played with. He would do the job at shortstop and do the job at bat and was just a very easy-going guy. He used to kid me every day I walked into the park. He'd say, "You're the Thomson with the *p* or without the *p*?" He was talking about Hank Thompson.

**Friends in baseball**

Larry Jansen and Whitey Lockman. I played on the Braves but there was nobody I'd call close, but guys that, you know, I knew and liked. I know when the Giants came into Milwaukee and played I'd go out with Lockman and Jansen—kind of like Jack Lohrke. He was one of the people I ran around with. But, no, that's about it.

**Baseball in 1993**

Well, [today] I keep an eye on things. I don't have the time or don't care to sit and watch television for three hours watching a ballgame unless, once in a while, I enjoy a particular pitcher. Maybe I want to watch a particular player. I just kind of keep a distance and have a fairly rough idea what's going on. But the game has gotten to be a pain in the neck, in a sense, based on the whole—starting with agents and the huge contracts, where the game of baseball has been left behind. The business aspect is what everybody seems to be more



NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY, COOPERSTOWN, N.Y.

**"I think Durocher worked on my stance," Thomson recalled years later. "He had me crouching over, in other words, to make me more aggressive. I was always pretty much of a standup guy at the plate—you know, without crouching. So I think that crouching just got me more aggressive and got me into the ball more."**

concerned with. Of course, the media is part of that. You know, back in our time, we signed a one-year contract based on what our performance was the year before. Then, it was over again. There was no haggle and hassle . . . over contracts. Once you did [it], it's over with. The business [now], it never ends. Players aren't satisfied when they're already making two or three million, and you wonder how much can they spend? And what about the fans? This moving around from team to team—when we played, there were times we got traded, but not the way these guys move around today. So, what if the kids' . . . favorite player has taken off for another team for an extra million dollars? So, that's part of it. . . . The instability of players moving around the way they do has become more of a selfish thing. Hey look, you can't blame the players. . . . It's the system and baseball the way it is now. It's too bad. ■

# A Bitter Rivalry Recalled

## The Cleveland Indians and the New York Yankees, 1947–1956

James E. Odenkirk

The late Ed Linn, coauthor of *Veeck—As in Wreck*, later wrote in *The Great Rivalry* (1991), “I don’t care what anybody says, there is no rivalry on the face of the earth that can compare with the Yankees and Red Sox.”<sup>1</sup>

Linn, who died in 2000, might have been able to justify that statement more easily had he qualified it to cover only the period since 1990 or so. The intensity of the Yankees–Red Sox rivalry since then is indisputable. It is enthusiastically hyped in the media, print and broadcast alike, particularly ESPN. In the mid to late 1990s, Red Sox Nation was reinvigorated by teams that, at least at times during the regular season and finally in the American League Championship Series in 1999, were competitive and that battled the reemergent Yankees dynasty toe-to-toe. At times, regular-season games took on the aura of playoffs.

The “Curse of the Bambino,” still assumed to be operative, was finally swept away when the Red Sox won the World Series in 2004; Dan Shaughnessy, noted sportswriter for the *Boston Globe*, popularized the notion with his book *The Curse of the Bambino*, published in 1990. The theme of the curse took on a life of its own and entered baseball language. Glenn Stout referred to the Curse as “a nice hook, but not very good history.”<sup>2</sup> Peter Gammons described the phrase as a “silly, mindless gimmick that is as stupid as the wave.”<sup>3</sup> Spurned by knowledgeable fans, it largely faded away after the two Red Sox championships in recent years.

Observers have long questioned the description of the Red Sox as the Yankees’ rival, “one that equals,” according to Merriam-Webster’s, “another in desired abilities.” From 1918 (when Boston edged out Cleveland for the pennant) through 2003, the Yankees had won twenty-six World Series. The Red Sox had won—one. The ratio

hardly represented equality. Since 2004, pundits have been less inclined to dismiss competition between the Yankees and the Red Sox as an entirely predictable contest between “the hammer and the nail.”<sup>4</sup>

### Boston or Cleveland? Cleveland

This author humbly thrusts himself into the fray. I have been a close observer of Major League Baseball since the mid-1930s. During the remarkable period 1947–56, as I see it, the dominant rivalry in the American League was Yankees–Indians, not Yankees–Red Sox. My argument is supported by two sets of statistics. The first is the performance of the Yankees, Indians, and Red Sox on the field. The second is attendance figures for games between the Yankees and Red Sox and for games between the Yankees and Indians.

The Yankees won four straight world championships in the late 1930s, only to have my beloved Indians, briefly known as the “Crybabies” in 1940, lose to Detroit that year in a pennant race in which Cleveland for once had the inside track. The Yankees won pennants again in 1941, 1942, and 1943 and the World Series in 1941 and 1943, but the worst was yet to come.

During the twelve-year span from 1947 through 1958, the Bronx Bombers won ten pennants and eight world championships. The only other team to win the American League pennant during that period was the Cleveland Indians. Since the Yankees’ first World Series appearance, in 1921, the only teams to beat them there were the New York Giants (1921, 1922), the St. Louis Cardinals (1926, 1942), the Brooklyn Dodgers (1955), and the Milwaukee Braves (1957). And hence the expression “damn Yankees,” which may have had its origins as a derogatory term for Union soldiers during the Civil War but by the second half of the twentieth century had come

to be firmly associated with the New York team of the American League.

In contrast, only three times between 1920 and 1948 did the Cleveland Indians finish the season within 10½ games of the pennant winner, eliciting variations on the theme of “wait until next year,” a saying made famous in Brooklyn. For a period of ten years, however, it was the Indians, not the Dodgers or the Red Sox, who posed the most persistent challenge to the Yankee dynasty.

At the outset of the Great Depression, Boston and Cleveland were comparable in size. According to the U.S. census of 1930, the populations of Boston and of Cleveland were 781,000 and 900,000, respectively.<sup>5</sup> During and after World War II, the migration of African Americans from the South to the industrialized North was significant, but, even so, the populations of the two cities remained about the same, 801,000 and 915,000, although in both cases the metropolitan area, consisting of outlying suburbs, grew substantially.<sup>6</sup> Television was in its infancy in the late 1940s, beset with numerous technical difficulties and an overabundance of snow on the screen. For detailed information about their favorite teams, fans relied on *Baseball Magazine*, *The Sporting News*, and metropolitan newspapers. Three Cleveland newspapers were highly competitive in their effort to provide readers with deep reporting about the fortunes of the Tribe. The local sportswriters were excellent. Two of them, Gordon Cobbledick and Hal Lebovitz, would be inducted into the writers wing of the Baseball Hall of Fame.

Boston fans read about the Boston Millionaires (a name often identified with their local team after millionaire Tom Yawkey purchased the franchise in 1933)<sup>7</sup> in one of four dailies, particularly the *Boston Globe*, which featured sportswriters Dave Egan and Al Hirshberg. Fans in all three cities eagerly listened to radio broadcasts of the games described by Curt Gowdy (Boston), Mel Allen (New York), and Jimmy Dudley (Cleveland), all of whom would receive the Hall of Fame’s prestigious Ford C. Frick Award.

### “Best Location in the Nation”

How and why did the Indians rise to become the major challenger to the Yankee dynasty during the decade after World War II? The answer begins with a brief look at the



WESTERN RESERVE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, ANDY KRAFFERT COLLECTION

**The Cleveland Indians’ brain trust. Left to right, general manager Hank Greenberg, manager Lou Boudreau, and owner Bill Veeck.**

history of Cleveland’s rapid growth in the period leading up to that point. The Forest City had been a major industrial center since the turn of the twentieth century. Cleveland was very much “alive” after the war ended in August 1945. Despite inflation, fans had disposable income and were eager to support the home team. By 1948 local journalists and advertisers had dubbed Cleveland, the sixth largest city in the country, “City of Champions” and, what proved to be a more enduring title, “Best Location in the Nation” (both of them a far cry from the moniker “Mistake by the Lake,” which in later decades would attach to Municipal Stadium, home of the Indians and the Cleveland Browns).<sup>8</sup> The Cleveland Buckeyes had won the National Negro Baseball Championship in 1945. The Cleveland Barons consistently challenged for or won the Calder Cup in the American Hockey League, and the Browns in their early years dominated the All-American Football Conference and then, later, the National Football League.

But what about the Tribe, the professional team with the longest history in Cleveland? It had been 26 years since their last and only world championship when, in 1946, a 32-year old ex-marine named Bill Veeck bought the Indians and established the foundation for rapid success, which included some classic battles between Cleveland and New York. Veeck set three main goals: a pennant, increased fan interest, and increased attendance.

Before 1947, the Tribe played most of their home games in cozy and quaint League Park, whose seating capacity, though it shifted as the facility was renovated over the years, never exceeded 27,000. I watched my first major-league game there in 1936 and saw Hal Trosky stroke a home run over the close right-field wall (290 feet from home plate at the foul line), which, however, was 40 feet high, the top 20 feet consisting of chicken wire held up with steel beams. Except for the second half of the 1932 season and all of 1933, the Indians used Municipal Stadium, a cavernous facility on the shore of Lake Erie, only for weekend games and select night games—until 1947, when they abandoned League Park and scheduled all their games for the Stadium, which sat 78,000. Veeck toured Ohio during the winter to promote the rejuvenated Cleveland Indians to any school, church, service club, business, or bar that would listen to him.<sup>9</sup> He scheduled all kinds of gameday promotions, some zany, some sentimental, but all with the idea of making a day at the ballpark fun.

Veeck's efforts soon paid off. The Indians won the World Series in 1948. Attendance was 2,620,627, which still stands as the record for the 77-game home schedule of the pre-expansion era.<sup>10</sup> Veeck sold the club after the 1949 season, and in 1950 the Indians came under the leadership of Hank Greenberg, the Hall of Famer, who was now appointed vice president and general manager. Through 1956 the Tribe would remain a consistent contender.

Meanwhile, Veeck, following the lead of Branch Rickey over in the National League, signed to a major-league contract 23-year old Larry Doby, the first black player in the American League.<sup>11</sup> The following summer he signed the venerable Leroy "Satchel" Paige. A baseball icon, Paige drew thousands to the ballpark, both home and away. The lanky pitcher went 6–1 to help the Indians on their way to narrowly winning the pennant and then their first world championship in 28 years. In addition to future Hall of Famers Doby and Paige, eleven other former Negro Leaguers, including first baseman Luke Easter, debuted with the Tribe between 1949 and 1956

The wary Veeck was unsure how Cleveland's fans would react to an integrated team. He knew that in professional football the Cleveland Browns had set precedent

#### Rendezvous at Gate D

I participated in a small way in that storybook summer of 1948 at Municipal Stadium. I had been appointed commissioner of the youth baseball program in Mansfield, 72 miles southwest of Cleveland. One of my responsibilities was to drive a rickety old bus filled with youngsters to Cleveland to see the Tribe in action when they played at home on Saturdays. We arrived at 11 A.M. at Municipal Stadium and proceeded to Gate D in center field, where as many as 10,000 young Indian fans were admitted free. We sat along the left-field foul line, where all the youngsters waited to chase after balls during batting practice and for home-run balls during the game. I was paid three dollars per trip and given a ticket to the game. The Tribe's record for the games I attended that season was 16–4.

—Jim Odenkirk

by signing Marion Motley and Bill Willis in 1946. Veeck appreciated that Cleveland's growing African American community was a source on which he could draw to increase the team's fan base. In 1950, one seventh of the people living in Cleveland proper were black.

The Yankees did not integrate until much later, signing Elston Howard to a minor-league contract in 1950; he would not debut with the major-league team until 1955. In Boston, which had been a capital of the antislavery movement a century earlier, the Red Sox were slow to join the rest of Major League Baseball in razing the color barrier. Owner Tom Yawkey, manager Pinky Higgins, and general manager Eddie Collins were all perceived to be quietly resisting integration. When Elijah "Pumpsie" Green debuted with Boston in 1959, the Red Sox became the last major-league team to embrace what Jules Tygiel called "baseball's great experiment."<sup>12</sup>

#### Municipal Stadium, Yankee Stadium, Fenway Park

The main pillar on which my argument rests is attendance—attendance at games between the Yankees and Red Sox and at games between the Yankees and Indians. (I do not consider attendance at games between the Indians and Red Sox, as I assume that fans of neither

team perceived the other team as the primary obstacle to their goal of winning the pennant.)

Two important variables influenced attendance. First, it can be assumed that it was depressed by inclement weather, particularly in the early weeks of the season. Second, the seating capacities of the three ballparks differed significantly. At Municipal Stadium in Cleveland, it shifted somewhat over time but never fell below 73,000 during the period in question. Yankee Stadium sat 67,000, and Fenway Park only 35,000. In both leagues, the regular season was 154 games, each team playing 22 times against each of seven league opponents.

Standing in stark contrast to old League Park, Municipal Stadium was built in part for the Indians but also for other large public events. Every year during the period 1947–56, the Indians’ attendance exceeded 1 million, a figure high for that era. The Stadium was demolished in 1996, and by the time you read this the old Yankee Stadium may have already given way to the nearby smaller replica that is still under construction as I write. In baseball, the football-size crowds that some of the old facilities could accommodate are becoming obsolete, as the trend toward major-league ballparks that are relatively small and intimate shows no sign of abatement.

As would be expected, given the size of their venues, Cleveland and New York had higher attendance figures than did Boston. The Indians during this period drew 3,966,855 when playing the Yankees in Cleveland. The Yankees during the same period drew 3,746,045 when playing the Indians in New York; when playing the Red Sox in New York, they drew only slightly more, 3,895,503.<sup>13</sup> (See accompanying table.)

Of the 109 home games that the Red Sox played against the Yankees in Boston, 30 of them drew fewer than 25,000.<sup>14</sup> Yankees–Indians in Cleveland fell below 25,000 only 25 times. Average attendance at a game between the Yankees and Red Sox was 25,435 in Fenway Park, 35,414 at Yankee Stadium. Average attendance at a game between the Yankees and Indians was 36,062 in Cleveland, 34,055 in New York.

These attendance figures suggest that, in New York, the Yankees’ rivalry with the Indians was felt to be almost exactly as strong as the Yankees’ rivalry with the Red Sox. The difference was that Clevelanders were more drawn to the Indians’ rivalry with the Yankees than Bostonians were drawn to the Red Sox’ rivalry with the Yankees. The large difference between the seating capacities of Municipal Stadium and Fenway Park might appear to make that assertion problematic, but in fact Yankees–Red

THE CLEVELAND PRESS COLLECTION, CLEVELAND STATE UNIVERSITY



**Cleveland Municipal Stadium, “a cavernous facility,” seating 78,000 in its first year of operation, 1932, was the site of 24 Yankees–Indians games that drew more than 60,000 during the ten-year period 1947–56.**

**August 8, 1948—a turning point**

A memorable episode in the great Indians–Yankees rivalry of that era occurred on August 8, 1948, in the first game of a doubleheader. Four teams—the A’s, Red Sox, Indians, and Yankees—were all within two games of first place. Lou Boudreau, the Tribe’s inspirational manager, was sidelined with a sprained ankle, strained left knee, and bruised shoulder after a collision at second base three days earlier. Cleveland trailed 6–4 in the seventh inning of the first game. With the bases loaded and two out, left-handed Thurman Tucker was due to bat against left-hander Joe Page, the Yankees’ ace reliever. Boudreau, who had been soaking his ankle in a bucket of ice, quickly put on his sock and shoe, grabbed a bat, and limped to the plate to the cheers and amazement of 73,484 partisan fans.

“I was sure that New York manager Bucky Harris figured I couldn’t hit because I was hurt and knew the only other right-handed batters we had on the bench were Joe Tipton and Bob Kennedy,” Boudreau said of his decision to put himself in to bat for Tucker. “I felt it would be our last shot to win and also, however immodest it sounds, I knew I was the best [hitter] we had available.”

The count on Boudreau went to 2 and 2. He swung at Page’s next pitch, a fastball, lining it to the right of second base and into center field. “It might have been a double, but I barely made it to first base, my ankle hurt so much,” Boudreau said. The hit scored two runs, and Satchel Paige would go on to record the win for the Indians. The Indians won the second game of the doubleheader as well. Boudreau called his long single the biggest thrill of his life. Veeck said it was the most courageous thing he had ever seen in baseball.

**SOURCES**

Franklin A. Lewis, *The Cleveland Indians* (New York: Putnam, 1949), 260., Russell Schneider *The Cleveland Indians Encyclopedia* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), 81.

Sox in Boston drew more than 33,500 (a sellout was 35,000) only 21 times. Attendance fluctuated throughout the period and, predictably, declined in Boston in the 1950s as the Red Sox’ performance declined. Throughout the period taken as a whole, the Cleveland–New York matchup drew more fans in New York and Cleveland taken together than Boston–New York drew in New York

and Boston taken together. While attendance for all matchups in the American League remain to be tabulated, it is at least reasonable to assume that none exceeded Cleveland–New York.

It was an event whenever the two chief contenders for the American League pennant met. From Public Square in the heart of downtown Cleveland, thousands would walk toward the long flight of stairs near the West Third Street railway bridge and then make their way down the walkways leading to the lakefront stadium. Yankees–Indians games during this period in Cleveland drew 24 crowds of more than 60,000. Of those, 11 were more than 70,000, and one even exceeded 80,000. Attendance at the Yankees–Indians doubleheader on September 12, 1954, was 86,563, a regular-season record that still stands.

**New York, Cleveland, Boston—and usually in that order**

What accounts for the intensity of this rivalry between the Indians and Yankees? All three teams—Boston, Cleveland, New York—were loaded with veteran players and tended to match up well against each other.

On December 6, 1946, Veeck completed a trade that would later prove to be decisive for his team’s fortunes,

NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY, COOPERSTOWN, N.Y.



Yankee Stadium in the 1940s and '50s, before renovations would shrink its capacity, sat 67,000.

enabling the Indians, a couple of years later, finally to get past the New York Yankees. He sent them catcher Sherman Lollar and second baseman Ray Mack for pitchers Gene Bearden, Al Gettel, and outfielder Hal Peck; Bearden, critically wounded in South Pacific action, would have only one good season, 1948, but what a season—the Indians could not have won the pennant and World Series without him. A couple of months earlier, on October 11, 1946, the Yankees sent second baseman Joe Gordon to the Indians for pitcher Allie Reynolds—a trade that can be said to have benefited both teams. “The Gordon–Reynolds trade was one of those deals that won pennants for each side,” Veeck wrote. “You can’t ask for anything fairer than that.”<sup>15</sup>

During this ten-year period, the Bronx Bombers won eight pennants, the Tribe two, and the Red Sox were shut out, although they had won the pennant in 1946. Most disheartening for the Indians was that they regularly finished second to the Yankees, a theme that had come to define the managership of Al Lopez. Lopez met with general manager Hank Greenberg after the 1955 season with the idea of resigning, citing “stomach problems” brought on partly by the frustration of being the runner-up in the American League in four of the five past seasons. Greenberg talked Lopez into staying. Again, the Indians finished second, again to the hated Yankees.

After the 1956 season, Lopez finally did resign, and Greenberg was fired after the 1957 season.<sup>16</sup>

The intense rivalry between Cleveland and New York began to unravel. Casey Stengel’s Yankees would not surrender their apparent lock on the American League pennant, and neither the Indians nor the Red Sox could break it. During 1947–56, New York’s record was 123–97 against the Indians, 124–95 against the Red Sox. The Indians won the season series with New York only once; they split twice.<sup>17</sup> The Red Sox won once, split once. Another telling statistic is derived from the simple formula whereby each of the three teams is awarded points corresponding to the position where it finished in the standings. As in golf, the low score wins. The Yankees during this period finished with 13 points, the Indians with 23, and the Red Sox with 35.

Given the Tribe’s famously outstanding pitching during this era, why didn’t it fare better? The four-man rotation of Bob Feller, Bob Lemon, Early Wynn, and Mike Garcia is arguably the greatest in the history of the game. Among them, Indians pitchers had seventeen 20-win seasons during this period. The Yankees had six. The Red Sox and Yankees had several pitchers with victory numbers in the high teens, but Red Sox pitchers could claim only three 20-game seasons, one by Ellis Kinder and two by Mel Parnell.<sup>18</sup> The Most Valuable Player award went to a

NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY, COOPERSTOWN, N.Y.



**Fenway Park, which sat 35,000, sold out (or nearly so) 21 Yankees–Red Sox games during 1947–56. For 30 games during that period, the Sox drew fewer than 25,000.**

NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY, COOPERSTOWN, N.Y.



**Larry Doby, who at 23 became the first black player in the American League, was signed by Indians' owner Bill Veeck and played his first game with Cleveland on July 5, 1947, only 11 weeks after Jackie Robinson debuted with the Brooklyn Dodgers. Doby would soon be joined by future Hall of Famer Satchel Paige and 11 other former Negro Leaguers, including Luke Easter, who would play for the Indians at one time or another from the late 1940s through 1956.**

Yankee six times during the ten-year period, whereas the Indians claimed two, the Red Sox one.<sup>19</sup>

### **Cleveland's woes begin to mount**

And so a golden era for the Tribe and the city of Cleveland was coming to a close. Losing seasons would become the rule, year after year. The Indians staged one more valiant effort, in 1959, only to fade in September, as so often happened, and lose out to the "Go-Go" White Sox, owned by none other than Bill Veeck and managed by none other than Al Lopez.

In his novel *Crooked River Burning*, Mark Winegardner, a native Clevelander, captured the disappointment and sense of despair that had come to grip his hometown and its baseball team. Considering Game 1 of the 1954 World Series, between the Indians and another New York team, the Giants, he writes:

Bad enough that this has to happen, why does it have to happen in New York. . . . Because, God is the most shameless of classical dramatists. The ostensibly inconsequential moment that will presage Cleveland's descent

into loserdom and laff-riot Rust Belt pathos must necessarily come at the hands of its nemesis. Apotheosized in the gloved hand of young, racing, dashing Willie Mays. It figures. If a thing is going to happen, it figures it's going to happen to Cleveland. Cleveland gets past its nemesis, the Yankees, who won every damned pennant since Cleveland's last one. And what happens? Right! New Yorkers may be surprised to learn that the rest of America has been scorned, abandoned, and upstaged by New York so often as to render "New York underdog" oxymoronic.<sup>20</sup>

As an aside, I will add that I could share the sentiment Winegardner so eloquently expresses here—I had tickets for Game 5 of the 1954 World Series. I later enjoyed a bit of retribution in 1958 when, as a graduate student at Columbia, I attended my first World Series game and saw Warren Spahn and the Milwaukee Braves shut out the Yankees 3–0.

The decline of Cleveland's baseball franchise coincided with that of the city itself. In 1969, the Cuyahoga (an American Indian name meaning "crooked river") actually caught on fire, becoming a symbol of the state into which Cleveland had fallen. To the rest of America, it had come to epitomize Rust Belt blight. Industries in this once proud city were in disarray. After the election of Carl Stokes in 1967, it did enjoy the distinction of becoming the first major American city to elect a black mayor, but the race riots it suffered in the late 1960s quickly took their toll. On its way to becoming a one-newspaper town, the city saw the *Cleveland News* fold in 1960 and the *Cleveland Press* bleed circulation until it too closed its doors in 1982, leaving only the *Plain Dealer* standing. By 1970, Cleveland's population had dropped markedly. A major exodus to the suburbs left parts of the inner city in shambles. It was not a pretty sight.

### **The Tribe begins its forty years in the desert**

Four factors contributed heavily to the Tribe's travails. The first involved the Yankees in a way that no one could have expected. On May 7, 1957, Herb Score, the best young pitcher in baseball, the American League Rookie of the Year in 1955 and AL strikeout leader in 1955 and 1956, was nearly blinded when he was hit in the right eye by a line drive off the bat of New York's Gil McDougald at the Stadium in front of 18,386 horrified fans. He did not lose his eye, and Score claimed that it was a sore

elbow that kept him from regaining his old form. Whatever the reason, he would never be a consistently effective pitcher again. After struggling with the Indians and then the White Sox, he retired after the 1962 season and a couple of years later began his second career as the Indians' TV and then radio announcer.

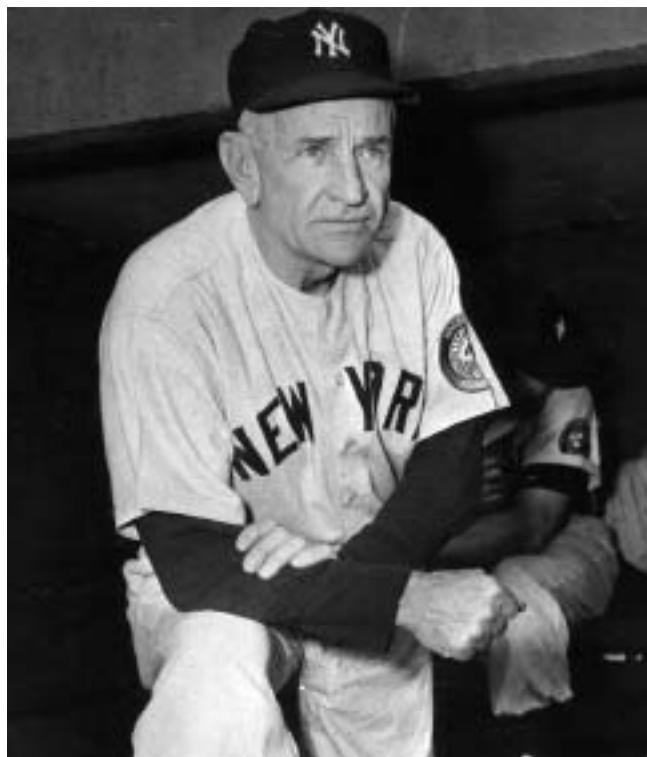
Second, Frank "Trader" Lane, hired as general manager in 1958, traded away some of the best talent that the Indians didn't lose to injury. His first year on the job he sent outfielder Roger Maris, pitcher Dick Tomaneck, and infielder Preston Ward to the Kansas City "Yankees" for shortstop Woodie Held and first baseman Vic Power.<sup>21</sup> To the surprise to no one, Maris would be in a New York Yankee uniform within two years, and the rest is history. Two years later he brought down on Cleveland the "Curse of Rocky Colavito" when he traded Colavito to the Detroit Tigers for outfielder Harvey Kuenn. Colavito, a slugger, was a fan favorite in Cleveland. In the mid-1950s he and Score were seen as the core of the next generation of the great Tribe powerhouse. Kuenn, a good defensive outfielder, had hit .353 in 1959 to win the American League batting title. A singles hitter, he hit .308 in 1960 and was then traded at the end of the season. Third, soon after Veeck sold the team in 1949, Indians ownership entered a phase during which it changed hands frequently. From 1949 until the Jacobs brothers bought the team in 1986, it was controlled by as many as nine different owners. Most of them were ineffectual, and at times the club was near bankruptcy. I recall attending an Indians game in May in the early 1980s and being interviewed by a local TV station. The weather was terrible. About 6,000 fans were on hand, and the Indians were losing. The interviewer asked, "Why are you here?" I didn't have a good answer. Rumors persisted that the club would be relocated to New Orleans, Denver, or some other city. The team had long ago taken on the character of a small-market franchise.

Finally, the rivalry between the Indians and the Yankees received a heavy blow from league expansion and the realignment of teams into divisions. With the redistribution of teams across three divisions in 1994, the season series between the two teams was reduced to 14 games (only 9 of which were played that year, because of the work stoppage). A further reduction, to as few as

6 or 7 games (it varies from year to year), followed the introduction of interleague play in 1997. Conversely, the season series between the Yankees and the Red Sox remains 18 (and, some seasons, 19) games, a condition that supports their ability to maintain their rivalry at a level that exceeds that of the great Yankees-Indians rivalry in the decade following the end of World War II.

### A tale of three cities

The Indians went deep in the tank during the 1970s and '80s, and the Yankees and Red Sox also had their down times during that period. Since 1995, however, all three teams have winning records and have enjoyed stretches during which they have been dominant. The Yankees have won four World Series and ten division titles. The Red Sox have put to rest the Curse of the Bambino with two titles and two World Series championships. The Indians have gone some considerable distance toward burying the Curse of Rocky Colavito, having won seven division titles and made two appearances in the World Series, and, in the process, defeated the Yankees in two of three playoff engagements.



**Casey Stengel led his team to 10 pennants and 7 world championships during his remarkable 12-year tenure as the Yankees' manager, from 1949 through 1960.**

NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY, COOPERSTOWN, N.Y.

**Attendance—Red Sox and Yankees, Indians and Yankees, 1947–1956**

	BOSTON at NEW YORK		CLEVELAND at NEW YORK		NEW YORK at BOSTON		NEW YORK at CLEVELAND	
	Total	Average per game	Total	Average per game	Total	Average per game	Total	Average per game
1947	419,763	38,160	329,347	29,941	306,228	27,839	293,668	26,697
1948	566,153	51,468	447,651	40,696	305,932	27,812	446,201	40,564
1949	575,915	52,356	460,929	41,903	332,226	30,202	605,058	55,005
1950	483,501	43,955	362,766	32,979	308,424	28,039	444,809	40,437
1951	381,836	34,712	417,602	37,964	284,300	25,845	418,414	38,038
1952	299,530	27,230	297,677	27,062	240,651	21,877	360,083	32,735
1953	246,932	22,448	366,384	33,308	269,810	26,981	323,282	29,389
1954	295,259	26,842	398,361	36,215	254,445	23,131	426,804	38,800
1955	342,546	31,141	349,109	31,737	212,329	19,303	356,459	32,405
1956	284,068	25,824	316,219	28,747	258,106	23,464	292,077	26,552
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,895,503</b>	<b>35,414</b>	<b>3,746,045</b>	<b>34,055</b>	<b>2,772,451</b>	<b>25,435</b>	<b>3,966,855</b>	<b>36,062</b>

SOURCES: Retrosheet.org for all years except 1950, whose figures are from *The Sporting News*. Attendance figures vary slightly in different sources. 1950 data includes estimates for some games.

Attendance for game of 23 August 1950, Boston at New York, could not be found. Average attendance for the other 10 games, Boston at New York, was substituted. For all years, per-game averages reflect doubleheaders counted as two games, although a single attendance figure was given for both games taken together.

The success of these three franchises during the past decade or so, under varying division alignments and play-off configurations, brings back memories from what is sometimes described as the golden era of baseball.<sup>22</sup> One major difference between then and now is the size of some of the crowds back then. On the whole, attendance was lower, but to hear of the exceptional crowds of 70,000 or even 80,000 for high-stakes games is striking to fans in these early years of the twenty-first century, when the big stadium has been supplanted by the smaller ballpark. Still, for the most part it was baseball as we know it today. The enthusiasm, the disappointment in defeat, and the exultation of victory were much the same as they are now. The titanic struggle between the Red Sox and Yankees that has dominated the baseball universe in recent years had its forerunner in the great Yankees–Indians rivalry of the past. Much like the Red Sox today, the Tribe back then both lost and won in its mighty struggle to defeat the New York Yankees, the most successful professional sports team in America in the twentieth century, but the twenty-first century belongs to—time will tell. ■

**NOTES**

An earlier version of this article was delivered at the SABR annual convention in Cleveland in June 2008.

1. Ed Linn, *The Great Rivalry: The Yankees and the Red Sox, 1901–1990*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1991), ix.
2. Glenn Stout and Richard A. Johnson, eds., *Red Sox Century: 100 Years of Red Sox Baseball*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000).
3. Dan Shaughnessy, *Reversing the Curse*. (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2005), 9.
4. *Ibid*, 21.
5. *Fifteenth Census of the United States*, 1930, vol. 3, parts 1–2 (Washington, D.C.: Department of Commerce, 1932), 519, 1110.
6. *Seventeenth Decennial Census of the United States*, 1950, vols. 1–2 (Washington, D.C.: Department of Commerce, 1952), 1:35–91, 2:21–67.
7. Steven A. Riess, ed., *The American League*, vol. 2 of *Encyclopedia of Major League Baseball Clubs* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2006), 2:514.
8. Steven A. Riess, ed., *Encyclopedia of Major League Baseball Clubs*, 584–85.
9. Riess, *The Encyclopedia of Major League Baseball Clubs*, 2:582.
10. *Ibid*, 2:584.
11. Terry Pluto, *Our Tribe: A Loving Look at a Thirty-Year Slump* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999), 144–50.
12. Riess, *Encyclopedia of Major League Baseball Clubs*, 519–20.
13. Attendance figures are drawn from Retrosheet.org except for the year 1955, which reflects data drawn from both Retrosheet and *The Sporting News*. *The Sporting News*, 1947–56; *New York Times*, 1947–56.
14. The Red Sox played 11 games a year against the Yankees at Fenway Park except for 1953, when they played 10.
15. Bill Veeck, with Ed Linn, *Veeck—As in Wreck* (New York: Putnam, 1962), 144.
16. Russell Schneider, *The Cleveland Indians Encyclopedia*, 71, 343.
17. In 1954, when the Indians set an American League record by winning 111 games, their record against the Yankees was 11–11. The temptation to look for some numerological significance is hard to resist.
18. Joseph L. Reichler, ed., *The Baseball Encyclopedia*. (New York: Macmillan, 1988), 396–413.
19. *Ibid*, 35.
20. Mark Winegardner, *Crooked River Burning*, 183.
21. Russell Schneider, *The Cleveland Indians Encyclopedia*, 72, 75.
22. R. W. Apple, “Oh, to Be in Cleveland, Now That Pride Is There,” *New York Times*, 22 October 1995.

# Ace

## The Jake Jones Story

Dick Thompson

*One thing I can't go for is any "hero" stuff. I know I am no hero. All right, I flew 39 missions—I know too many others who flew 100 and more. . . . Just because I happen to be in baseball, it seems to be big news. Well, I'm not kidding myself and I am not going to kid anyone else.*

—Ted Williams, on returning from Korea

One of Joe McCarthy's first moves as the new manager of the Boston Red Sox in 1948 is also his least remembered. His moving Johnny Pesky to third base to make room for Vern Stephens at shortstop is still often discussed, and his decision to start Denny Galehouse in the 1948 playoff game is a part of Boston baseball lore. Fans and historians may be able to name Billy Goodman as the team's first baseman in 1948 but few will remember that Marse Joe's initial intent was to give outfielder Stan Spence the job, and fewer still can recall that the man McCarthy benched in favor of Spence was a forgotten World War II flying ace named Jake Jones.

Jones had come to Boston in 1947 when Joe Cronin was acting as de facto general manager for an ailing Eddie Collins. Joe first discussed the deal with Chicago manager Ted Lyons at the beginning of June but nothing came of it until the White Sox were in Boston about two weeks later. "Joe asked me what I thought of it," Tom Yawkey told Harold Kaese of the *Boston Globe* after the trade. "I told him that it was okay with me if it was okay with him. He was closer to the field and the players than I was."

The trade—Jones for Rudy York—was completed on June 14 and the next day Jones blasted two balls over the left-field wall and drove in 7 runs in a doubleheader sweep of his old team. His walk-off grand slam in the ninth inning of the nightcap broke a 4-4 tie. "I guess the

trade is all right for tonight, at least," Cronin remarked, with a grin that was likened to that of comedian Joe E. Brown. Jones's new teammates were awed by his power. "He's strong," said Johnny Pesky. "I'm glad he is on our side." When someone remarked that Jones had a pretty good day, Eddie Pellagrini came back with, "Pretty good day! That's a pretty good week." Tex Hughson had prophesized to the bench as Jones walked to the plate, "He'll hit a home run on the first pitch." Kaese joked that Jones's big day had placed him in position to "run the city in the event of Mayor Curley's absence."

Jones almost did not receive full credit for his big finale. "Bobby Doerr, who was on first base when Jones hit the ball over the fence," reported the *Globe*,

ran down to second base, touched the bag—and then headed to the clubhouse. Just as Doerr reached the vicinity of the pitcher's box, he saw Coach Del Baker waving at him and suddenly realized that—although the winning run had scored—a rookie's home run was at stake. He then turned back and resumed his trip around the bases.

That Jones was a "rookie" in 1947 was ironic, as so much had transpired since his big league debut in 1941.

### Beginnings

James Murrell Jones was born in Epps, Louisiana, on November 23, 1920, to Luther A. Jones Sr. and Della Virginia Moore Jones. His childhood was spent in Epps and nearby Monroe, Louisiana, where family and friends

called him either J.M. or Murrell. The nickname “Jake” was acquired from his minor league days<sup>1</sup> or from his time in the service;<sup>2</sup> sources differ. The Boston papers referred to him as “Jonesy.”

Jones played for a semipro squad in Clarks, Louisiana, after graduating from high school in 1938. The next year he hit .321 with 14 homers and 103 RBI for Monroe in the Class C Cotton States League. In 1940 he hit .301 with 16 homers and 75 RBI for Shreveport in the Texas League.

The Texas League was a pitcher’s paradise, and Shreveport topped the circuit in 1941 with 66 homers. Jones’s league-leading 24, despite his late-season call-up to the majors, matched the total for the entire Oklahoma City team and exceeded Beaumont’s team (21).

In addition to his powerful bat, Jones demonstrated an innate ability to scoop up low throws around first base. “Jones reached his defensive peak in the Texas League all-star game at Beaumont,” the *Shreveport Journal* reported (August 14, 1941), “when he practically saved the hides of the southern division team with sensational fielding feats on bad throws. He was so nearly the whole show that he was acclaimed the most valuable player in the game and will receive a trophy designating him as such.”

With 20 home runs by early August, Jones had caught the eye of the big-league scouts. The Pirates, Yankees, Giants, and White Sox were reported to be the most interested parties. An unidentified clipping from his Hall of Fame file reads “Detroit’s immortal Harry Heilmann has labeled Jones as one of the greatest natural hitting prospects he has ever seen.” Amid rumors that “he might draw \$75,000 from the pocketbook of a big league magnate,”<sup>3</sup> Jones was sold to the Chicago White Sox on August 23, 1941.<sup>4</sup> His major-league debut came on September 20, and he went hitless in his first six games—totaling 21 at-bats over two seasons—until breaking through with two hits against Washington’s Early Wynn on April 30, 1942.

### Military training

Sent back to the minors, Jones enlisted in the United States Navy during the summer of 1942. Though lacking a college education, he was selected for flight training, and on August 1, 1943, he received his commission as

**The great Harry Heilmann was said to have called the young Jake Jones one of the greatest natural-hitting prospects he had ever seen. Jones’s major-league career would turn out to be brief—224 games over five seasons. The heart of it was interrupted by his service in the U.S. Navy during World War II. For his heroism as a combat pilot in the Pacific theater, he was highly decorated. He was cited for his “skill and courage” and for “conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action.”**



GEORGE BRACE PHOTOS

an ensign. Information from the military’s National Personnel Records Center indicates that his place of entry into the service was Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Ted Williams and Johnny Pesky—along with Johnny Sain, Joe Coleman, Pete Appleton, Ray Scarborough, Dusty Cooke, Buddy Hassett, and Harry Craft<sup>6</sup>—played for the navy team at Chapel Hill in the summer of 1943, but Pesky could not recall having crossed paths with Jones during the war. Christopher Jones, Jake’s youngest son, recalls his father telling him that he played for the basketball team at Chapel Hill.

### Combat pilot

The USS *Yorktown* (CV-10) was nicknamed the “Fighting Lady.” She was the second aircraft carrier of that name to serve in World War II, the original (CV-5) being lost at the Battle of Midway.

In November 1944 the *Yorktown* launched air strikes on targets in the Philippines in support of the invasion of Leyte. It was during this action that Jones was awarded his first Air Medal. His citation, signed by Vice Admiral J. S. McCain, grandfather of Senator John S. McCain III of Arizona, reads as follows:

For distinguishing himself by meritorious acts while participating in an aerial flight as pilot of a carrier based fighter airplane assigned to strike against enemy installations and shipping in the vicinity of the Philippine Islands on 14 November 1944. He performed his assignment as wingman for the Air Group Commander in an outstanding manner and destroyed an enemy fighter during our attack. His skill and courage were at all times inspiring and in keeping with highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.

Promoted, Jones quickly picked up a second Air Medal.

For meritorious achievement in aerial flight as pilot of a fighter plane in Fighting Squadron THREE, attached to the USS *Yorktown*, in action against enemy Japanese forces in the vicinity of the Philippine Islands, December 14, 1944. Participating in a strike against the enemy, Lieutenant Junior Grade Jones pressed home a daring attack against three enemy fighters, destroying one, inflicting severe damage on another and forcing the third to flee. His skill, courage and devotion to duty were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.

Rear Admiral MacPherson B. Williams, U.S. Navy (retired), who had been the *Yorktown*’s Air Group Commander, later described his harrowing experience in evading capture after being shot down:

It was 16 December 1944. The U.S. Navy Task Force was 150 miles east of the Philippines. As the air group commander in the USS *Yorktown*, “The Fighting Lady,” I was leading the morning strike. We launched and rendezvoused over the pocket destroyer on the starboard bow and headed west toward our objective, climbing for altitude and checking our guns on the way. We were at 15,000 feet when we topped the cloud cover of the

eastern shore of Luzon and saw the wide expanse of the Manila Plain below.

Over Nichols Field, our target, we peeled off, delivered our bombs, and ducked low to Manila Bay to get under their flak. We turned south beyond Sangley Point and the ruins of Cavite Navy Yard to join up over Laguna del Bey. . . .

With 40 minutes to spare, I released the three section leaders to browse on their own and join me . . . in 30 minutes.

My wing man, Jake Jones, and I went up the Pasig River to Markina Air field, where reconnaissance photos had shown there were hidden Japanese aircraft. The low level attack we delivered resulted in a small antiaircraft hit in my engine. Realizing trouble, we headed toward the hills of the eastern side of Manila Plain. The fire in my engine got bigger and finally into the cockpit with me. Having no choice, I bailed out.<sup>6</sup>

Williams suffered painful burns but landed safely. He was rescued after spending several weeks behind enemy lines.

As for Jones, ten combat missions flown between January 3 and 15, 1945, in the vicinity of Formosa, China, French Indo-China, and Nansei Shoto earned him his third and fourth Air Medals. A week later he won his first Distinguished Flying Cross, for

heroism and extraordinary achievement in aerial flight as pilot of a fighter plane in Fighting Squadron THREE, attached to the U.S.S. *Yorktown*, during enemy action against enemy forces in Formosa on January 21, 1945. Participating in a long instrument flight, Lieutenant Junior Grade Jones carried out a low altitude attack in the face of intense antiaircraft fire, scoring rocket hits to set a large hostile oiler on fire and contributed to the success of the mission.

In February the *Yorktown* launched strikes on mainland Japan near Tokyo. Jones downed five enemy planes. Years later he told his son that, flying back to the carrier from one of those missions, he had a hole in his wing big enough for a man to climb through. He was awarded the Silver Star for

conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action against the enemy during the first carrier based strikes against the Japanese homeland on February 16, 1945. While flying a carrier based fighter plane he countered aggressive,

NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY, COOPERSTOWN, N.Y.



**Joe Cronin, left, field manager and de facto general manager in 1947, persuaded Red Sox owner Tom Yawkey, right, to acquire Jake Jones from the Chicago White Sox. In his first two games (a doubleheader) for Boston, Jones drove in seven runs and hit two home runs, including a walk-off grand slam to win the second game.**

determined and skillful attacks by numerically superior enemy fighters. He succeeded in shooting down three of these enemy fighter planes. After air opposition had been neutralized he, along with his wingman, made low-level rocket and strafing attacks against air field installations, securing destructive hits on each of six hangars.

and another Distinguished Flying Cross for

heroism while participating in aerial flight against the enemy during the first carrier based strikes against the Japanese Homeland on February 17, 1945. While flying a carrier based fighter plane as section leader in his Air Group Commander's division, he countered the aggressive, determined and numerically superior enemy fighters. In this action he shot down two of the attacking planes. His skill and courage were at all times keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.

Jones returned home a hero. He received a week of shore leave in New York City, where he appeared on Kate Smith's radio show. Grantland Rice, quoting an anonymous shipmate, wrote of Jones:

A great guy and one of the best flyers I ever saw. Jake was on the Fighting Lady, one of the fightingest carriers in the war. And Jake was one of the fightingest pilots in the outfit—his record was seven planes shot down in

combat and, in addition to this, he was responsible for the sinking of at least four ships. His war campaign included the Philippines, Formosa, China, Iwo Jima, Okinawa and missions over Tokyo. It was over Tokyo that three flyers ganged up on him and he got all three.

Jake got to play some baseball between flights, but not too much. . . . It was on the island of Maui. . . . Jake played ball and got two home runs and a triple, to break up the game. He certainly could put wood against the ball.<sup>7</sup>

Commander George Earnshaw, the star pitcher for Connie Mack's great Philadelphia World Series teams of 1929–31, was a shipmate on the *Yorktown*. Several photos of the pair are known to exist, probably used by the navy for publicity purposes, and it is likely that Earnshaw was Rice's anonymous source.

Jake's older brother, Luther A. Jones Jr., was also a pilot and commanded City of Monroe, a B-29, in more than twenty combat missions in the Pacific. The aircraft's bombardier was Hollywood actor Tim Holt.<sup>8</sup>

#### **Return to baseball**

Jones was the only legitimate power threat on the 1946 White Sox team, which finished last in the American

League with only 37 home runs. Veteran Hal Trosky opened the season as the starting first baseman, but manager Jimmie Dykes soon moved Jones into the lineup, and his first major-league home run on May 3 proved to be the game-winner versus the Athletics. His second, a two-run shot at Comiskey on May 15, countering a Ted Williams homer, was the big blow in a 3–2 victory over the Red Sox. His walk-off double produced a 5–4 victory over Philadelphia on May 22.

Jones had returned unscathed from the Second World War but did not have the same luck on the diamond, where on May 26 he fractured his left wrist and elbow when Detroit's Eddie Lake ran into his outstretched arm. His season was ended. Surgery was required, and *The Sporting News* reported shortly after the close of the season that he was having trouble straightening out his arm and had resorted to carrying around a bucket of sand several hours a day as a form of physical therapy.<sup>9</sup>

#### 1947

When manager Ted Lyons went to spring training in Pasadena in 1947, he didn't know who his first baseman would be. He looked at Jones, Trosky, and Joe Kuhel before opening the season with Don Kolloway. Jones saw little playing time in April but had four doubles and three home runs in May for the still-punchless White Sox. Then his bat went silent. Streaky as they come, Jones was capable of carrying the team when his bat was hot, but when it wasn't it could be freezing. The line on Jones was that he didn't show much emotion on the field. One can speculate about emotional scars from the war—or were they emotional callouses? “When you fly through a lot of flak,” he once said, “you don't scare easily on a baseball field.”

#### Fenway Park

Jones's swing was tailor-made for Boston's home field, where in 254 at-bats in 1947 he hit .276 with 12 doubles, 3 triples, 14 home runs, and 57 RBIs. In 321 at-bats away from Fenway that year he hit .206 with 9 doubles, 1 triple, 5 home runs, and 39 RBIs. He scored 39 runs in Boston and 26 on the road.<sup>10</sup>

Three players hit at least 10 home runs at Fenway Park in 1947. Williams had 16, Jones 14, and Doerr 12. The

numbers after the Jones–York trade on June 14 were 13 by Jones, 11 by Williams, and 10 by Doerr.<sup>11</sup> “Too bad he can't carry the left field wall with him on the road,” quipped a writer in the *Boston Globe* (September 10). “Jones is strictly a pull hitter,” according to the *Lowell Sun* (September 13), which noted that opposing teams had learned to shift against him. “And teams like the Chisox, Yankees, Indians and Tigers shift their infield on him, bunching their men on the left side of second base, just the opposite of the way they play Ted Williams.”

Pitcher Dizzy Trout described Jones's go-for-broke approach to hitting. “He misses a couple of curves by a mile and you feel certain you've got him, and then he makes a monkey out of you by blasting the ball out of the park.”<sup>12</sup>

Capable of delivering the big hit, Jones had at least two game-winning at-bats while with Chicago in 1947. The first was a fly ball that produced the deciding run in a 3–2 victory over Washington on May 18. The second was a tenth-inning single that accounted for a 9–8 win over the Yankees on June 9. A base hit by Jones following Ted Williams's triple on July 5 was the difference in Boston's 7–6 win over the Senators. Jones's ninth-inning triple off the Senators' Early Wynn on August 12 resulted in a 2–1 Boston win, and the next day Jones hit back-to-back homers with both Doerr and Sam Mele in a 10–3 victory. Jones drove in all four runs of a 4–1 win over New York on September 1, and his three-run shot on September 9 was the vital hit in a 5–3 win over Detroit. His final home run of the season, coming on September 17, accounted for the first two runs of Joe Dobson's one-hit, 4–0 win over the St. Louis Browns.

#### Oddities

The Red Sox took both ends of a doubleheader from St. Louis at Fenway Park on July 27. Jones topped a foul ball down the third-base line in the sixth inning of the first game. The ball appeared to be headed foul. Just as Browns third baseman Bob Dillinger was about to pick it up, pitcher Fred Sanford inexplicably threw his glove at it. Despite vehement protests from the Browns, umpire Cal Hubbard awarded Jones a triple, on a 60-foot foul ground ball.<sup>13</sup> The reasoning behind this strange decision was that the word foul was missing from the rule

NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY, COOPERSTOWN, N.Y.



**For Joe Cronin, Jake Jones was good enough to be Boston's everyday first baseman in 1947. When Joe McCarthy, the legendary former Yankees manager, succeeded Cronin in 1948, he soon decided that he would platoon Jones, who played in only 36 games that year, his last in the majors.**

pertaining to the situation. Taking note, the Rules Committee later amended the wording.

Jones was involved in another odd play, in the 2–1 win against the Senators on August 12. The Senators were batting in the fifth with Rick Ferrell on third and Early Wynn on second. Joe Grace hit a sharp grounder to Jones, who stepped on first base to record the second out of the inning. Wynn raced to third only to find Ferrell still standing there. Jones sprinted across the diamond and tagged them both. The umpire signaled that the final out had been recorded, and the Boston first baseman was credited with an unassisted double play—one out recorded at first, the other at third.

#### 1948

Joe McCarthy replaced Cronin as Red Sox skipper shortly after the 1947 season. McCarthy, arguably the most highly regarded manager at the time, was more skeptical than Cronin in his assessment of Jones's baseball abilities. Jones's 96 RBIs had placed him in a virtual

tie, with Tommy Henrich (98) and Joe DiMaggio (97), for second place in that category, but McCarthy was not so impressed. Already two months before spring training, he announced that newly acquired outfielder Stan Spence would be his first baseman in 1948.<sup>14</sup>

Oscar Fraley of United Press, covering the Red Sox spring camp in Sarasota, wrote:

So Jones sits it out in spring training even though he hit 19 homers last season compared to 16 for Spence and knocked in 96 compared to 73 for the former Senator.

A left-field hitter, Jones is a dangerous batter in the Red Sox home park, and while he may not impress McCarthy, he received a tidy tribute from Cronin last winter when McCarthy was on his shopping spree.

For about that time, Joe DiMaggio bumped into Cronin and, kiddingly, asked the Red Sox manager when Cronin was going to purchase him from the Yankees.

Cronin said the Red Sox might trade Jones for joltin' Joe, which struck DiMag—and a lot of others—something like swapping a Rembrandt for a comic book.

But Cronin pointed out that DiMaggio hit only one more home run last season than Jones and knocked in one more run. Still Jones gets the deep freeze without an explanation as Marse Joe oils the buttons labeled with stars.

Shirley Povich of the *Washington Post* interviewed McCarthy and asked him about his changes to the infield.

I was talking to one of McCarthy's former Yankees the other day at St. Petersburg, and he had some comment on McCarthy's big decision to shift Johnny Pesky from shortstop to third base, instead of Vernon Stephens. "We thought the Red Sox were going to be tough to beat," said the big Yankee, "but if McCarthy plays 'em that way, we'll lick 'em."

So at Sarasota yesterday I asked McCarthy about that and he wasn't perturbed at all. "I didn't move Pesky because he couldn't play shortstop," he said. "Why don't my friends let me do the worrying? Pesky and Stephens are interchangeable, anyway. If my move is wrong, I'll be the first one to know it."

Anyway, McCarthy is vastly more excited about another development in the Red Sox camp. He's babbling, almost, about the showing of Stan Spence as his first baseman.

The former Washington outfielder who hasn't played more than 50 games at first base in his big league career, is now the sensation of Sarasota and has the first base job all to himself.

McCarthy handed Spence a first baseman's mitt the first day he reported, and now he is ready to open the season with him. In fact, Murrell Jones, the Boston first baseman of last season, has seen so little action in the exhibition games that he is about to ask someone to introduce him to McCarthy so his presence in camp can be noted.<sup>15</sup>

No position was secure in the Boston infield. McCarthy was covering all of his bases. Projected as the Red Sox first baseman of the future since his signing in 1947, Walt Dropo was sent to the minors on March 29, and McCarthy announced the next day that Jones and Spence would be platooned. Billy Goodman, an outfielder in the minors, was being groomed for second base in case Doerr's bad back did not improve. Spence was hampered by a leg injury and got off to a slow start, and Jones had blasted a two-run homer in his first start, on April 29. Neither, though, could make a bold enough statement with the stick. By May 8, a writer for the *Lowell Sun* was observing that "baseball fans are all talking about the strange case of Jake Jones."

This big, curly-haired first sacker has become a real problem. Lately the fellow has looked helpless at the plate. It seems that he couldn't hit mother-in-law with a base fiddle at two paces. Yet, he can stretch like a rubberneck at a burlesque show when it comes to playing first base.

Time and time again Jake's two way stretch puts a girdle to shame as he makes almost impossible double plays. He saves his infielders errors at least twice a game, yet is as lost as a two-year-old in a subway when he gets to the plate.

Jones has become a real problem. Stan Spence opened the season as first base but he isn't half as fancy around the cushion as Jake.

Before long, McCarthy had seen enough. On May 25, with the Red Sox languishing at 12–17, he handed the first baseman's job to Goodman. Spence moved back to the outfield, where he sometimes hit clean-up between Williams and Stephens, and Jones rode the pine, remaining with the club all season but seeing virtually no action in the second half of the season. He received a full

portion (\$1,191.71) of the team's second-place money and in January of 1949 was released to Louisville in the American Association.

Jones hit .243 with 18 homers and 69 RBIs that year—his last—splitting time between Louisville and San Antonio of the Texas League. After retiring he returned to his hometown, where he owned a 400-acre cotton farm. He also operated a flying service, which consisted mostly of crop-dusting work, until 1980. He was recalled to active duty during the Korean conflict to help train pilots. He married twice and raised five children and two stepchildren. He died in Delhi, Louisiana, on December 13, 2000, at the age of 80. Mary and Christopher Jones described their husband and father as a quiet man who shunned publicity. He wouldn't initiate conversation about the war or his baseball career but would be forthcoming on either topic if asked.

Jones and Ted Williams shared an interest in fishing, flying, and baseball and were great friends. Ted once forgot to return some fishing equipment he had borrowed, and that gave Jones a story he would tell the rest of his life: The greatest hitter in the history of baseball owed him fishing tackle. ■

#### NOTES

I would like to thank Mary Jones, Christopher Jones, Ray Nemeč, Bill Deane, Bill Nowlin, and David Vincent for assistance with this article.

*Editor's note:* This article is published posthumously. We were not able to find exact source citations for some of the quotes.

1. *The Sporting News*, 7 May 1947.
2. *Ibid.*, 25 June 1947.
3. *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 28 November 1941.
4. *The Sporting News*, 23 August 1941.
5. Bill Nowlin, *Ted Williams at War* (Boston: Rounder Books, 2007), 45.
6. MacPherson B. Williams, "I Was Alone in Enemy Territory," *Naval History*, November 2001. The article originally appeared in the *U.S. Naval Institute Naval History* magazine. Williams died in 1990.
7. *Syracuse Herald-American*, 8 September 1946.
8. [www.39th.org](http://www.39th.org).
9. *The Sporting News*, 30 October 1946.
10. As tabulated from Jones's day-by-day logs from the Hall of Fame.
11. SABR's *Tattersall/McConnell Home Run Log*, as provided by David Vincent.
12. *Lowell Sun*, 13 September 1947.
13. *Boston Globe*, 28 July 1947.
14. *The Sporting News*, 17 December 1947.
15. *The Washington Post*, 30 March 1948.

# They Served with Valor

## Negro League Ballplayers in the Armed Forces during World War II

Bill Swank

In 1944, three years before he broke Major League Baseball's color barrier, Lieutenant Jack Roosevelt Robinson was court-martialed at Fort Hood, Texas. Robinson had volunteered for combat with the segregated 761st Tank Battalion. Although he had signed a waiver for a previous football injury, he was required to undergo extensive medical tests before being transferred to the European theater of operations. While on base, Robinson remained in his seat after the white driver ordered him to move to the back of an Army bus, as was the custom in the Jim Crow South. He was acquitted at his court-martial and given an honorable medical discharge. Jackie left the Army to play baseball for the Kansas City Monarchs in the Negro Leagues in 1945.<sup>1</sup>

It is estimated that more than one hundred Negro League baseball players served in the armed forces during World War II. The number is undoubtedly higher.<sup>2</sup> Most served in ancillary assignments, because politicians and military leaders did not believe that African Americans were capable of understanding complex tactics or were dependable in combat. By 1944, with a pressing need for increased manpower, Negro units such as the 761st Tank Battalion, 92nd Infantry Division, and 332nd Fighter Group were put into action.<sup>3</sup> When the Germans launched their pre-Christmas counteroffensive, known today as the Battle of the Bulge, General Eisenhower sought volunteers "of all races." As many as 4,500 black troops answered the call and served with distinction.<sup>4</sup>

After the war, returning veterans who included Negro League ballplayers could no longer tolerate their role as second-class citizens. The modern civil-rights struggle was born as black Americans fought both the enemy abroad and racial injustice on the home front.

Philadelphia Stars manager Jake Dunn<sup>5</sup> and Memphis Red Sox first baseman Jelly Taylor were among the first

Negro Leaguers to answer the nation's call to military service after Pearl Harbor. Although African American servicemen would be subjected to extreme prejudice, their patriotism was exemplary.<sup>6</sup>

On D-Day, June 6, 1944, Newark Eagles pitcher Leon Day piloted a landing craft ashore and Kansas City Monarchs slugging outfielder Willard Brown landed on the Normandy beaches with the Army Quartermaster Corps.<sup>7</sup> Following the war, Leon Day would pitch an opening-day no-hitter against the Philadelphia Stars in 1946.<sup>8</sup> He was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1995. "I've never seen a better athlete," fellow Hall of Famer and World War II veteran Monte Irvin said of Day, "never seen a better baseball player all-around."<sup>9</sup>

Willard "Home Run" Brown was a seven-time Negro League home-run champion and three-time batting leader. He played for the lowly St. Louis Browns in 1947 and left the team because, he said, "The Browns couldn't

**Willard Brown's illustrious career with the Kansas City Monarchs was interrupted by his service with the Army Quartermaster Corps in World War II. He fought on the beaches of Normandy. Brown's Monarchs teammate Hank Thompson, who would later play for the great Giants teams of the early 1950s, served as an Army machine gunner at the Battle of the Bulge. Brown was elected to the Hall of Fame in 2006.**



NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY, COOPERSTOWN, N.Y.

NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY, COOPERSTOWN, N.Y.



**On D-Day, Newark Eagles pitcher and future Hall of Famer Leon Day piloted a landing craft ashore. "I've never seen a better athlete," Monte Irvin said of him, "never seen a better baseball player all-around." Day pitched an opening-day no-hitter against the Philadelphia Stars in 1946.**

beat the Monarchs, no kind of way— only if we were all asleep." Willard Brown was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 2006.<sup>10</sup>

Fellow Monarch Hank Thompson was also briefly with the Browns in 1947 and later spent eight years with the New York Giants. Playing in Cuba after the war, he went by the nickname *Ametralladora*, Spanish for "machine gun."<sup>11</sup> During the Battle of the Bulge, Sergeant Thompson was a machine gunner in a company of combat engineers.<sup>12</sup>

John Ritchey was another combat engineer at the Battle of the Bulge who earned five battle stars along with staff-sergeant's stripes. He later served in the Pacific. Playing for the Chicago American Giants in 1947, the left-handed-hitting catcher led the Negro Leagues with a .378 batting average.<sup>13</sup> The following year, he broke the color barrier in the Pacific Coast League.<sup>14</sup>

Homestead Grays catcher Josh Johnson and Newark Eagles pitcher Max "Dr. Cyclops" Manning hauled gasoline around the clock for the famed Red Ball Express, which fueled General George Patton's tanks as his Thundering Third Army rolled across France and into

Belgium. Lieutenant Johnson would remain in the Army Reserve and attain the rank of major. Max Manning helped deliver badly needed supplies to the 101st Airborne Division, surrounded at Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge.<sup>15</sup>

The 92nd Infantry was a highly decorated outfit that fought in North Africa and Italy. Kansas City Monarchs catcher Joe Greene served with distinction in one of the unit's antitank divisions. During the liberation of Milan, his company removed the body of Benito Mussolini from the Piazza Loreto, where it hung by the heels after the dictator's execution.<sup>16</sup>

Late in the 1943 season, 31-year-old Buck O'Neil, one of the game's most beloved ambassadors, left the Monarchs to join the Navy. One morning in the Philippines, as his men were loading ammunition aboard a destroyer, an alarm sounded. A white officer shouted at the black stevedores, "Attention, Niggers." First Class Petty Officer O'Neil calmly replied, "I believe you could have addressed us a little better than that, sir." The officer apologized. Buck soon learned that his old baseball team had signed Jackie Robinson.<sup>17</sup>

It is no accident that all five African Americans who broke the color barrier in the major leagues in 1947 were World War II veterans. Larry Doby of the Cleveland Indians was in the Navy, and Dan Bankhead of the Brooklyn Dodgers served in the Marine Corps. In the ironic double standard of the times, Negro Leaguers were more acceptable to white fans if they had served their country.<sup>18</sup>

Military records of Negro Leaguers are difficult to confirm. The following players served in the European theater of operations: Russell Awkard, Skeeter Banks, James Brown, Elmer Carter, Frank Duncan, Jake Flowers, Bob Griffith, Johnny Hayes, Monte Irvin, Byron Johnson, Red Moore, Charlie Parks, Ulysses Redd, Joe Scott, Herb Simpson, and Lonnie Summers. Those who served in the Pacific include Jeremiah Bennett, Charlie Biot, Sherwood Brewer, Ernest Burke, Marlin Carter, Bus Clarkson, Sammy Hughes, Leonard Pigg, Slick Surratt, Bob Thurman, Andy Watts, and Apples Wilmore. Several other prominent black players were in the military, but it is not known if they were shipped overseas.<sup>19</sup>

NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY, COOPERSTOWN, N.Y.



**Buck O'Neil, left, and Ernie Banks, right, in the Chicago Cubs dugout. In 1943, O'Neil, then 31, left the Kansas City Monarchs to enlist with the U.S. Navy. The Cubs hired him as a scout in 1955 and, in 1962, as a coach, the first black coach in Major League Baseball.**

Only two white major-league players, Elmer Gedeon and Harry O'Neill, were killed in action during World War II.<sup>20</sup> Numerous minor-leaguers died in combat, but ballplayers from both races spent most of the war years playing baseball to help boost morale among the troops. Those on the front lines did not always meet this with favor.

After the war, when Branch Rickey had signed Jackie Robinson to a major-league contract with the Brooklyn Dodgers, Baseball Commissioner A. B. "Happy" Chandler was quick to make the connection to the contribution African Americans had made in the recent war effort. "If they can fight and die on Okinawa, Guadalcanal . . . in the South Pacific," he remarked, "they can play ball in America."<sup>21</sup>

Negro League ballplayers had fought and earned the right to compete in the big leagues. Today, they are still remembered as outstanding baseball players, but we should not forget that many of them also served our country with valor. ■

#### NOTES

1. Jules Tygiel, "The Court-Martial of Jackie Robinson," *American Heritage Magazine* 35, no. 5, August/September 1984.
2. Gary Bedingfield's *Baseball in Wartime*, [www.garybed.co.uk](http://www.garybed.co.uk).
3. John B. Holway, *Red Tails Black Wings: The Men of America's Black Air Force* (Las Cruces, N.M.: Yucca Tree Press, 2000).
4. Charles B. McDonald, chap. 22 in *American Military History*, ed. Maurice Matloff (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1969), 494.
5. For Dunn as manager of the Philadelphia Stars, see James A. Riley, *The Biographical Encyclopedia of the Negro Baseball Leagues* (New York: Carroll and Graf Publishers, 1994), 257, 605.
6. Riley, *Biographical Encyclopedia*, 257, 770.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*
9. The National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, [www.baseballhalloffame.org](http://www.baseballhalloffame.org).
10. Leslie Heaphy, *The Negro Leagues: 1869-1960* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2003), 142.
11. Riley, *Biographical Encyclopedia*, 780.
12. Gary Bedingfield's *Baseball in Wartime*, [www.garybed.co.uk](http://www.garybed.co.uk).
13. For his batting average of .378, see Riley, *Biographical Encyclopedia*.
14. Ed Rogers, *Daily Worker*, 17 January 1948.
15. Riley, *Biographical Encyclopedia*, 439, 510.
16. *Ibid.*, 337.
17. Buck O'Neil, with Steve Wulf and David Conrads, *I Was Right on Time* (New York: Fireside Books, 1997), 160.
18. Riley, *Biographical Encyclopedia*.
19. *Ibid.*
20. Gary Bedingfield's *Baseball in Wartime*, [www.garybed.co.uk](http://www.garybed.co.uk).
21. *Ibid.*

# Ed Barrow, the Federal League, and the Union League

Dan Levitt

**H**all of Fame executive Ed Barrow secured his legacy during his years with the Yankees. He joined New York's front office after the 1920 season as their first de facto general manager. The next year the team won its first pennant; during his 24-year tenure, from 1921 through 1944 (through 1947 he stayed on as chairman of the board, but the position was largely honorary), New York won fourteen pennants and ten World Series championships. Barrow had apprenticed well for the Yankee position, having spent nearly his entire adult life in baseball holding almost every conceivable job, including scorecard hawk.

From 1911 through 1917 he served as president of the International League, designated (along with the American Association and the Pacific Coast League) as the highest-classification minor league. The International League consisted of many of the largest northeastern cities in North America that did not have a major-league team: Baltimore, Buffalo, Jersey City, Montreal, Newark, Providence, Rochester, and Toronto. Three of these cities—Baltimore, Buffalo and Providence—had an extended run with a major-league team in the nineteenth century.

During the early years of his tenure as president, the International League was profitable and successful. In 1913, however, a new outlaw league, the six-team Federal League, began operation in a number of larger cities in the Midwest. Its players came from outside of Organized Baseball, and so most baseball owners initially remained aloof. The Federal League's teams consisted predominantly of local semipro players, aging ex-major-leaguers, and journeyman minor-league veterans. Late that first season, the Federal League decided to expand to eight teams, invade some larger eastern cities, and challenge the existing order as a third major league. To compete, the Federals

assembled a financially strong group of owners that compared favorably with the major leagues.

At the time minor-league franchises were generally owned by baseball men and politically connected businessmen of unexceptional wealth. The owners in Barrow's International League were at a significant disadvantage when confronted with a league backed by some of America's wealthy industrialists. The problem manifested itself most acutely in the two markets competing directly with the new league, Baltimore and Buffalo. In Baltimore, the team was owned by Jack Dunn, a brilliant baseball operator but with few financial resources outside his franchise. Buffalo president J. J. Stein headed up one of the league's most poorly capitalized franchises.

The other International League franchises were also insufficiently capitalized for a drawn-out battle. Newark and Providence were owned by major-league interests. A syndicate led by Charles Ebbets, owner of the Brooklyn Robins (as the Dodgers were then called), controlled the Newark franchise, and a Detroit group including William Yawkey, Frank Navin, Ty Cobb, and Hugh Jennings owned the Providence club. Because of the impact of the Federals on their major-league teams, neither—particularly Ebbets—had extra funds available to expend in defense of their International League franchises. A corporation that included Bill Devery, part owner of the Yankees and a shady former New York police chief, controlled the Jersey City club. The other three franchises, Toronto, Montreal, and Rochester, were principally owned by baseball men of modest means. To add some perspective, Table 1 summarizes the various market sizes in 1914. The chart underscores how competitive the Federals made the struggle for fans in a number of cities. Furthermore, it highlights that in Baltimore, Buffalo, and Toronto, the International League was in some of the largest North

**Table 1—1914 Population (thousands)  
Cities with AL, NL, FL, IL, and AA Franchises**

	City	Metro	Teams
New York (1)	2,615	6,475	2
Chicago	2,185	2,447	3
Brooklyn (2)	2,065	6,475	2
Philadelphia	1,549	1,972	2
St. Louis	687	829	3
Boston	671	1,520	2
Cleveland/Toledo	561	613	2
Baltimore	558	659	2
Pittsburgh	534	1,043	2
Montreal	471	NA	1
Detroit	466	501	1
Buffalo	427	489	2
Toronto	377	NA	1
Milwaukee	374	427	1
Cincinnati	364	564	1
Newark	347	6,475	1
Washington	331	368	1
Minneapolis	301	526	1
Jersey City	268	6,475	1
Kansas City	248	340	2
Indianapolis	234	238	2
Providence	224	396	1
Louisville	224	286	1
Rochester	218	249	1
St. Paul	215	526	1
Columbus	182	222	1

SOURCES: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Thirteenth Census, 1910; Census of Canada, 1911.

Highlighted rows indicate International League Cities.

(1) City: Manhattan and Bronx; metro: larger New York area.

(2) City: Brooklyn and Queens; metro: larger New York area.

American cities. (As to Montreal, despite its size, it was a perennially struggling franchise.)

At their December 1913 winter meetings, Barrow and his owners discussed ways of countering the threat from the Federal League. The American Association advocated a plan to end the regular season after 112 games and then play an interleague series with the International League. The International League owners, however, feared that fans would have little interest in a bunch of exhibition games after the regular season and turned down the proposal.

The International League and American Association also petitioned the major leagues to eliminate the major league–minor league draft. The draft had long been a sore spot between the high minors and the major leagues.

It allowed teams to select players—for a meaningful but not particularly generous fee—from a lower classification league. The exact draft rules changed often, but in general a team could lose one or two players in a season. Owners and fans in the high minors often resented being cast as second best, and the bitter confrontation with the Federals, who promoted themselves as major, exacerbated this problem. Barrow hoped to rescind the draft, at least during the battle with the Federal League. Although sympathetic to the plight of the minors, the major-league magnates never agreed to Barrow’s request. Many felt that eliminating the draft was tantamount to conferring major-league status, further diluting their own monopoly. Additionally, the draft provided a source of relatively inexpensive, well-trained talent.

Despite Barrow’s best efforts, by June it was clear that the International League was in big trouble. Table 2 summarizes the overall 1914 losses. Clearly, the modestly capitalized International League teams were in severe financial distress. (These figures are from several newspaper accounts, and the National League figures in particular are probably exaggerated to the high side; it is highly unlikely that any league, in aggregate, turned a profit in 1914.) Jersey City, though not in direct competition with the Federals, was drawing only 200 to 500 fans per game. In Montreal the players were so disgusted with the poor attendance that they sent a delegation to petition owner Sam Lichtenhein to either trade them or sell the club. The players later complained that they could not “play winning ball in that city,” and warned they might strike if the franchise was not transferred. In Newark, President Charles Ebbets Jr. had to borrow \$2,000 from his father to meet payroll. Rochester’s week-day games drew only 800 to 1,200 patrons, compared to 2,000 to 3,000 in previous years. But it was in Baltimore that the crisis manifested itself most acutely. Despite the team’s first-place showing, at the gate the fans overwhelmingly chose the putative major-league Federals over the International League.

On June 20, 1914, Barrow led a delegation that included Dunn, Stein, and J. J. McCaffrey and Joe Kelley from Toronto to a meeting at New York’s Waldorf-Astoria Hotel with the National Commission to plead for some relief from the mounting losses. In the period before the

**Table 2—1914 Profit Summary (\$ thousands)**

City	NL	AL	FL	IL
New York	120	-20		
Chicago	50	70	20	
Brooklyn	-25		-60	
Philadelphia	-20	18		
St. Louis	30	-10	-50	
Boston	90	75		
Cleveland		-80		
Baltimore			10	-43
Pittsburgh	-30		-38	
Montreal				-40
Detroit		30		
Buffalo			-30	NA
Toronto				-30
Cincinnati	-5			
Newark				-30
Washington		-15		
Jersey City				NA
Kansas City			-40	
Indianapolis			12	
Providence				-12
Rochester				NA
<b>Total *</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>-176</b>	<b>-200</b>

SOURCES: *New York Times*, 31 January 1915; *Atlanta Constitution*, 7 February 1915; *The Sporting News*, various dates.

Highlighted rows indicate International League Cities.

\* In aggregate, the National, American, and Federal Leagues almost surely performed worse than suggested by this table. For the International League, overall losses were variously estimated at \$150,000 and \$200,000. Reports that spotlight individual team losses suggest that the aggregate loss for the league most likely approaches the high end of the estimates.

current commissioner system, Organized Baseball was governed by the National Commission, a three-man panel consisted of the two league presidents and chairman Garry Herrmann, president of the Cincinnati Reds. Barrow and his owners lobbied for either financial support or an elevated status for the International League through the elimination of the draft and other changes.

Barrow, Dunn, and company were surprisingly successful and received provisional support from the commission to create a third major league within the Organized Baseball structure. American League president Ban Johnson, first among equals on the National Commission and the most powerful man in baseball, announced after the meeting:

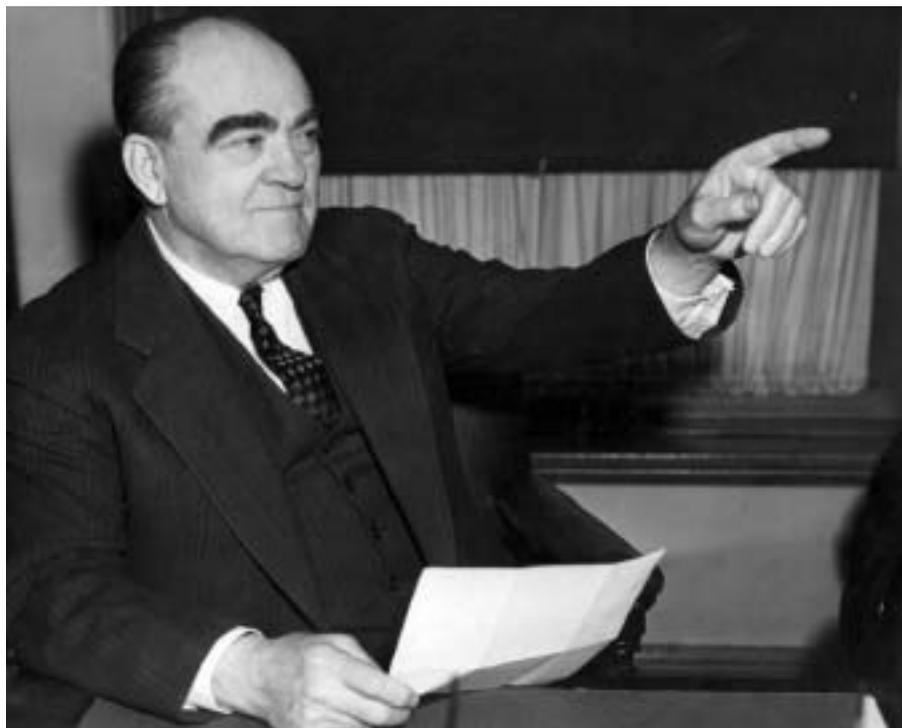
There will be a third major league, and I think it will be a good thing for the peace of Organized Baseball. It is true that the commission has not formally ratified the

new project. But that is only a question of formality. We will now see how far the Federal League can go against real major league opposition on every hand. Let me tell you the new circuit will soon prove its merits over the so-called class of Gilmore's league. (James A. Gilmore was the Federal League's president.)

The principal scheme for the third major league involved peeling off the four strongest markets from the International League—Baltimore, Buffalo, Toronto, and Newark—and merging them into a new league with four from the American Association, most likely Indianapolis, Toledo, Milwaukee, and either Minneapolis, Louisville, or Columbus. The remaining franchises in the two class AA leagues would then be formed into a new minor league. An alternative proposal floated from the meeting had the new league placing new, Organized Baseball-sanctioned teams in existing major-league cities. In this version Baltimore, Buffalo, and Toronto would be joined by other International League and American Association franchises transferring into the major-league cities of Detroit, Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, and Cleveland, with Newark potentially moving to Washington. The latter alternative never had any chance of success. No major-league owner would voluntarily permit another major-league team in his city, even assuming the game dates could be scheduled to eliminate conflicts. (For example, to discourage the Federal League from invading his city, Charles Somers, owner of the Cleveland American League franchise, moved the Toledo American Association franchise, which he also owned, to Cleveland to present a full slate of baseball games.)

Unfortunately for Barrow and Dunn, the entire third-major-league idea died quickly over the next couple of weeks. As the plan reached a wider audience, strong opposition developed among a number of interested parties. A few major-league owners were mildly receptive, but most were hostile to the idea of adding a third major league to the already fierce competition for fans and players. Moreover, the American Association owners had not been consulted in advance and showed little interest in the proposal. Indianapolis and Kansas City—the two American Association teams competing directly with the Feds—had fared tolerably. Many of the other franchises were certainly losing money, but most owners felt the

NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY, COOPERSTOWN, N.Y.



**Competition from the upstart Federal League provoked Barrow to take action, which led to his efforts in 1914 to form a third major league.**

situation was not dire enough to warrant the dissolution of their league. As their hopes died, Barrow and the potentially major-league International League cities felt betrayed and disappointed. Barrow naturally had hoped to found a new, solvent major league, of which he would be president. The other members of his delegation thought they were on their way to becoming major-league owners.

In retrospect, it is hard to gauge whether the third-major-league option was ever feasible. In any case, Barrow and Johnson failed to manage the political side of the issue with any sensitivity. Such a radical step required backroom lobbying with both major-league and American Association owners well in advance of any announcement. That consensus-building was not a strength of either Barrow or Johnson seriously impeded any scheme for a new, third major league.

Despite the financial hardships, Barrow held the eight-team International League together through the end of the season. He restructured the ownership in Buffalo and relocated the Baltimore franchise to Richmond. In 1915, though, the struggle grew increasingly desperate. Over the second half of the season Barrow not only had

to manage his league's affairs; he was also essentially running the Jersey City and Newark franchises, which had been forfeited to the league. When the season ended the International League was still intact—but just barely. Relief appeared when, during the offseason, the Federal League agreed to a buy-out of its franchises by Organized Baseball.

But the demise of the Federal League was no guarantee that the next year would be a prosperous one for the International. By the end of the 1916 season, none of the teams had banked more than a token profit. In aggregate, the league's franchises lost another \$100,000 in 1916, and many were in severe financial distress. The owners were now more restless than ever about the major

league—minor league draft. As major-league attendance recovered, the high minor leagues strongly resented the price-depressing effect that the draft placed on player sales. In the fall of 1916, the ongoing financial troubles of the International League led to another revival of discussion about a third major league. Once more the new major league would consist of some amalgamation of the International League and the American Association. In an interview after the 1916 season, American League president Ban Johnson remarked that he “rather liked the idea” of a third major league.

Johnson was not really advocating for a third major league but simply offering a casual opinion. He may also have been posturing for the benefit of Organized Baseball in the lawsuit filed by the owners of the Baltimore franchise in the Federal League. (The Baltimore owners had rejected the settlement dissolving their league and sued Organized Baseball for violation of the antitrust laws. This lawsuit, *Federal Baseball Club of Baltimore, Inc. v. National Baseball Clubs*, led to the famous Supreme Court decision exempting Organized Baseball from provisions of the Sherman Antitrust Act.)

NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY, COOPERSTOWN, N.Y.



**Even after the Federal League disbanded, the International League struggled financially, and Barrow revived his plan to form a third major league, to be called the Union League, from pieces of the International League and the American Association.**

As the most powerful man in baseball, Johnson's comments received wide publicity, probably what he intended.

Barrow at the time was in the midst of trying to organize his clubs for the upcoming 1917 season. He did not want any distracting rumors of impending major-league status for select teams. Barrow called the idea of a third major league "preposterous" and stated that the International League would operate in 1917 as a class AA league. He did squeeze in the caveat, however, that a third major league would come about only as a last resort in the event of a disastrous 1917.

As the 1917 season was getting underway, the country was mobilizing for World War I, and Barrow feared for his league's profitability. By July a couple of International League teams were considering disbanding after the season, and the economic outlook appeared bleak enough to warrant more thought about Barrow's caveat. As the league struggled financially, some sentiment to cut Barrow's salary began to develop. In the midst of this renewed turmoil, Barrow again received the tacit approval of Johnson and the National Commission for a third major league. This time he also enlisted several American Association franchises. The Union League, as it was named, would consist of four International League franchises (Baltimore, Buffalo, Toronto, and probably Newark) and four from the American Association (Indianapolis, Louisville, Toledo, and possibly Columbus), with Barrow as president.

The politics of the proposed Union League were complex. The major leagues supported its creation as a way of helping the minors survive without requiring active financial support from the majors. Adding to its appeal was that several reports suggested that, as a compromise to settle the lawsuit, the Baltimore franchise in the new league would go to the Baltimore owners of the old Federal League franchise. Many major-league owners did not envision the Union

League as a true third major but, at least initially, as a step below. For example, the new league would likely be exempt from the major league–minor league draft but would not have a member on the National Commission. Johnson also viewed it mainly as an act of wartime expediency. The plan contemplated that those International League and American Association franchises not included in the Union League would join lower-classification minor leagues in their geographic area. This would displace some teams in those leagues. In turn, the displaced teams would need to be relocated, creating a domino effect on the lower minor leagues.

NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY, COOPERSTOWN, N.Y.



**Charles Ebbets, owner of the National League's Brooklyn franchise, also led the syndicate that owned the Newark franchise of the International League. He was stretched too thin financially to be able to float the Newark team for long as it struggled in the face of competition from the Federal League.**

And so the Union League would require territorial restructuring of the minor leagues as a whole.

Struggling financially themselves, the lower minor leagues had no interest in significantly disrupting their operations by reorganizing along the lines Barrow suggested. At the higher end, American Association president Thomas Hickey and the four leftover franchises in the two merging leagues had no desire to see their dissolution. At the National Association meetings in mid-November the minor leagues decisively voted down the restructuring proposal 11–2, effectively ending Barrow's hopes for the Union League.

Straightforward and blunt as always, Barrow, to his misfortune, had not learned his lesson from the failed attempt at a third major league in 1914. Again, his strength of will combined with passive support from the National Commission were not enough to persuade the baseball establishment to agree to a considerable restructuring. Barrow again demonstrated his blindness to the need for the behind-the-scenes politicking that such a substantial project demanded.

Not surprisingly, discussion of the creation of the Union League created a rift between the proposed participants and those who would have been excluded. With this festering distrust among the franchise owners and the survival of their league in doubt, their mood had grown hostile, gloomy, and pessimistic. At the league meeting on December 10, 1917, Barrow took the offensive. He declared Joseph Lannin's Buffalo franchise, which owed roughly \$18,000, including player's salaries, league fees,



**Ed Barrow, left, with Yankees manager Joe McCarthy (1931–46), right.**

and guarantees to visiting clubs, forfeited to the league.

With Lannin neutered, the owners addressed two issues: whether to suspend operations for 1918, and Barrow's future as league president. In a sign of the league's distress, the former failed narrowly, by a 4–3 vote; Rochester, Richmond, and Providence voted to put the league on ice for a year. As to the latter, Barrow had underestimated the lingering resentment generated by his failed attempt to establish the Union League. The four franchises not included in the Union League allied with Dunn to force Barrow's resignation. (Dunn believed—probably correctly—that the Union League would have squeezed him out for the Federal League owners in Baltimore.) Ultimately, the offended owners voted 4–3 to reduce Barrow's salary from \$7,500 to \$2,500, an insult they correctly perceived would induce Barrow to resign. At the end of the meeting Barrow and Lannin nearly came to blows. Barrow's two staunchest supporters, Toronto's McCaffery and Newark's Jim Price, held Barrow back, telling him, "Don't hit him, Ed, he's got a bad heart." Now effectively out of a job, Barrow remained bitter. He later grumbled that, if the league chose to degenerate to the level of a Class B league, he was happy to be no party to it. ■

NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY, COOPERSTOWN, N.Y.

## SOURCES

### Newspapers

*Atlanta Constitution*  
*Boston Globe*  
*Chicago Tribune*  
*Los Angeles Times*  
*New York Times*  
*The Sporting News*  
*Toronto Star*  
*Washington Post*

### Books and Articles

Alexander, Charles C. *Our Game: An American Baseball History*. Holt, 1995.

Barrow, Edward Grant, as told to Arthur Mann. "Baseball Cavalcade." *Saturday Evening Post*, 24 April 1937.

Barrow, Edward Grant, with James M. Kahn. "My Baseball Story." Parts 1–6. *Colliers*, 10 May, 27 May, 3 June, 10 June, 17 June, 24 June 1950.

———. *My Fifty Years in Baseball*. Coward-McCann, 1951.

Bradley, Hugh. "The Ed Barrow Story." Parts 1–4. *New York Journal American*, December 1953.

Burk, Robert F. *Never Just a Game: Players, Owners, and American Baseball to 1920*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994.

Daniel, Dan. "From Peanuts to Pennants: The Story of Ed Barrow." Parts 1–11. *New York World Telegram*, January–February 1938.

Foster, John B., ed. *A History of the National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues, 1902–1926*. National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues. N.d.

Fullerton, Hugh S. "Baseball—The Business and the Sport." *The American Review of Reviews*, April 1920.

Johnson, Lloyd, and Miles Wolff, eds. *The Encyclopedia of Minor League Baseball*. 3d ed. Baseball America, 2007.

Levitt, Daniel R. *Ed Barrow: The Bulldog Who Built the Yankees' First Dynasty*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008.

Murdock, Eugene C. *Ban Johnson: Czar of Baseball*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1982.

Okkonen, Marc. *The Federal League of 1914–1915: Baseball's Third Major League*. Garrett Park, Md.: Society for American Baseball Research, 1989.

Okrent, Daniel, and Harris Lewine, eds. *The Ultimate Baseball Book*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1988.

Reach Official American League Base Ball Guide. A. J. Reach, 1915–18.

Seymour, Harold. *Baseball: The Golden Age*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1971.

Spalding's Official Base Ball Guide. American Sports Publishing Company, 1915–18.

U.S. Bureau of the Census. *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970*. Bicentennial Edition. 1975.

U.S. House of Representatives. *Hearings before the Subcommittee on the Study of Monopoly Power of the Committee of the Judiciary: Organized Baseball* (82d Cong., 1st sess., 1952).

U.S. House of Representatives. *Report of the Subcommittee on the Study of Monopoly Power of the Committee of the Judiciary: Organized Baseball* (82d Cong., 2d sess., 1952).

Voigt, David Q. *American Baseball Volume 1: From Gentleman's Sport to the Commissioner System*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1983.

Wright, Marshall D. *The American Association*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1997.

———. *The International League: Year-by-Year Statistics, 1884–1953*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1998.

### Other Sources

Correspondence between Ed Barrow and minor-league team executives, 1917.

# Did the Federal League Have a Reserve Clause?

David Mandell

Its defiance of the reserve clause for two brief but eventful years in the second decade of the twentieth century has secured for the Federal League a lasting place in the history of sports law. Outbidding owners of the National and the American League for some of the best baseball talent of the era, Federal League teams boasted rosters that included such stars as Mordecai Brown, Joe Tinker, Edd Roush, and Eddie Plank, who jumped from the two established major leagues.

Officials of the Federal League resolved to defend any player of theirs whose former team, in the National or American League, might sue him for violating the reserve clause. At a meeting of the new “outlaw” league in Indianapolis in December 1913, J. Edward Krause, a league director, asserted that “the reserve clause in the contracts of ball players is invalid” and added that his colleagues were confident they would prevail in court if the issue was litigated.<sup>1</sup>

Two days later, Robert Hedges, owner of the St. Louis Browns, said he had a copy of a Federal League contract that included both a ten-day release clause and a reserve clause. Edward Steininger, co-owner of the Federal League franchise in St. Louis, granted the part about the ten-day clause—the team could release a player on ten days’ notice—but not the reserve clause, which he and the rest of the league publicly and pointedly opposed.<sup>2</sup> Edward E. Gates, counsel for the Federal League, maintained that “the reserve clause is illegal and not binding upon players, lacks mutuality, and is against public policy.”<sup>3</sup>

Bolstering the credibility of the Federal League in this matter was the publicity surrounding Jake Daubert, first baseman for Brooklyn. Denying rumors that the Federals would sign him for \$30,000, a fabulous sum at the time, league president James A. Gilmore seized the opportunity to clarify the league’s stand on the reserve clause. “I

will not permit any club in the Federal League to sign Jack Daubert,” he said.

He is under contract with a Major League club and the Federal League will not take any signed players. We recognize the validity of the Major League contract but not the reserve clause. If Daubert was held under reserve only it would be different. But he is signed and no Federal League club would be allowed to use him.<sup>4</sup>

On January 5, 1915, after their first full season, the Federal League filed suit in U.S. District Court in Illinois, contending that Organized Baseball violated the Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890—that the National Agreement was illegal, that the two leagues were a monopoly, and, moreover, that they had conspired to put the Federal League out of business.

The case was assigned to Kenesaw Mountain Landis, who in his ten years as a federal judge had presided over several important cases, including the Standard Oil antitrust case. George W. Miller, an attorney representing Organized Baseball, said he had an affidavit from umpire Steve Cusack attesting that Federal League contracts bound players to their teams for ten years. “They could not possibly operate successfully without the ten-day release notice in their contracts,” he wrote, “or without the reserve rule and the baseball men of experience in their ranks know that just as well as we do.”<sup>5</sup>

Judge Landis declined to hand down a quick decision. Contract disputes continued, and the suit was eventually settled out of court after the 1915 season.

For future historians, a judicial decision might have brought to light the existence, or nonexistence, of a reserve clause in the Federal League. It was a subject on which spokesmen for the Federals and spokesmen for Organized Baseball plainly contradicted each other. One of the two sides was issuing false statements, and from

contemporary newspaper accounts alone it is impossible to know which side that was.

According to historians Harold Seymour and later David Pietrusza, the answer to the question posed by the title of this article is, in a word, yes. As they describe it, the reserve clause written into the Federal League contract did, however, contain two provisions that distinguished it from its counterpart in Organized Baseball. First, if a club exercised its option on a player, that player got a raise of at least 5 percent. Second, after ten years, a player would be released from his contract with the club if he so requested—in effect, he could become a free agent.<sup>6</sup>

Neither Seymour nor Pietrusza cited any sources, but their account turns out to be corroborated by the Federal League contract that the Indianapolis Feds offered to Edd Roush in 1915:

9. It is understood and agreed that after the player has given service in the Federal League for any portion of ten different years, the said player shall be given, if he demands it, his unconditional release:
10. The club owner shall have the exclusive right and option of extending this contract from year to year upon like conditions, except that the compensation to be paid the player shall be five percent each year in excess of the sum named in this contract, provided that written notice of the exercise of such option shall be given to the player on or before September fifteenth.

The question, then, is not whether the Federal League had a reserve clause but why Federal League officials spoke so forcefully against it in public and even went so far as to bring to court a case that could well have called into question the legality of this practice that they themselves engaged in. ■



**Page 2 of the contract that the Indianapolis club of the Federal League offered to Edd Roush in January 15. Paragraphs 9 and 10 stipulate the terms of a modified reserve clause.**

**NOTES**

I would like to thank Susan Dellinger, Edd Roush’s granddaughter, for providing copies of the contract that the Indianapolis Feds offered him in 1915. I would like to thank Ross Davies for leading me to the relevant passage in David Pietrusza’s book *Major Leagues*.

1. “Will Defend Players,” *New York Times*, 29 December 1913.
2. “No Reserve in Contracts,” *New York Times*, 31 December 1913.
3. “Anti-Trust Law in Baseball War,” *New York Times*, 31 December 1913.
4. *New York Times*, 10 January 1914.
5. *New York Times*, 23 January 1915. But that the Federal League had even a ten-day release clause was later contradicted by a newspaper report on the negotiations, in Cincinnati in December 1915, between the Federal League and Major League Baseball. The agreement struck was essentially that the latter would buy out the Federal owners. “The bone of contention at Cincinnati will be the ballplayers with whom the Federal League has iron-bound contracts,” according to the *New York Times* (15 December 1915). “In these contracts the ten day and reserve clause were eliminated.”
6. Harold Seymour, *Baseball: The Golden Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 201; David Pietrusza, *Major Leagues: The Formation, Sometimes Absorption, and Mostly Inevitable Demise of 18 Professional Baseball Organizations, 1871 to Present* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2006), 226.

# Burleigh Grimes and the 1912 Eau Claire Commissioners

Jason Christopherson

Ask any resident of Eau Claire if any Hall of Fame baseball players got their start in their Western Wisconsin city, and you will likely hear a story about Henry Aaron and his storybook 1952 season. Or you can view the bronze statue featuring the likeness of the young slugger, wearing his not so famous number 6, standing as a reminder outside of Carson Park. Forty years before Henry Aaron began hammering out his legendary status, though, another future Hall of Famer began his career (with slightly less fanfare) with Eau Claire's entry in the Minnesota-Wisconsin League (Class D).

In 1912, Burleigh Arland Grimes was still a long way from being "Ol' Stubblebeard." Grimes was an 18-year-old kid fresh off a farm near tiny Clear Lake, Wisconsin. Eau Claire is only about sixty miles away but, with a population exceeding 20,000, it may as well have been a different country for the young Grimes.

His love for baseball began at an early age. The key to his future diamond success he may have found during a fateful trip to St. Paul. The exact date is unknown, and even the exact year varies, depending on the source. In their book *The Neyer/James Guide to Pitchers*, Rob Neyer and Bill James cite an article, by J. G. Taylor Spink, in Grimes's file at the Hall of Fame:

Grimes: "Mike Kelly, then manager of the St. Paul Club of the American Association, was a friend of my father. In 1909, I visited St. Paul and Mike took me to see a game in which Hank Gehring, the old spit-baller, was pitching. I was so impressed with his delivery that when I returned home I immediately started practicing the spitball delivery."

Grimes gave a slightly different but far more detailed version of the story to Herman Weiskopf, who penned an article titled "The Infamous Spitter" that appeared in *Sports Illustrated* (July 31, 1967):

[In 1906] my father and uncle were sending four carloads of cattle to St. Paul. When you sent a carload or more you were allowed to ride in the caboos, and that's how I got to go along on the trip with my uncle. When he had taken care of his business in St. Paul he said, "How'd you like to go to a ball game?" and he takes me out to the ball park. I saw this guy—his name was Hank Gehring—using a spitball that day. When I got home, I cut some basswood—some people call it chokeberry—and put it in my mouth to make me salivate. As school kids we used to chew it all the time. Well, I got a catcher and I'd work out with him at noon at school and I'd practice throwing the spitter. From then on I was a spitball pitcher.

Whichever version, or combination of versions, is correct, the one constant is Hank Gehring. A St. Paul native, Gehring had flashes of brilliance in his minor-league career, highlighted by a 32–5 mark for the Western Association's Wichita Jobbers in 1905. Gehring's major-league career was brief—just 18 games for Washington in 1907 and 1908. He went 3–8 for the Senators with an ERA just under 4.00. Ironically, the inspiration for Grimes's famous pitch died of uremic poisoning—kidney failure—just a month before Grimes made his professional debut. Gehring was only 31 years old.

While perfecting his new pitch, Grimes played town ball for Clear Lake. He was a good athlete and could play any position on the field. He also knew how to handle a bat—he was one of the best hitters on the team. The hitting prowess was lasting, as he compiled a major-league career batting average of .248, remarkable for a pitcher. Though Grimes was a talent, his Clear Lake coach would not bring him in to pitch in home games because he wasn't good enough for that just yet. The coach, not one to be accused of nepotism, was his father, Nick.

### From Clear Lake to Eau Claire

Grimes went to Eau Claire in early May 1912 with \$15 (from his father) in his pocket. The Commissioners, Eau Claire's entry in the Minnesota-Wisconsin ("Minnie") League, held open tryouts beginning May 8, and the hard-working Grimes was ready for the challenge. The tryouts were held at the massive complex known as the Driving Park on Eau Claire's south side. Built a decade earlier, the Driving Park was also host to horse racing, track events, polo games, and football matches. Grimes showed athleticism well beyond his years, and he was signed to a contract for \$80 a month—more than double the \$36 he was earning every month while putting in 16-hour days in a lumber camp during the winter. Grimes auditioned so well, in fact, that he was exempted from having to play the only exhibition game the Commissioners had scheduled. The May 12 tilt against Eau Claire's powerhouse semipro team, "Big Jo's," saw four other hurlers shut down the opponents on six hits

in a 19–3 rout. The Commissioners' lineup included a 20-year-old shortstop from Milwaukee named "Falsh," according to the Eau Claire newspaper account. Though he got at least one hit, this young hopeful would never play for Eau Claire again, as Grimes had apparently sewn up one of the few remaining open spots on the roster. Given that his name would become forever linked with those of his fellow Black Sox, perhaps Oscar "Happy" Felsch would one day come to the point that he would have actually preferred the incorrect moniker.

Grimes quickly became a favorite of Russ Bailey, an Eau Claire baseball fixture in the early years of the twentieth century. Bailey, formerly a corporal in the Spanish–American War, first appeared professionally as an outfielder with the 1906 Eau Claire–Chippewa Falls Orphans—Eau Claire's first professional team since 1887. In 1909, the first season of the Minny League, Bailey's .308 batting average was good enough to lead it. Bailey had played for Eau Claire continuously since 1906, except for 1908, when the Northern League left Eau Claire out in the cold without a franchise, and then for a period in 1910, when Milwaukee's Class A team promoted him. There he played the outfield and batted .185 in 31 games for the Brewers before hurting his ankle and returning to Eau Claire. Tommy Schoonhoven, Bailey's Eau Claire manager since his successful 1909 season, stepped down after a lackluster fourth-place finish in 1911. The popular Bailey was an easy choice to replace him.

If there was going to be a 1912 season, that is. The Minnesota-Wisconsin League was in turmoil—from its inception, it sometimes seemed—but never before like this. La Crosse businessman John Elliott, the league president until 1910, was coaxed back into office to replace Winona's Lee H. Bierce, who hadn't held the position long enough to receive the league records from his predecessor before resigning. Frank E. Force, the St. Paul newspaper magnate, had been the league president in 1911 but resigned after one tumultuous season at the helm. Force did everything he could to keep the league afloat in 1911 after Red Wing declared it could no longer pay the bills and had to withdraw from the league in June. Wausau graciously volunteered to leave so as to balance out the schedule with six teams,

NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY, COOPERSTOWN, N.Y.



**Best known as the last pitcher to use the spitball in a game legally, Burleigh Grimes had not yet developed the pitch when he broke in with the Eau Claire Commissioners of the Minnesota-Wisconsin League in 1912 (Class D), his first season in professional ball.**

assuming that they would be allowed to maintain the franchise and reenter the league when it could accommodate them. The league finished the season, but its financial troubles were widespread. Duluth was hit hard and could not even afford to pay their scorekeeper; he never turned in Duluth's official scorebooks to the league office, and so no statistics were ever released. Duluth and Superior, the two largest cities in the league, withdrew from the Minny after the season because they were tired of "carrying the weak sisters" to the south. This left but four teams in the league: La Crosse, Winona, Rochester, and Eau Claire. Despite all this, Elliott and the league directors were optimistic. They voted to play out the 1912 season. Without the larger cities to the north, though, the league was essentially doomed. Bailey was given the unenviable task of keeping the Eau Claire team afloat financially after club president Henry Davis unexpectedly resigned on April 26 to take care of his business interests.

Burleigh Grimes's professional career didn't actually begin on the mound. He did not play in the rain-shortened opener, a 5–1 win on May 14 at Winona. On May 16, the second game of the season, fiery Eau Claire veteran Danny Kick became a little too upset with umpire Marsh's decisions and was ejected in the fifth inning. Bailey needed a shortstop (where was "Falsh" when he needed him?), and he pointed a finger at his young recruit. Grimes didn't hesitate, and he didn't disappoint. Although he went hitless in two at-bats, he handled his only two defensive chances cleanly. Ray Lampman, the pride of tiny Eleva, Wisconsin, pitched a fine game for the Commissioners, and Eau Claire improved to 2–0 with a 6–5 win again at Winona.

#### **And on the mound for the Eau Claire Commissioners . . .**

Russ Bailey did something on May 21 that Nick Grimes refused to do—namely, start Grimes on the mound in a home game. And he did it at the first opportunity—the home opener at the Driving Park. The Commissioners had just lost their first game of the season on May 18 in Rochester and came home to the faithful with a 3–1 record, still good enough for first place in the league. The Eau Claire "lid lifter" pitted Grimes against Rochester's Armontrout, who was making his season debut on the mound as well. The cold and rainy weather that had

plagued the season continued, as strong winds sent shivers through fans and players alike. Drizzle began in the sixth inning, after Grimes had been replaced on the mound. He had started strong, but the Lunatics (yes, Lunatics—Medics was also a popular newspaper name for the team hailing from the town made famous by the brothers Mayo) finally got to the youngster in the fifth inning, smacking two singles and three doubles with two out. Bailey replaced Grimes with Tower, who pitched well in the rain. Grimes, who had struck out two batters, was understandably nervous and no doubt affected by the elements, just as everyone else was. He hit a batter and gave up a walk along with 7 hits in 4½ innings. The exact story of the game has been lost to history, but it appears that Grimes gave up 6 runs, 4 earned, and was the pitcher of record in the 7–6 loss. In his only plate appearance, he sacrificed. The loss dropped the Commissioners to 3–2 and a half-game back of Rochester. That .600 winning percentage would be the low point of the season.

Grimes's next appearance for Bailey came on May 27, when Eau Claire hosted the La Crosse Outcasts. In the five days since his debut, the team had gone 4–1 to take the lead in the Minny League. Lampman pitched brilliantly, shutting out Rochester on May 22 (the only shutout of the year for Eau Claire's pitchers) and giving up only one run to Winona on May 26 to improve his record to 3–0. Grimes came out firing in his second start, scattering 5 hits and a walk around his 8 strikeouts. He gave up 2 runs (one earned), and the Commissioners took advantage of 8 Outcast errors to give Grimes his first professional win, 6–2.

He was nearly as impressive in his next start, on June 2, on the road at Rochester. Going the distance for the second straight game, he allowed 6 hits and 3 earned runs in Eau Claire's 9–3 triumph. His bat contributed three singles as well, and he was suddenly hitting .400. "He appears to have plenty of stuff on the ball," the *Eau Claire Leader* reported the next day, "and has lots of nerve. The latter factor in a pitcher's success was well demonstrated by Grimes, when he stood in front of a line drive and threw the man out at first." This was the second game of a five-game Eau Claire winning streak (which included yet another dominating performance from Lampman) that pushed the Commissioners to a record of 15–4. Eau Claire

was already threatening to run away with the Minny League pennant.

The streak ended on June 6 with Grimes on the hill for the first time in Winona. He pitched one of his worst games of the year, but the offense also let him down or at least failed to penetrate a solid Pirates defense. Winona pounded Grimes for 5 runs on 12 hits in 7 innings en route to the 5–1 win. Winona took the next game, this time in Eau Claire, by the same score. Grimes got the start in right field because the regular right fielder, Harry Bemis, shifted over to left to allow left fielder Herman Vigerust to fill in behind the plate for the injured veteran Helmer Benrud. Grimes went 2 for 4 and was thrown out trying to stretch his first double into his first triple. Suddenly, Winona was only three games back of Eau Claire for first place. So much for running away with the pennant.

Benrud still wasn't available for the next game, on June 8, and so Grimes once again manned right field. Tower, Eau Claire's starting pitcher, fell apart in the fifth. He gave up 4 runs, and, after walking Winona player-manager Fred Curtis, took himself off the mound and walked out to an undoubtedly surprised Grimes in right. Grimes, making his only relief appearance of the year, walked the first batter he faced. He then fired two wild pitches to allow two runs to score before settling down and striking out the last two batters of the inning. The Commissioners rallied, but they lost 8–7. The league lead went back up to three games the next day in the series finale, a 6–2 win. Grimes, again in right field, went hitless in three at bats.

#### **Disquieting rumors about the Minnesota-Wisconsin League**

Newspapers around this time began reporting that the league was still in good shape. All the clubs were working within salary limitations, a problem that had damaged the league's credibility in the past. President Elliott did acknowledge, however, that none of the four clubs was breaking even at this point, citing weather as the main cause. Still, all the clubs were somehow meeting expenses, and there had been no "disquieting rumors" as in recent seasons. Later, Grimes said he was never paid for his time in Eau Claire, contradicting the official reports as reported in the newspapers at the time.

Grimes had a couple of days off as Benrud returned to the lineup, allowing Vigerust, Bailey, and Bemis to resume their usual positions in the outfield, left to right. Then on June 12, for the third time in five starts, Grimes faced off against Rochester, a struggling team with an 8–15 record. Grimes didn't have his best stuff, but it was good enough for a 6–4 complete-game victory. He walked 4, a lot for him, and gave up 6 hits. At the plate he collected his second three-hit game. Russ Bailey injured himself and played through it to the end of the game, but it left a vacancy in center that the versatile Grimes filled for the next three games. His line in the box scores for them were nearly identical—in each game, 1 single in 4 at-bats. On June 16, he stole a base for the first time as the Commissioners beat La Crosse 3–1, giving Lampman his fifth (and final) win of the season. Despite a team batting average of just .236, Eau Claire, at 20–9, still managed to hold on to first place.

Eau Claire took two of three games in La Crosse and then hosted the Outcasts for their own three-game set, in what is now known as a "home and home" series. As in his second start of the year, also at home against La Crosse, Grimes was masterful. He gave up 2 runs, 1 earned, on just 4 hits and a walk while going the distance in the 9–2 win. But he failed to ride the momentum into his next start, on the road at Rochester on June 21, when he hit 2 batters, walked another, and gave up 11 hits in a sloppy 8–6 loss.

That same day, the *Leader* ran conflicting stories that, when taken together, appeared ominous for fans of the Commissioners and the Minny League itself. "Minny Will Finish Season" was a headline that was undoubtedly meant to imply "full" season. The story, published approximately two weeks after the "good shape" stories, indicates that, even though the finances of the league were depleted, the directors voted to play out the schedule: "Mr. Elliott reported that the Eau Claire club had been in a tottering condition but Manager Bailey has taken the situation in charge and will be able to work it out without difficulty." And that was the positive story!

Another piece, headlined "No Games Played in Minny League," served as a reminder to the paying customers that this was a scheduled offday. But the next few lines are where things get scary:

Danny Kick led the lads to Rochester in the afternoon where beginning today they play a series of three games. Russ Bailey will join the team at Winona, he laying over to boom the finances of the club. . . . Rumor has gained widespread circulation around the place the last few days to the effect that the team would not go on the road but disband. The club officials are at a loss to know who gave rise to this rumor, and wish to make it known that it is wholly unfounded. No doubt it started from some malcontent who fails to appreciate the town's leading enterprise. It is true that the attendance at games thus far has not been any too good, but Eau Claire is not entertaining the idea of withdrawing from the Minny.

About what, if not who, "gave rise to this rumor," the alert reader was liable to make reasonable inferences from the other article that ran in the same issue. The players had to know things were bad just by looking at the stands and seeing the dwindling groups that could scarcely be called a "crowd." Bailey probably kept them in the know, as he was essentially one of the boys, and what Bailey didn't tell them they could read for themselves in the paper. Whether they knew they were in the final days of the season, though, is still a mystery.

#### Rumors are realized

The off-the-field news for Eau Claire was bad enough. The surging Winona Pirates were bad news of a more immediate kind. The Kick-led Commissioners, with Grimes filling in again for Bailey in center, managed to win the last two games with the Medics. This kept Eau Claire a scant 1½ games ahead of Winona with a big six-game home-and-home series with the Pirates next on the schedule. Winona took the opener at home to pull within half a game. The next day, Eau Claire broke a tie in the top of the seventh to take a 4–2 lead. Winona answered with three in the bottom of the eighth, but the Commissioners pushed across three runs of their own in the ninth to go back on top, 7–5. Dramatically, Winona scored three times off of Eau Claire's clearly tiring starter, Bersing, to win 8–7 and retake first place. In hindsight, Kick's managing ability and the health of Grimes's arm were questionable. He had played center field in place of the still-missing Bailey since his last mound start four days earlier, but surprisingly he did not get the call to pick up Bersing, as he had done for Tower.



NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY, COOPERSTOWN, N.Y.

**Grimes would win 270 games in his 19-year career in the majors, which included five seasons of more than 20 wins; twice he won 19. His lifetime batting average was .248, and twice he hit better than .300 in a season of more than 100 at-bats. In 1928, when he won 25 games, a career high, he had a career year at the plate as well, hitting .321 (42 for 131). For Eau Claire in 1912, he was one of the best hitters and often played the outfield when he wasn't pitching.**

Eau Claire went on to lose the third game, and the sweep was complete. Grimes played his fifth straight game in the outfield and even played a few innings in left—his fifth different position. He had one hit in each game and had hit safely in ten of his last eleven games. Now trailing the Pirates by a game and a half in the standings, the Commissioners headed for the Driving Park for three more chances, beginning June 28, to scuttle Winona's mighty Pirate ship.

Russ Bailey's return to the lineup would have probably meant a start on the mound for Grimes had it not been Brody's turn in the rotation. Brody, a 6-game winner, pitched well in scorching heat, but again Eau Claire's bats were silent. Winona had taken their fourth straight game from Eau Claire, this time by the score of 3–2. In the second game of the series, Herman Vigerust filled in for a banged-up Helmer Benrud behind the

plate. As the team had done earlier in the season when Benrud was hurt, Harry Bemis was shifted from right field to left while Grimes was inserted in to right field. He made the most of it, going 3 for 4—again, all singles—and chipping in with two stolen bases, which ran his total on the season to five. Eau Claire played inspired ball and won for the first time in nearly a week. Stakes for the series finale on June 30 were high. Bailey tabbed the young Grimes to take the ball.

Grimes pitched well enough to win. He shut down the Pirates on four hits through the first five innings, and Eau Claire led 2–0. But Winona scratched out single runs in the sixth, seventh, and eighth innings, and the Commissioners dropped the key contest, 3–2, as the Eau Claire bats went to sleep again—perhaps because the spacious Driving Park was so quiet. On that glorious Sunday afternoon, only 177 fans ventured to the park to watch the top two teams in the league battle it out.

Bailey had seen enough. Citing low attendance, the local baseball legend made the painful decision to withdraw from the Minnesota-Wisconsin League. The *Leader* on July 2 carried no account of the final game but chastised the citizens of Eau Claire. They also reported that there was no money to pay the players. With only three other teams and no community that could field a team on short notice to replace Eau Claire, the Minny League had no choice but to fold. Eau Claire, who had already lost franchises after the 1887 and 1907 seasons at least in part due to poor fan support, would not see professional baseball again for 21 years.

### **Relocating to Austin, Minnesota**

Bailey felt sorry for the young spitballer, Burleigh Grimes. He gave him \$5 and a lead to a possible position with an amateur team in Austin, Minnesota. Grimes went, won the job, and made the most of his new surroundings. He immediately became a fan favorite by dominating the Albert Lea squad in his debut on July 4, giving up 6 hits and striking out 9 in Austin's 5–2 win. And he had a good day at the plate, hitting a double and a triple. In the second game of the double-header, he played center field, where he made a sensational running catch, and he contributed a double to Austin's 13–1 romp.

Grimes excelled in nearly every game he played for Austin. He single-handedly beat the team from Owatonna, Minnesota, ten days after his debut, holding them to just one hit but collecting a couple of doubles himself in the course of scoring twice, and driving in four runs. (The umpire was none other than Frank Force, who only the season before had been serving as head of the now recently disbanded Minnesota-Wisconsin League.)

Led by their new young star, Austin breezed through its schedule and declared itself the amateur champions of Minnesota after Grimes beat the North Side (Minneapolis) Athletics 11–7 on September 8. All told, the available records indicate Grimes went 8–0 for Austin. In the games where a box score is available, he gave up 3.53 runs per nine innings (it is impossible to determine which were earned) and had an impressive WHIP of 0.98.

The reputation Grimes would later develop for being intimidating, even mean, may not have yet begun to develop in his rookie season. The Eau Claire newspaper indicated no unusual behavior. Of his four hit batsmen on the season, one came in his first game and two more in a game marred by rain. The first glimpse we get of Grimes's demeanor comes from the *Austin Daily Herald*, which, reporting on his debut game with the local team, offered that “he is young, good natured, and has a smile that at once won the hearts of the fans”—no hint there of the Ol' Stubblebeard he was to become. He adjusted well to his “demotion” to Austin, but any reputation he may have acquired for being “good natured” was short-lived. Charles F. Faber and Richard B. Faber in the book *Spitballers* note that “during his four years in the Southern Association (1913–1916), Grimes became known as a kid who would fight at the drop of a hat.”

Grimes was back in the professional ranks the following season, 1913, going 6–2 for Ottumwa, Iowa, in the Central Association before Detroit bought his contract for \$400 and sent him to Chattanooga. He remained in the minors until August 1916, when Pittsburgh bought his contract from Birmingham and elevated him to the big-league team. At the time of his call-up, Grimes had compiled a minor-league won-lost record of 76–52.

As for Burleigh Grimes's first true professional season, he ended up 4–4 for Eau Claire and with an estimated ERA of 3.50. (In the SABR Minor League Database, his

**Burleigh Grimes—Eau Claire Commissioners 1912 Pitching Record**

Date	Opponent	Game	Start	Est. IP	Est. R	Est. ER	Est. H	BB	K	WP	HB	Decision	Est. ERA
May 21	Rochester	1	Y	4 $\frac{2}{3}$	6	4	7	1	2	0	1	L	7.71
May 27	La Crosse	1	Y	9	2	1	5	1	8	0	0	W	1.00
June 2	@ Rochester	1	Y	9	3	3	6	1	7	0	0	W	3.00
June 6	@ Winona	1	Y	7	5	5	12	2	3	0	0	L	6.43
June 8	Winona	1	N	4 $\frac{2}{3}$	2	1	0	2	4	2	0	ND	1.93
June 12	Rochester	1	Y	9	4	4	6	4	5	0	0	W	4.00
June 17	La Crosse	1	Y	9	2	1	4	1	6	0	0	W	1.00
June 21	@ Rochester	1	Y	8	8	5	11	1	6	0	2	L	5.63
June 30	Winona	1	Y	9	3	3	6	2	6	0	1	L	3.00
<b>TOTALS</b>		<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>69<math>\frac{1}{3}</math></b>	<b>35</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4-4</b>	<b>3.50</b>

ERA is given as 3.52, based on 69 innings, but I believe 69 $\frac{1}{3}$  to be the more accurate figure.)

After an exhaustive attempt, I have concluded that several statistics are impossible to tally perfectly. The numbers presented in the accompanying table for innings pitched, runs, earned runs, and hits are all based on best estimates from game stories and box scores.

He walked only 15 and struck out 47 in 69 $\frac{1}{3}$  innings. For the 18-year-old from Clear Lake, Wisconsin, the pitcher working on his spitball, it was an impressive line and a precursor to a Hall of Fame career.

**Postscript**

Precious little has been published about Burleigh Grimes’s first professional season. Because the Minny League folded so suddenly, no statistics were published in the guides. As a result of the research I did for this article, many of the statistics provided here now can be found in the SABR Minor League Database. The compilation for strikeouts, wild pitches, and hit batters are believed to be original. Please note that the won–lost record of Eau Claire has been previously reported as 25–17. This appears to be in error.

I had a long conversation with Charles Clark, Grimes’s friend of many years and an interesting man in his own right. Clark told me that the best biography of Grimes that he had ever read appears in *Spitballers: The Last Legal Hurlers of the Wet One*, by Charles and Richard Faber. It is a great piece of work, and I encourage you to take a look at it. I end this article with that in mind—from here, you can pick up the rest of Grimes’s story in the pages of that book. ■

**SOURCES**

*Austin Daily Herald*.  
 Burleigh Grimes baseball cards. Authorized by Burleigh Grimes and Tom Daniels. N.p., 1977.  
*Eau Claire Leader*.  
 Bohn, Terry. “Doctors, Buttermakers, Outcasts, and Lunatics: A History of the Minnesota-Wisconsin League.” *Minneapolis Review of Baseball* 9, no. 2 (1990): 36–46.  
 Faber, Charles F., and Richard B. Faber. *Spitballers: The Last Legal Hurlers of the Wet One*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2006.  
 Hamman, Rex, ed. *The All-Time Rosters of the Milwaukee Brewers of the American Association, 1902–1952*. Cleveland: SABR, 2006.  
 Interview with Charles Clark, October 2006.  
 Interview (via e-mail) with SABR member Frank Hamilton, August 2006.  
 Interview (via e-mail) with Stew Thornley, April 2008.  
 Lee, Bill. *The Baseball Necrology: The Post-Baseball Lives and Deaths of Over 7,600 Major League Players and Others*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2003.  
 Neyer, Rob, and Bill James. *The Neyer/James Guide to Pitchers*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004.  
 Poling, Jerry. *A Summer Up North: Henry Aaron and the Legend of Eau Claire Baseball*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003.  
 Russell C. Bailey Family, <http://rootie.geeknet.com/russbailey.html>.  
 SABR Minor League Database.  
*Winona Republican Herald*.

# Farmer Hal from Yoncalla

## Hal Turpin of the Pacific Coast League

Eric Salle, Dave Eskenazi, and Dave Baldwin

In 1994, Dave Eskenazi traveled to Yoncalla, Oregon, to visit one of the Pacific Coast League’s all-time great pitchers, Harold “Hal” Turpin. As a ninety-first-birthday present, Eskenazi handed Turpin a packet of letters written to him by some of his former Seattle Rainiers teammates.<sup>1</sup> A quiet, reserved man who shunned publicity, Turpin was visibly touched by words reflecting the great esteem the players felt for “Farmer Hal.” An ace on one of the most dominant teams in PCL history, Turpin was a 20-game winner for Seattle teams that won regular-season pennants in 1939, 1940, and 1941 and league playoff championships in 1940, 1941, and 1942.

The letter writers mentioned the experience of playing with the Rainiers and recounted the current whereabouts and fortunes of elderly teammates. They reminisced about visiting Turpin’s farm to hunt and fish during the off-seasons. And they wrote with admiration about Turpin’s pinpoint accuracy and his unusual sidearm knuckleball.

Turpin was not a member of the privileged class nor was he an overnight success. He was a humble farm boy who understood the value of hard work and perseverance. Born on September 28, 1903,<sup>2</sup> in a farmhouse midway between Scotts Valley and Yoncalla, Hal was the youngest of the nine children of Missouri native Joseph Turpin and his wife Cynthia, née Cellers. He attended school in Scotts Valley until his father died and he was needed to work the family farm. Although not a student, Turpin did find time to travel to Yoncalla to play for the high-school baseball team. In 1921 he joined the Yoncalla town team, and it was then that he initially had success as a country hardball pitcher. Becoming expert at farmwork and playing baseball on the side, Turpin took his burgeoning pitching skills on the road, playing for Oregon teams in North Bend, Cottage Grove, and Albany.



DAVID ESKENAZI COLLECTION

Hal Turpin, *left*, with Dave Eskenazi, *right*, in 1994.

In 1926, while playing for the Albany team in the semiprofessional Willamette Valley League, Turpin was invited to Portland to try out with the San Francisco Seals, who were playing the Beavers in a PCL series at Vaughn Street Park. Impressing Seals manager Nick Williams, the 22-year-old Turpin was signed for the 1927 season.

Early in his career, the five-eleven, 185-pound right-hander used a conventional overhand delivery and relied on a lively fastball and sharp-breaking curve. From 1927 through May 1935, Turpin struggled with inconsistency and arm problems, causing him to bounce from team to team. After winning 6 games and losing 4 in 97 sporadic innings in 1927, the Seals sent him to Little Rock of the Southern Association, where he won 23 and lost 23 over two seasons. He married Georgia May Wallace in Roseburg, Oregon, on December 26, 1928; San Francisco gave the newlyweds a belated wedding present when



**San Francisco Seals, 1927.**

***Top row: Gus Suhr (far left), Smead Jolley (3rd from left), Babe Pinelli (4th from left), Denny Carroll (trainer, 7th from left), Dolph Camilli (8th from left), Ping Bodie (10th from left, partially obscured)***

***Middle row: Roy Johnson (far left), Hal Turpin (3rd from left), Earl Averill (4th from left), Lefty O'Doul (5th from left)***

***Bottom row: Walter Mails (2nd from left), Eddie Mulligan (6th from left)***

they brought Turpin back to the Pacific coast and the Pacific Coast League after the 1929 season. The Seals dealt him to Seattle in the midst of a pennant-winning 1931 season. From Seattle he went to Denver in the Western League, where he won 13 games in 1932, creating enough interest that Portland bought his contract for the 1933 season. After winning 15 games and leading the league with 32 complete games for a poor Beaver team in 1934, Turpin was released when he struggled early in 1935. He had been relieving one day, starting the next, or not pitching at all for ten consecutive days. Sportswriters blamed that routine for the sore arm that caused his poor showing. At age 31 and after nine years in the minor leagues, Turpin's record stood at 86 wins and 92 losses, a .483 winning percentage. He had a sore pitching arm, a wife, 4-year-old son Wallace, and a farm to take care of. He had arrived at a crossroads.

With the motivation that only people who love baseball can understand, he chose the road to Des Moines for a second attempt in the Western League. It was there that he discovered his arm did not hurt if he threw the ball sidearm. He also discovered that the new sidearm slants

were deceiving to hitters and, perhaps best of all, he could still throw the ball exactly where he wanted it to go. At this point, Turpin became a consistent winner who never experienced recurring arm pain again. As a sidearmer he won 185 games and lost 111 (a .625 percentage), a complete turnaround from his conventional overhand days. After catching on with Des Moines, he finished the season by winning 12 of 20 decisions. In 1936, he was a 20-game winner for the first time, leading the league in wins and complete games, and was named to the Western League All-Star team.

In 1937, the Seattle Rainiers hired Des Moines manager Spencer Abbott. He brought his ace with him. Turpin's prior PCL record with San Francisco, Seattle, and Portland had been mediocre—50 wins, 65 losses—but with a new arm angle and renewed confidence he was brilliant over the next 10 seasons, winning 153 and losing 93. During the Rainiers' dynasty, he led the PCL with 23 wins in 1939, 28 complete games in 1940, and winning percentage in 1941 (.769) and 1942 (.719). He was a 20-game winner in four consecutive years, 1939 through 1942, and averaged 289 innings pitched per season.

DAVID ESKENAZI COLLECTION



**Hal Turpin with Des Moines in 1936, his first 20-win season, when he was named to the Western League All-Star team. The photo was staged in the grandstand, perhaps because it was raining.**

Newspaper headlines barked “Farmer Hal Does It Again!” and Turpin became a West Coast celebrity representing a city that consistently led the league in attendance.

“Hal Turpin was always an amazement to me,” said teammate Paul Gregory, a member of a Rainiers’ stellar pitching staff that also included Tracy “Kewpie Dick” Barrett. “I couldn’t understand how he could get people out until they decided that he was one of the original slider pitchers,” Gregory recalled. “He had an excellent slider and could throw it in a knothole. His control and his movement on the ball without remarkable speed gave him the winning edge” (Dobbins, 92).

Another sidearm pitch that made Turpin highly effective was the knuckleball. Gregory called it Turpin’s “Sunday pitch,” the one a veteran pitcher used in a pinch. Turpin gripped his knuckler by digging his fingertips into the seam, flicking the fingers forward as he released the ball. This finger action eliminated most of the spin on the ball, producing a pitch that behaved erratically. Many knuckleball pitchers have used this method of gripping and releasing the knuckleball, but nearly all threw the pitch using an overhand or high three-quarter delivery.

A sidearm delivery usually results in an inadvertent topspin, which destroys the fluttering effect. Turpin, however, found a way to avoid the spin. Rainiers’ catcher Buddy Hancken recalled that Turpin’s knuckleball had unique flight characteristics because of the odd arm angle at release. On its way to the catcher it might dart off in any direction—completely unpredictable. The pitch was described as nearly unhittable.

Turpin, who was “one of the quietest individuals to ever wear the Seattle baseball livery,” managed to give an interview wherein he credited much of his success to knowing the hitters’ weaknesses and being able to control the location of his pitches. “Control is the secret of my pitching,” he said.

All my life, even in a bunting game, or when warming up, I am aiming—I’m aiming at the left knee, the right shoulder, or the buckle on the belt. Most young pitchers don’t want to learn ball enough to take pains. They just bust the ball loose. Another thing, I study the hitters. I know what they like to hit, and then give them something else. Then, I used to learn from good pitchers, doing what they did. But mostly I just know where the ball is going when I throw it (Brougham).

Royal Brougham, the legendary Seattle sportswriter, had this to say about Turpin:

He’s in perfect condition 365 days of the year. When the baseball season is over, Hal changes into overalls and puts in the fall crop of hay, wheat and oats on an \$18,000, 100-acre Oregon farm. He gets in the winter’s work and takes care of the stock. Up at 6, in bed at 9, he is practically ready to pitch the day he reports at camp in the spring (Brougham).

Rainiers manager Bill Skiff said, “Hal is a manager’s type of ball player. He’s always in shape and always ready to pitch. Every spring he works as hard as the youngest rookie in the camp” (Keller). Skiff declared that he wouldn’t trade Hal for four new tires—and this was during wartime, when rubber was scarce.

On April 12, 1942, Turpin approached perfection. Against the Padres in San Diego, with two out in the ninth and a 2–2 count on pinch-hitter Cedric Durst, Turpin threw what appeared to be the third strike to end the game. Durst turned and carried his bat back toward the dugout, but umpire Bill Doran came trotting after



**Yoncalla's town team in 1921. Hal Turpin is in second row, far right.**

him to explain that he had called the pitch a ball. Durst went back to the plate and Turpin walked him on the next pitch. Durst was San Diego's only baserunner in a 2-0 Seattle win. Turpin's no-hitter bested one of the 1994 letter writers, Padre right-hander Frankie Dasso, in a game that lasted 97 minutes.

Pitching a quick game was not unusual for Turpin. Beer baron Emil Sick had rescued Seattle's PCL team from bankruptcy after his friend, New York Yankees owner Jacob Ruppert, convinced him that owning a baseball team was good for beer sales. "They had a blue law in Seattle at that time, and you couldn't sell beer on Sundays," said ex-Rainiers outfielder Edo Vanni,

so we never pitched Hal Turpin on Saturday night. We'd pitch Dickie Barrett, and he'd pitch a three-hour game and that would be their [management's] best beer night. Turpin would pitch the Sunday afternoon game when we were going on the road because he'd pitch the game in one hour, twenty minutes, and we'd catch the train in time (Dobbins, 119).

The Rainiers paid Turpin handsomely; several sources reported he was one of the highest-paid players in the minor leagues. It is not surprising, then, that major-league teams were not willing to pay Turpin enough to justify his leaving the Rainiers and putting too much

distance between him and his farm. Popular opinion during Turpin's era suggested that the PCL *was* "major league," at least in the western half of the nation, and he was content staying put. Even during the World War II years, when major-league talent became scarce, Turpin remained with the Rainiers and close to his farm. Turpin, when the United States entered the war in 1941, was 38, too old for military duty.

In fact, the farm was always on his mind. Turpin raised cattle and sheep and harvested hay, oats, and wheat crops. His wife, Georgia May, recalled, "Harold ran the farm from the pitcher's mound." In Seattle and on road trips he scoured the PCL cities for farm equipment, for the war effort had created metal and rubber shortages, and machinery was hard to come by. It also created a manpower shortage, and in 1943 Turpin left the Rainiers in midseason and returned to the farm because he could not find anyone to run it while he played ball.

In 1945, Turpin's last full season, he won 18 games, lost only 8, and had an ERA of 2.40 in 229 innings pitched. He was 42 by the end of the 1945 season, one of four 40- or nearly-40-year-old pitchers for the Rainiers. Lefty Carl Fischer (39) joined Turpin as part of the regular rotation, and the staff included right-handers Sylvester Johnson (43) and Byron Speece (48) as well.



With a league-leading attendance of 434,133, Seattle fans encouraged these middle-aged men to a second-place finish that season. It was Hal's last hurrah.

Turpin finally retired from baseball after the first month of the 1946 season. During the previous winter he had been traded to Sacramento. To his chagrin, the Senators sometimes traveled by plane rather than bus or train. He had never flown and decided it was too late in life to start, so he said good-bye and took a bus home. "Up at 6, in bed at 9," Turpin worked his farm year round until 1961, when he sold it and moved to Yoncalla. He spent his retirement years hunting and fishing, doing repair work at a local church, enjoying his family (the Turpins had two children, son Wallace and daughter Kay), and playing in the occasional old-timer's game. While he was not a particularly social man, he did enjoy talking about baseball and his time in it with anybody who engaged him.



COURTESY OF THE CENTENNIAL FLOURING MILLS, SEATTLE, WA

Trading card of Turpin demonstrating his knuckleball grip. The back of the card explains that Turpin had "retired with a sore arm. He came back with a sidearm delivery and has been one of Seattle's big winners in recent seasons."

**HAL TURPIN'S CAREER RECORD**

Year	Teams	League	W	L	ERA	G	CG	IP	H	BB	SO
1927	San Francisco	PCL	6	4	4.45	29	3	97	119	26	21
1928	Little Rock	South. Assoc.	12	12	3.95	44		237	264	60	44
1929	Little Rock	South. Assoc.	11	11	3.69	31		173	198	26	30
1929	San Francisco	PCL	0	0	6.75	2	0	3	6	2	0
1930	San Francisco	PCL	10	11	3.86	45	9	205	247	41	65
1931	San Francisco & Seattle	PCL	9	14	5.07	39	10	197	267	50	64
1932	Seattle	PCL	1	1	3.18	3		17	15	3	2
1932	Denver	Western	13	4		23		152	187	39	48
1933	Portland	PCL	6	9	2.94	16	10	104	130	23	35
1934	Portland	PCL	15	22	4.05	42	<b>32</b>	320	<b>376</b>	58	89
1935	Portland	PCL	3	4	8.43	12	2	47	73	21	17
1935	Des Moines	Western	12	8		25		161	194	34	110
1936	Des Moines	Western	20	10	2.75	34	<b>28</b>	259	<b>285</b>	69	124
1937	Seattle	PCL	9	11	4.59	24	11	157	175	50	64
1938	Seattle	PCL	17	14	2.90	37	17	217	220	53	81
1939	Seattle	PCL	23	10	2.50	37	27	270	273	46	100
1940	Seattle	PCL	23	11	2.73	37	<b>28</b>	297	289	65	96
1941	Seattle	PCL	20	6	2.51	37	21	269	274	35	68
1942	Seattle	PCL	23	9	2.07	36	31	321	309	44	67
1943	Seattle	PCL	7	6	2.89	14	10	106	111	17	25
1944	Seattle	PCL	13	15	3.10	31	20	229	238	33	52
1945	Seattle	PCL	18	8	2.40	31	18	229	244	26	29
1946	Sacramento	PCL	0	3	5.29	5	0	17	24	8	3
TOTAL (incomplete)			271	203	3.29	634	277	4084	4518	829	1234
PCL only (incomplete)			203	158	3.26	477	249	3102	3390	601	878

\* **Bold** indicates led league.

DAVID ESKENAZI COLLECTION



**Seattle Rainiers boarding a bus for a road trip in 1940. Left to right: Les Webber, Ira Scribner, Bill Walker, Tom Simmons, Hal Turpin, Ed Kearse, Edo Vanni, and Pete Jonas.**

Although Hal Turpin's name is not in the *Baseball Encyclopedia*, some of his teammates over a 20-year career include major-league stars Lefty O'Doul, Earl Averill, Dolph Camilli, Bill Dickey, Frank Crosetti, Lefty Gomez, Dutch Ruether, George H. Burns, Spud Chandler, and Fred Hutchinson. He competed admirably against the likes of Harry Hooper, Ernie Lombardi, Carl Mays, Joe DiMaggio, George Kelly, Bobby Doerr, Ted Williams, Dom DiMaggio, Babe Herman, Tony Lazzeri, and Pepper Martin. He won 203 games in the pre-1958 Pacific Coast League and 271 minor-league games overall (see accompanying table). In 1954, Seattle fans recognized Turpin's importance to some of the greatest seasons in Seattle baseball history when they picked him as one of the original members of the Rainiers' Roll of Honor. Baseball historian John Spalding and the Pacific Coast League Historical Society later determined that Turpin was the ninth-best pitcher in PCL history. Finally, in 2003, Turpin was posthumously honored with election to the Pacific Coast League Hall of Fame, a well-deserved recognition for "Farmer Hal from Yoncalla."

Hal Turpin died in Roseburg, Oregon, on February 28, 1997, at age 93. He is buried in the Yoncalla Masonic Cemetery. ■

## NOTES

1. Players writing letters to Hal Turpin included Paul "Pop" Gregory (Hal's teammate at Seattle, 1937 through 1941), Pete Jonas (at Seattle, 1938 and 1943), Ed Selway (at Seattle, 1939), Mike Budnick (at Seattle, 1939 and 1942), and Al Libke (Seattle, 1942 and 1944). Frank Dasso also wrote a letter, but he was never Turpin's teammate. He played against Turpin in 1940 through 1944 and again briefly in 1946.
2. Several reference works, including the SABR Minor League Database, incorrectly list Turpin's year of birth as 1902.

## SOURCES

- Allison, W. "A Visit with Hal Turpin." *Northwest Ruralite* (Douglas Electric Edition) 11, no. 10 (October 1964): 12–13.
- Bauer, C. *The Coast League Cyclopedia: An Encyclopedia of the Old Pacific Coast League, 1903–57*. San Diego: Baseball Press Books, 2003.
- Brougham, R. "The Morning After: Oregon Farmer Wants 100 Wins—Turpin Tells of Pitching Craft." *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 20 March 1941.
- Dobbins, D. *The Grand Minor League: An Oral History of the Old Pacific Coast League*. San Francisco: Woodford Press, 1999.
- Johnson, L., and M. Wolff. *The Encyclopedia of Minor League Baseball*. 2nd ed. Durham, N.C.: Baseball America, 1997.
- Keller, E. "Base Hits." Unidentified San Diego newspaper, 1942.
- Reach Official American League Baseball Guide*, 1928, 1930, and 1933.
- Smith, B. K. "Harold Turpin, Baseball's Famous Country Boy." In *Yoncalla Yesterday*, 397–401. Portland, Ore.: Yoncalla Historical Society, 2001.
- Spalding's Official Baseball Guide*, 1929, 1931–32, 1934–41.
- Sporting News Baseball Guide*, 1942–47.
- Turpin, G. M. W. "The Pitcher's Wife." In *Yoncalla Yesterday*. Portland, Ore.: Yoncalla Historical Society, 2001, pp. 405–8.
- Turpin, H. Personal scrapbook containing various newspaper clippings (1927 through 1994) and miscellaneous documents. In the David Eskenazi Collection.

# The 1924 Junior World Series

## The St. Paul Saints' Magnificent Comeback

Roger A. Godin

By 1920 the idea of matching two high-minor-league teams in a lesser version of the major-league World Series had finally taken root. Informal series had been staged in 1904, 1906, 1907, 1917, and 1919. In 1920, the pennant winners of the International League (IL) and of the American Association (AA) met in the Little World Series, or Junior World Series (JWS) as it would come to be called, establishing a tradition, a championship series between the IL and AA, that would be observed most years through the end of the century until the AA disbanded after the 1997 season. At stake was the championship of the high minors at a time when most of these teams were strong independent entities close in quality to that of the major leagues.

Jack Dunn in the second decade of the twentieth century had established in Baltimore a dynasty that would bring his Orioles seven consecutive IL pennants and corresponding trips to the JWS. In both 1920 and 1922 his teams had defeated St. Paul in the postseason event, and there was little reason to believe that Baltimore's domination would end when the two teams met again in October 1924. The Orioles had finished 19 games ahead of second-place Toronto. After briefly trailing Buffalo early in the season, they had gone on to win the pennant handily.

Baltimore was paced by future Hall of Famer Robert Moses (Lefty) Grove (26-6, 3.01 ERA). Other significant members of their pitching staff were Jack Ogden (19-6, 3.63 ERA), later to see action with two of the St. Louis Browns' better teams (1928-29) and with the Reds (1931-32); Cliff Jackson (16-8, 3.92); Tommy Thomas (16-11, 4.08), and Ed Tomlin (11-2, 3.61).

Second baseman Dick Porter led the IL in batting with a .363 average along with 23 home runs and 125 RBIs. He was injured in late August but returned in time for

the JWS. At first base was Clayton Sheedy (.298, 16, 99). Joe Boley (.291, 4, 100) was at short, and Fritz Maisel (.306, 20, 88) at third. In the outfield was left fielder John Jacobs (.284, 14, 70), center fielder Merwin Jacobson (.308, 18, 97), and right fielder Tom Connelly (.312, 19, 98). Both Jacobs and Connelly had been acquired during midseason trades. The catching was handled largely by Joe Cobb (.320, 22, 84), who was backed up by Lew McCarty (.308, 4, 22). Off-the-bench outfielder Harold Clark (.339, 9, 39) was a major contributor as well.

The 1923 St. Paul Saints had won 111 games but still finished second behind Kansas City in the AA pennant race. The 1924 version of the team would win "only" 96, but that was good enough for a first-place finish over Indianapolis. The team was piloted by backup catcher Nick Allen, succeeding long-time manager Mike Kelley, who had moved over to Minneapolis to assume the reigns of the Millers. Allen's pitching staff was led by Cliff Markle (19-9, 3.01), Howard Merritt (19-17, 4.68), Paul Fittery (16-10, 4.37), and Tony Faeth (15-4, 3.45). St. Paul's offensive leader was third baseman Charlie Dressen (.346, 18, 151), destined to become better known for his major league career as a manager, guiding the Brooklyn Dodgers to two pennants (1952, 1953) during his three years at the helm there. First baseman Johnny Neun, a Baltimore native, batted a healthy .353 with 5 home runs and 100 RBIs while leading the AA in stolen bases with 54. He would subsequently earn a degree of immortality after moving up to the Detroit Tigers in 1925 and, two years later, becoming one of only two first basemen in major-league history to execute an unassisted triple play.

Second baseman "Hap" Morse (.273, 3, 52) and shortstop Danny Boone (.259, 4, 65) rounded out the infield.

Patrolling the outfield was AA runs leader Walt “Seacap” Christensen (.314, 8, 73) in center, flanked by Bruno Haas (.293, 11, 100) in left and, in right, Cliff Lee (.382, 3, 36). Leo Dixon (.272, 10, 67) was the everyday catcher. Also in the dugout was utility infielder Mark Koenig (.267, 0, 16), who would parlay this series into a starting role with the 1925 Saints before joining the Yankees and ultimately playing shortstop for the memorable 1927 team.

Baltimore had trained at Columbus, Georgia, and then barnstormed north, playing major- as well as minor-league teams. St. Paul had no opportunity to face major-league opposition during spring training. Assembling at Fort Smith, Arkansas, near the Oklahoma border in early March, the Saints broke camp on March 25 for a twelve-game exhibition tour of the Southern Association, through Memphis, Birmingham, Nashville, and Chattanooga, finishing with a record of 6–5 and one tie. The *Baltimore Sun*’s evaluation of the Orioles could have applied to the Saints equally well: “done well, without setting the world on fire.”

#### The tight AA pennant race of 1924

Unlike Baltimore, which won the IL pennant easily, St. Paul fought a hard, season-long pennant race. The AA season opened in mid-April. Indianapolis, Louisville, and St. Paul rose to the top of the standings, all of them holding first place at some point during the summer. By September 15, the Saints were on top at 84–62. Indianapolis was second at 82–65, and, at 82–66, Louisville was a close third.

A week later, with less than a week of the season remaining, the Indianapolis Indians, now holding a half-game lead over the Saints, went to St. Paul, where they lost four of five games and fell 2½ games back. The Saints then split a four-game series against Louisville. Indianapolis got swept by the Minneapolis Millers in a three-game series, and that was the season.

The clincher came in the second game of a double-header versus Louisville on September 27 as Markle went the distance in the 5–3 win. Allen put things into perspective as reported by the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*: “It’s too early to start crowing. Our biggest job lies ahead of us. When we have beaten Baltimore, and I am sure

**Future Hall of Famer Lefty Grove started Game 1 of the Junior World Series for the Baltimore Orioles of the American Association, hanging on for a 4–3 victory courtesy of a two-run, walk-off home run by Merwin Jacobson.**



NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY, COOPERSTOWN, N.Y.

this is our year, then we will be able to call it a successful season” (September 28).

#### Opening in Baltimore

The Junior World Series was to open in Baltimore on Thursday, October 2. The Saints took the train from Minnesota on Monday evening. After an hour’s layover in Chicago, they departed for Maryland in time to work out at the home team’s Oriole Park on Wednesday. No Saint was suffering from anything worse than minor injuries as Allen put the team through “a short, but intensive workout”:

After the usual infield and batting practice Allen took the men over the field, inspecting the distances to the fences and discussing the possible developments from hits to any field. Standing in left, center, and right fields successively, the players discussed every possible play that might develop from balls bouncing off the short fences and a plan of campaign was outlined that pretty comprehensively covered all the possibilities of the opening game. (*Pioneer Press*, October 2)

The series would be best-of-nine, a format that the major leagues had used previously for the Fall Classic in 1903 and then again in 1919, 1920, and 1921.

#### Game 1

In Game 1, Allen went with Cliff Markle as his starting pitcher, while Dunn predictably sent to the mound Groves, as Lefty Grove was then known. Allen’s decision looked misguided when the Orioles’ lead-off hitter Fritz Maisel sent Markle’s second offering over the left-field fence to put the home team up in the first inning. The

locals added another run and took that lead into the fourth when the Saints got to Grove for two runs. The tie held until the top of the ninth when Cliff Lee homered to right to give the visitors a 3–2 lead heading into the home ninth. After Maisel was retired, Connelly doubled to right, bringing up Merwin Jacobson, who “fixed his eye on the offering of the St. Paul pitcher,” according to the account in the *Baltimore Sun* (October 3), “gave a mighty swing at the whirling sphere and caught it squarely with his bat. Before it fell outside the park, a thousand fans were on the field to hail him chief, conqueror and premier batsman of the day.”

Despite the 4–3 defeat, the *Pioneer Press* in its account (October 3) was optimistic:

All in all, even in defeat, the Saints looked like the better team. Their superiority is marked in the outfield and even more so in the infield. The Orioles have an advantage in catching, not because McCarty is any part of the catcher Dixon is, but because he knows St. Paul’s hitters and guides his pitcher carefully and wisely [McCarty had played for 1923 AA Kansas City].

Five thousand St. Paul fans had stood outside the newspaper’s downtown offices at Minnesota Street watching the game’s progress on an electronic scoreboard. Others stood in windows and on roofs of adjacent buildings to catch the play-by-play reports. The crowd had taken heart when Lee had put the locals in front during the top of the ninth and called on Markle to preserve the victory. They were predictably disappointed when things turned sour in the last half of the inning.

### Game 2

Allen had intended to start Tony Faeth for the Saints in Game 2 but decided against that move as the well-traveled Faeth was a fly-ball pitcher who could be easily victimized in the small confines of Oriole Park. He decided to save Faeth for more spacious Lexington Park and go with Howard Merritt, who responded with a masterful three-hit shutout as the Saints won 6–0 and evened the series. Dunn had elected to start Jack Ogden and stayed with him through eight innings and ten hits. Charlie Dressen’s RBI single in the fourth, scoring Neun, put the Saints on the board first. Dressen’s two-run home run in the sixth made it 3-0, opening the floodgates for



NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY, COOPERSTOWN, N.Y.

In Game 4, starter Lefty Grove was supported with 6 runs and managed to hold on for the win despite a late rally by the Saints.

the Saints, who added one run in the eighth and two more off reliever Ed Tomlin in the ninth, but even Dressen’s heroics couldn’t overshadow Merritt’s performance. His

quiet confidence, his deliberate planning of every move, his calmness growing more serene as the situation grew more critical, was just the tonic the Saints needed. . . . With two on and two out, Walter Christensen ended the game by a nice catch of Freitag’s fly and the Baltimore fans, much to their credit, gave Merritt a genuine ovation, the tribute that was due an artist’s masterpiece. (*Pioneer Press*, October 4)

### Game 3

On October 4, in Game 3, three hours and ten minutes into play, the two teams were tied 6–6 after thirteen innings when the game was called due to darkness. Allen had rethought his reluctance to use Faeth in Oriole Park and got 5½ innings out of him before bringing in Paul Fittery, who went the rest of the way. Dunn started Cliff Jackson, but he left in the fourth when the Saints came up with five runs. His relief, Tommy Thomas, finished the game. St. Paul carried a 6–3 lead into the sixth when

Baltimore tied the game, Fritz Meisel chasing Faeth with a two-run homer. Both teams nearly won the game on solo home runs in extra innings. In the bottom of the eleventh, Connelly's line drive nearly cleared the fence but was held to a double. In the top of the thirteenth, Dressen's long fly missed going out by a yard or two.

**Game 4**

Before the next day's game, on Sunday, October 5, Baltimore second baseman Dick Porter received a cup as a reward for winning the IL batting title. Unfortunately for the Orioles, he would be throwing to someone other than Clayton Sheedy at first base. Sheedy had sprained his ankle in the tie game the day before, forcing Dunn to use pitcher Ed Tomlin in his place now in Game 4. Each manager returned his Game 1 starter, Grove and Markle, to the mound, and with the same outcome.

Close to 11,000, the largest crowd either team would draw for the series, saw the locals build up a 6-0 lead after seven innings, largely as the result of a four-run third inning. Markle was hit hard, walked two batters, and uncorked a wild pitch to put St. Paul in a hole. Allen relieved him with Herb McQuaid, 7-9 on the season, who gave up a run before yielding to Oscar Roettger (8-4) in the seventh. The Saints made it interesting in the top of the ninth. Trailing 6-4 with Christensen on second and two out, Grove faced local product Neun. "Johnny wasted no time," as Saints fan would read the next day in the *Pioneer Press* (October 6).

Swinging at the first ball pitched, he drove a tremendous fly to right field. "It's over," shouted the fans, and so it seemed. Connelly raced for the fence, which in that part of the field is only a little over waist high. He threw himself against the barrier, reached into the crowd beyond and made the catch.

**Game 5: Ed Onslow and Mark Koenig**

Game 4 had marked the series debut of Mark Koenig, who batted for Morse in the seventh and took his place at second base. The San Francisco native would find himself in the lineup for good in Game 5, but not at second. During batting practice before the final Baltimore game, on October 6, St. Paul's shortstop Danny Boone was hit in the head by Faeth, and Koenig was his emer-



ST. PAUL DAILY NEWS

**Saints second baseman Hap Morris, who committed six errors during the series and struggled at the plate, is shown here sprinting home in the sixth inning of the Saints' 6-3 victory in Game 10.**

gency replacement. He would also be the Saints' only bright spot in a 10-1 pasting that put them down 3-1 in the series.

Merritt, who had pitched so brilliantly for the Saints in Game 2, was opposed by Baltimore's George Earnshaw. This time it was Earnshaw who would throw a three-hitter. He struck out 11, the only run he allowed being a solo home run by Koenig in the sixth. Baltimore pounded Merritt, McQuaid, and Roettger for 12 hits.

Already deprived of their regular shortstop, the Saints were now faced with an Orioles lineup to which a significant bat had been added. To replace Sheedy, Baltimore's first baseman who was now out for the series, the Orioles had recruited Toronto's Ed Onslow. Under the series' rules, teams suffering a season-ending injury to a player were allowed to pick from other AA teams a substitute player who was comparable (*Pioneer Press*, October 8). The Saints' manager protested.

The game was delayed several minutes while the umpires and managers discussed the substitution of Eddie Onslow . . . for Sheedy. Allen announced that he [would play] the game under protest. . . . Allen's contention was that Onslow had hit forty points higher than Sheedy and was acknowledged to be a far superior fielding first baseman.<sup>1</sup>

Later the conference moved over to the box occupied by J. Conway Toole, president of the International league, and J. W. Norton, owner of the St. Paul team. Here it was decided that President Hickey of the Association had

agreed to the substitution before leaving for [the series]. Under the circumstances, Norton consented to withdraw the protest. (*Pioneer Press*, October 7)

Baltimore had earlier lost catcher Lew McCarty for the series after Game 2, but had a backup, Otto Freitag, on the roster, to which they were now more than happy to add Onslow, who went on to hit .318 in the series. For their part, the Saints, after losing their shortstop Boone, tried to get either Les Bell (Milwaukee), Ray French (Minneapolis), or Maurie Shannon (Louisville) but to no avail. Bell, with his 18 home runs and league-leading .365, would have been a stronger addition to the St. Paul lineup than Onslow was to Baltimore's. In the end, Allen had to settle for Koenig.

The new Saints' backup shortstop was twenty years old and in his fourth professional season. He had had cups of coffee in St. Paul during his first three seasons. After hitting .288 and six home runs in 1923 with Des Moines in the Western League, he earned a roster spot as utility infielder with the Saints in 1924.

#### **Game 6: On to St. Paul**

The series now shifted west. The train carrying both teams to the North Star State stopped at Pittsburgh, Boone's hometown, where he was immediately taken to the hospital, as he had complained of partial paralysis at the back of his neck. The Orioles were in high spirits, with visions of closing out the series in the next two or three games. The Saints' coach was directly behind theirs, but there was little interaction between the players. They departed Baltimore on the evening of October 6 and arrived in Chicago the following afternoon. After a three-hour lay-over, the train then departed for St. Paul's Union Station, arriving at 7 A.M. on October 8. Play was scheduled to resume the following day and, despite their two-game deficit, the Saints were quietly optimistic that home-field advantage would now turn the series in their favor.

The Saints know they can beat Baltimore at Lexington Park. To win four games out of five, however, as they must to attain a championship, is an assignment which will take their best effort and a running start. If, by tonight, the series score stands three games to two, the Saints believe they are virtually starting the fight over again with an even chance. (*Pioneer Press*, October 9)

In what they might have felt to be a bad omen, the Orioles shortly after detaining at Union Station in St. Paul learned that there were no accommodations for them at the St. Francis Hotel because of a convention of funeral directors. The team soon found lodging at the Hotel Commodore, off St. Paul's upscale Summit Avenue, and readied themselves for the renewal of the series. In the first five games, Baltimore pitchers had struck out 20 Saints with men on base. Grove had won both of his starts, and Earnshaw was impressive in his win. With the Saints striking out so often in clutch situations and now with a questionable middle infield—a rookie at short and an unsteady fielder at second (“Hap” Morse made six errors in the series)—the Orioles had reason for optimism, their brush with the funeral directors notwithstanding.

The starters for Games 1 and 4 were at it again in Game 6, but this time Grove would be beaten and Markle wouldn't figure in the decision. It was St. Paul's turn for a pregame presentation, as manager Nick Allen received a new sedan from the fans. When he came to bat in the first inning, Johnny Neun was given a silver bat and ball for leading the team in hitting.

The Orioles carried a 2–0 lead into the bottom of the sixth when the Saints' bats came to life. With one out, Koenig sent Grove's offering to the roof of the neighboring Coliseum to draw the home team within one run. After Dixon fouled out, they went on to capture the lead. Paul Fittery, who had relieved Markle in the top of the inning, walked and moved to second on Christensen's single. Then came a blooper that opened the floodgates. Morse, who not only was fielding poorly but hitting just as badly, got a Texas League single when Baltimore's Porter, Jacobson, and Connelly let a catchable fly ball fall between them. Fittery scored to tie the game. Neun then singled, scoring Christensen, as Morse raced to third. When Grove cut off Connelly's throw from right in an attempt to get Neun at second, the ball bounced off his glove, and Morse came in with St. Paul's fourth run.

The home team picked up another run in the seventh on a Koenig sacrifice fly as Fittery closed out the game, and the Saints held on to win 5–2. The *Pioneer Press* heaped praise on the future Yankee:

And they were looking for someone to take the place of Mark Koenig.

They combed the country for a shortstop, an experienced infielder who would not crack under the strain of a championship series, one whose throws would be true and, most of all, one who could hit.

They wanted a veteran to play for the youngster who, between cracks of his melodious gum, put St. Paul back in the fighting. . . . They wanted Lester Bell (for his hitting). . . . Koenig hit 1.000 for the day; they wanted Bell because he could range here and there. . . . Koenig ranged as far as Bell and sent some throws that Bell would envy. (October 10)

### Game 7

Koenig couldn't match that performance the next day, October 10, in Game 7. The only effective Saint was center fielder Walt Christensen. He collected two of only three hits allowed by Oriole starter Tommy Thomas as the visitors shut out the Saints, 4-0, and took what appeared to be a nearly insurmountable series lead of 4-2. Thomas had earlier pitched the near-equivalent of a full game when he relieved Jackson in the 13-inning game that ended in a 6-6 tie. He had struck out 7 then and struck out 11 here in Game 7 while driving in two of Baltimore's four runs with a sacrifice fly and a single.

The sacrifice fly came in the fifth inning and scored Jacobs from third as the Orioles took the lead. An inning later, they got to Saints' starter Howard Merritt for three runs in a rally that began with Jacobson's lead-off triple. Porter doubled in Jacobson and went to third on Boley's ground-out to Koenig. Onslow singled him in and scored on Thomas's single. Merritt was gone after the sixth, as Allen brought in Roettger and McQuade to finish the game. They allowed no hits, the Saints lineup could do nothing against Thomas's blazing speed. The victory put Baltimore one game from the championship.

In a practice that by today's standards could only be called quaint, the Orioles dressed at their hotel and traveled to Lexington Park in taxis. The *Pioneer Press* reported that "they were greeted with hearty applause when they walked to their dugout" (October 10)—an early expression, perhaps, of what has come to be known as "Minnesota Nice"?



ST. PAUL DAILY NEWS

After impressive performances in Baltimore, Lefty Grove failed to win on the road in St. Paul, where he suffered a tough loss in Game 9.

Now facing elimination, the Saints, as the *Pioneer Press* (October 11) described the situation, "are in a desperate predicament. They need to win three games running. Baltimore needs one. This is not wholly impossible, but it must be accomplished against the same kind of pitching that has effectively halted the Saints so far, for Jack Dunn has George Earnshaw in reserve and Earnshaw is just as fast as Thomas."

### Game 8

Dunn may have had Earnshaw and Thomas, but Allen had Tony Faeth on the mound and Mark Koenig in the lineup for Game 8 on October 11. Faeth had given up 9 hits in 5½ innings in the tie game and in this contest surrendered 10, but they were scattered. He gave up only two runs, and the Saints held on to eke out a 3-2 victory. The Orioles took a 1-0 lead in the second when Onslow, who had singled and gone to second on an error, scored on Jacobs's single. In the home third, Koenig doubled. The next two batters were retired, and then Christensen walked. The substitute shortstop came in with the tying run when Porter booted Morse's grounder.

The next inning, Koenig singled Dressen in from second to put St. Paul up 2–1. Baltimore spent the next several innings failing to take advantage of scoring opportunities until they managed another run off Faeth in the seventh. With two down, Jacobson walked and reached third on Porter’s hit-and-run single. Onslow, who was proving to be a valuable addition to the Baltimore lineup, then doubled, bringing Jacobson in with the tying run. The visitors almost took the lead, but Porter was thrown out at home trying to score on Onslow’s hit.

It was Koenig again in the home seventh, as he found himself on third after his hit to right eluded Connelly and bounded off the stands. Dixon then singled him in to give the Saints the lead again. Dunn stayed with Earnshaw through the eighth. In the top of the inning, Allen had brought in Paul Fittery, who stayed in the game to close out the Orioles on two harmless hits.

The win brought St. Paul within a game of evening out the series. The *Sun* cited a controversial play in the Baltimore third that might have changed the game’s complexion:

The reversal of a decision by Umpire Harry Geisel (IL) really cost the International League champions the game. With one down . . . Jacobson slashed a single past Dressen . . . after Porter hoisted to Haas . . . Onslow came to bat.

Onslow sent a “sinker” to Christensen in center. . . . The outfielder came in fast and in a lunge apparently trapped the ball. Jacobson . . . pulled up at third. Geisel ruled that the drive had not been caught, but the St. Paul players, led by Manager Nick Allen, surrounded the arbiter, violently disagreeing. In his dilemma, Geisel appealed to Umpire Ollie Chill (AA), working behind the plate, and when Chill declared that Christensen had caught the ball, Geisel so decided.

This judgment was costly, for it made the third out. In the following inning, Boley and Jacobs . . . pounded out clean singles. (*Sun*, October 12)

Predictably, the *Pioneer Press* said considerably less: “It looked as if Christensen had caught Onslow’s low liner . . . but Geisel ruled he had caught it on the hop. Chill, however, overruled the base umpire and the side was called out” (October 12).

It was, of course, the classic “what might have been” scenario, but reading the accounts some eighty-plus years

after the fact, one finds it difficult to accept Chill’s overruling Geisel, who presumably had a better view of the play. The intimidation factor from both Allen and the Saints’ players in front of a home crowd would appear to have played a role in Chill’s reversal. Nonetheless, who’s to say that Boley or Jacobs would have brought Jacobson home if the play had gone as a hit?

### Game 9

Sunday, October 12, was an overcast day with occasional showers and low visibility. It was weather thought to be ideal for Lefty Grove’s fastball as Dunn went to his ace to finish out the series in game nine. Allen came back with Fittery, who had closed out game eight less than twenty-four hours previously. The thirty-seven-year-old veteran scattered five hits into the seventh inning before giving way to Cliff Markle. By that time, St. Paul led 3–1 on single runs picked up in the first, third, and fifth innings. Allen had reshuffled his batting order, moving Dressen to cleanup, placing Lee in right in lieu of Wade and batting him sixth, while Joe Riggert came off the bench to play left and bat fifth. Similarly, Dunn switched Jacobs and Connelly, with the former now batting second and the latter seventh.

The moves worked far better for the home team as Dressen went three for four and drove in two runs. Jacobs, who had gone three for four the day before, went hitless but very nearly put the Orioles ahead in the fifth. Trailing 2–1, with two out and a runner on third, he drove a hard liner to Riggert: “The first thought was that it would clear the fence . . . Joe Riggert . . . when he felt the fence at his back, made a desperate leap and brought the ball down to retire the side” (*Pioneer Press*, October 13).

The play was critical as the Saints scored in their half of the inning and the 3–1 lead held to the end of the game. Dunn had pinch-hit for Grove in the fifth, relieving him with Ogden, while Allen stayed with Fittery into the seventh when he brought Cliff Markle in to finish things off. Markle got Maisel to hit a looping fly into left center where Morse made a difficult catch to squelch Baltimore’s last rally.

The series was now tied at four games each and momentum—that oft-used phrase that had yet to enter sport’s vernacular—was now clearly on the Saints’ side.

The St. Paul management attempted to get the final and decisive game ten moved to Tuesday when they suggested that attendance would be better, but neither Dunn nor IL President Toole would agree. Was a bigger gate really the basis for the home team wanting the delay or was there a more compelling reason, such as perhaps another day's rest for the projected Saints' starting pitcher?

The *Sun* on October 13 sensed disaster looming:

That St. Paul is a hard club to beat on its home grounds is being brought home to the Orioles. They are trying their best to win the series, but the Saints are battling every inch of the way and have [the] most pepper. On Friday, the Birds were leading four games to two, but now are face-to-face with disaster.

A sense of cautious optimism was voiced by the *Pioneer Press* (October 13):

When the Saints came home from Baltimore, they needed four games out of five to win the Junior World's championship. It seemed a hopeless task[,] but they won three out of four and now stand even with their rivals. Everything depends upon today's game.

### Game 10

The Game 7 starters would face each other again in the finale before 6,000 at Lexington Park. Mississippi native Howard Merritt made his fourth start of the series for St. Paul while Tommy Thomas, who had shut out the Saints for eighteen innings, went to the mound for Baltimore.

Dunn was soon to discover that Thomas's touch had run its course, as the home team got to him for single runs in the second, third, and fourth innings. The last two runs were solo home runs by Dressen and Dixon. After the latter led off the fourth with his home run on Thomas's first pitch, Dunn relieved with Cliff Jackson, who had made only one appearance in the series. Jackson was effective into the sixth, when St. Paul picked up two more runs as Koenig led off with a double, advanced to third after two outs, and came in on Christensen's single down the third-base line. The Saints' center fielder then stole second, advanced to third on Morse's infield hit, and scored when Jackson balked.

Earlier in the fourth, the Orioles had seriously threatened when Jacobs and Jacobson opened with back-to-back singles, but Merritt bore down and retired

the side. Now laboring into the seventh and clearly showing the effects of twenty-five innings of series work, Merritt faltered. With two on and two out, Maisel homered to bring the visitors to within two runs at 5-3. It would be as close as they would get. Merritt then shut the door.

Long after his [Merritt's] curve had stopped breaking and his fast ball had stopped hopping he found enough of the courage and shrewdness, enough hidden power, to deliver the occasional baffling pitches which struck at the heart of the Baltimore attack. Alternately he pitched with caution and with daring but always with consummate wisdom and gameness. (*Pioneer Press*, October 14)

Merritt retired the side in order in the eighth and got the first two hitters in the ninth when Freitag singled. With Baltimore down 6-3, Dunn let Earnshaw, who had come in to relieve Jackson in the seventh and was a good hitter, come to bat. He grounded to Koenig, whose toss to Morse forced Freitag, and St. Paul had come all the way back to win the Junior World Series, accomplishing a feat that only seventy-two hours earlier was so improbable.

From the shadow of almost certain defeat to a faint, scarcely discernible glimmer of hope, from faint hope to actual opportunity and from opportunity to a joyous, explosive, cheer[-]crowned success the Saints fought their way doggedly and bravely to as glorious a victory, capture of the Junior World's [S]eries, as has ever rewarded the fighting spirit of a fighting team. . . .



ST. PAUL DAILY NEWS

**The surprising St. Paul Saints rallied from a 4-2 series deficit to win the Junior World Series in dramatic fashion, 5 games to 4.**

The suspense that the team has been playing under for the past five days broke loose . . . (at) the final out in the ninth. There was a hip-hip-hooray and the dash for the showers began. . . .

Spectators swarmed out on the field and started a demonstration, but they had so tired themselves rooting that their voices failed them. (*Pioneer Press*, October 14)

Merritt captured the most attention with his courageous late-inning efforts when it was apparent to all that he was almost beyond fatigue. He gave high praise to trainer John Bridges. “Were it not for Bridges,” he told the *Pioneer Press* (October 14), “I wouldn’t have been able to pitch today. My arm was limp Sunday. I couldn’t raise it and it seemed as if I never would be able to pitch again, but Bridges worked on it, and this morning it seemed like another arm.” Perhaps we now know why the Saints wanted Game 10 delayed.

Merritt had won two games, a number bested by Fittery, who sported a superb 0.47 ERA along with his three wins. Clearly, Mark Koenig had emerged as the Saints’ hitting star with a .474 average from nine hits in nineteen at-bats in seven games. Six of his hits were for extra bases and included two home runs. His second home run won Game 6, and his key hits in Game 8 helped St. Paul avoid elimination and win the first of the three straight games they had to win to take the series. St. Paul’s other heavy hitter was Charlie Dressen—.351, 2 home runs, 8 RBIs.

Whereas Dressen would go on to be remembered perhaps best, and if so unfairly, as the manager of Dodger teams that lost the World Series to the Yankees in the 1950s, Koenig’s name would be forever linked with the great Yankees’ team of 1927. As their everyday shortstop, he hit a solid .285 with 62 RBIs. Over a twelve-year major-league career, he hit 279, drove in 443 runs, and played in five World Series—three with the Yankees and one each with the Cubs and Giants. “I was never the player I should have been,” he would say of himself years later. “I was too hard on myself.”<sup>2</sup> But in October 1924 he was exactly the player he should have been.

The Saints celebrated that night at a banquet at Hime’s Café, on the site of the present-day St. Paul Travelers’ building, in an event open to the public. Allen got the

---

**1924 JUNIOR WORLD**

---

**Game 1—Oct. 2**

St. Paul 3  
 Baltimore 4  
 ATTENDANCE: 5,262

**Game 2—Oct. 3**

St. Paul 6  
 Baltimore 0  
 ATTENDANCE: 3,733

**Game 3 (13 inings)—Oct. 4**

St. Paul 6  
 Baltimore 6  
 ATTENDANCE: 4,919

**Game 4—Oct. 5**

St. Paul 4  
 Baltimore 6  
 ATTENDANCE: 10,949

**Game 5—Oct. 6**

St. Paul 1  
 Baltimore 10  
 ATTENDANCE: 3,190

**Game 6—Oct. 9**

Baltimore 2  
 St. Paul 5  
 ATTENDANCE: 5,487

**Game 7—Oct. 10**

Baltimore 4  
 St. Paul 0  
 ATTENDANCE: Unknown

**Game 8—Oct. 11**

Baltimore 2  
 St. Paul 3  
 ATTENDANCE: Unknown

**Game 9—Oct. 12**

Baltimore 1  
 St. Paul 3  
 ATTENDANCE: 5,552

**Game 10—Oct. 12**

Baltimore 3  
 St. Paul 6  
 ATTENDANCE: c. 6,000

greatest ovation, with his players leading the cheering. In only his first year as manager, he had done it all and had done it in a spectacular fashion.

As for the Orioles:

The Birds were a disconsolate band as they headed back to Maryland. They fell down miserably in the pinches and the batting was terrible. Porter, bothered by injuries, failed to shine on either defense or attack, while Connelly and Boley were weak as kittens at the bat. Failure of Lefty Groves to win a single game here hurt. The lefthander had captured a pair in Baltimore and was counted on to continue his victorious march here. (*Sun*, October 14)

The analysis is perhaps harsh, as Porter did hit .316, although with only 4 RBIs. Similarly, Jacobs, not mentioned above, hit .425, but with only 3 RBIs. Grove was the most noteworthy of the Orioles, and Dunn eventually sold him to the Philadelphia Athletics. Grove would go on to put up Hall of Fame numbers with them as well as with the Red Sox. He appeared in three World Series for the Athletics and logged a major-league career record of 300–146 with a 3.06 ERA.

“No cheering fans greeted the Orioles early yesterday morning at Union Station when the Birds returned after an unsuccessful quest,” reported the *Sun* on October 16.

“A few friends and relatives of the players were on hand to greet them, and the Orioles who live here lost little time in reaching home. Jack Dunn had little to say. ‘They beat us, and that’s about all,’ said the Oriole magnate, and the players in general were reticent in discussing their set back.”

The great come-from-behind victory would prove to be a high-water mark for the St. Paul Saints, as they avenged their defeats in 1920 and 1922 but would never win another Junior World Series, losing to Rochester in 1931 and Montreal in 1948. ■

## NOTES

1. In fact, Onslow hit 33 points higher than Sheedy, .331 to .298.
2. John Mosedale, *The Greatest of All: The 1927 New York Yankees* (New York: Warner Books, 1974), 59.

## SOURCES

### Books

- Bailey, Bob. *History of the Junior World Series*. Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2004.
- Minor League Baseball Stars*. Cooperstown, N.Y.: Society for American Baseball Research, 1978.
- Minor League Baseball Stars*. Volume 2. Cooperstown, N.Y.: Society for American Baseball Research, 1985.
- Minor League Baseball Stars*. Volume 3. Cleveland: Society for American Baseball Research, 1992.
- Mosedale, John. *The Greatest of All: The 1927 Yankees*. New York: Warner Books, 1974.
- Thornley, Stew. *Baseball in Minnesota: The Definitive History*. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 2006.
- Weiss, Bill, and Marshall Wright. *The 100 Greatest Minor League Baseball Teams of the Twentieth Century*. N.p.: Outskirt Press, 2006.

### Newspapers

- Baltimore Sun*  
*St. Paul Daily News*  
*St. Paul Pioneer Press*

# Anson in Greasepaint

## The Vaudeville Career of Adrian C. Anson

Robert H. Schaefer

### Overture

Adrian C. Anson's professional baseball career came to an abrupt end on February 1, 1898, when Chicago Club president James Hart unceremoniously sacked him without notice. Anson had made his living playing baseball since 1871, had been a member of the Chicago Club since 1876 and, as their captain since 1879, had risen to national fame. Now it was all over.

Although well fixed financially, the 45-year-old Anson was emotionally and psychologically unprepared for this brusque dismissal from his post. He had laid no plans for a future beyond the diamond. Forced to cope with restructuring his life, he turned his tremendous ego to forging a niche in Chicago's business world. He lusted for the limelight and the glories that came with being a dynamic and conspicuous public figure, as he had been for all of his adult life.

After publishing his autobiography, largely devoted to an around-the-world tour in 1889, Anson focused on operating a business designed to please sporting men. Long renowned as a top-ranked amateur billiard player, he established a splendid billiard parlor in downtown Chicago. Remodeling of the building began in March 1899, and it opened on June 9 of that year. Located at 135–141 Madison Street, it housed a 10-lane bowling alley on the ground floor and a well-illuminated billiard academy with 24 tables on the second.<sup>1</sup> The billiard room was elegantly appointed, and no expense was spared to provide its habitués with every possible luxury. Anson expanded his establishment in 1906 by adding to the ground floor an annex that contained 18 additional billiard tables and a lavish buffet called the Home Plate.

While operating his billiard room, Anson became heavily involved in politics. He was elected city clerk on the Democratic ticket in 1905 and served a full two-year term.

Although Anson was personally law-abiding, as city clerk he permitted some of his appointees to receive full pay while they were absent from the office. Accusations of other improprieties were leveled at him. On May 21, 1906, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* took him to task: "His record has conspicuously contradicted the idea that he knows much or cares seriously about the duties [of the office] . . . which 'Captain' A. C. Anson is paid \$5,000 a year to manage." In 1906 Anson sought the office of Cook County sheriff. He failed to win the nomination as the Democratic candidate and left politics.

On July 16, 1908, his billiard business failed. He owed more than \$6,500 in back rent to the building's owner, Mrs. Charles P. Taft, a sister-in-law of the Republican presidential candidate. The political connection must have been especially bitter to the lifelong Democrat. The business failure was said to have cost Anson more than \$80,000.

In 1909 he returned to baseball and formed a semi-pro team. He leased grounds at Sixty-third Street and



ADRIAN C. ANSON, A BALL PLAYER'S CAREER (CHICAGO: ERA, 1900).

Released by the Chicago Colts before the 1898 season, Cap Anson, 45 years old, went into business. In March 1899 he opened this lavish billiard club in downtown Chicago.

CHICAGO DAILY TRIBUNE, 31 DEC. 1906

**Capt. A. C. Anson**

Announces the addition of a spacious ground floor ANNEX to his billiard establishment at 135-141 Madison Street, and invites inspection of the

**Largest and Best Equipped Billiard and Pool Rooms in the World.**

The Annex will be used exclusively for pool, the new equipment consisting of eighteen pool tables of the latest pattern. A new Buffet has also been added, to be known as "THE HOME PLATE," where anybody can "put one over." FORMAL OPENING TONIGHT, with exhibition games between the following experts:

SCHAEFER vs. SUTTON,  
300 points, eighteen inch, two shots in.

WHEELER vs. CONKLIN,  
200 points, fourteen inch, two shots in.

CAPT. ANSON vs. RILEY,  
50 points, three cushions.

BENNETT vs. ROGERS,  
Pool, 150 balls.

There will be music and other attractions. All lovers of billiards and pool are invited to attend.

Madison Street, between Clark and La Salle

**Ad for Anson's billiard club, 1906. A top-ranked amateur billiards player, Anson opened and operated this business, which eventually failed and left him in debt.**

St. Lawrence Avenue, raising the money by taking a mortgage on the family home at 160 Thirtieth Street. Although Anson had owned this house since 1884, the title was in his wife's name. Virginia agreed to mortgage the property so he could underwrite the enterprise. His new team, "Anson's Colts," competed against strong semipro teams in the Chicago area and even went on tour, traveling as far as New York to compete. Pop's old friend and onetime rival Charles Comiskey arranged for them to play spring-training exhibition games against the Chicago White Sox. The baseball venture also ended in financial failure as Anson defaulted on the ballground lease. Once more disaster found Anson, and his home was foreclosed on May 31, 1910. Pop admitted to the world, "I'm busted."

Now almost 60, Anson was penniless, homeless, unemployed, and without a means of supporting his family. Owing to his lack of business acumen, coupled with a marked inability to forge viable business relationships, his economic options were limited. He still enjoyed unbounded personal popularity in Chicago, and his fame was undiminished nationally. He decided to draw on that capital, and he saw vaudeville as a potential avenue for

triumph, since immense sums of money were being paid to current baseball stars for daubing on greasepaint.

**Vaudeville Beckons**

Live performances were the principal form of entertainment in Anson's day. The major venues comprised the legitimate theater, vaudeville, burlesque, cabarets, opera, and the circus. Anson had appeared in one stage play, *A Runaway Colt* in 1895, which was a total fiasco.<sup>2</sup> The origins of vaudeville are murky, but the word *vaudeville* can be traced to a region in France known as the Val de Vire, which had long nurtured a tradition of ballad singing and other forms of entertainment in local taverns.<sup>3</sup>

American vaudeville emphasized a straight, clean variety show—distinct from burlesque, which relied on off-color jokes, lowbrow or slapstick humor, and scantily clad women. Vaudeville's goal was to present respectable comedy and a range of entertainments suitable for the entire family. It quickly became the theater of the people.<sup>4</sup>

A vaudeville program consisted of a series of unrelated acts that varied from just under 10 minutes to more than 35 minutes in length. A typical program consisted of nine acts with an intermission halfway through. Vaudeville hosted an unlimited spectrum of talent: singers, comedians, dancers, jugglers, trained animals, tumblers, sleight-of-hand artists, magicians, thespians, bicyclists, wire walkers, mimes, hypnotists, ventriloquists, monologists, and song-and-dance men. Ethnic jokes, stereotypical images, and pejorative terms—*black-faced*, *Hebrew*, *Wop*—that are unacceptable today were commonly used as a basis for humor.

The theater manager carefully selected the sequence in which the acts were presented. He had two goals as he fashioned a bill: to get the most out of the high-priced stars on his bill and to keep the audience entertained throughout the entire program.

To allow for the noise created by tardy patrons who arrived after the curtain went up, the first act did not depend on dialogue. Typically, a silent act—a mime, juggler, or magician—opened the show. The second spot, usually a comedian or a song-and-dance act, performed in front of the curtain. This allowed the hidden stage to be set for the very important third act. This position, considered "top billing," was reserved for the show's

“headliner.” One or two more acts completed the first half. Following the intermission, the second half opened with a lively act. Next was a production number that might feature a star actor doing a scene from a famous play. Another big star was located in the next-to-last slot. The audience tended to leave the theater before the final act was over, and performers were not thrilled at being placed last on the bill.

Many star athletes were lured to vaudeville. Champions and near-champs from every sporting endeavor appeared in vaudeville theaters. Theater managers and booking agents considered these to be “freak” acts, since few athletes delivered true entertainment in these venues. They were exploited strictly for their box-office appeal. It was well understood that their life expectancy on the stage was short, that it was over as soon as they stopped making headlines. All types of athletes were in vaudeville. Fighters were the most numerous. Baseball players ran a strong second; Hammerstein’s Theatre in New York City was called the baseball player’s “home plate.”<sup>5</sup>

In the offseason, many famous baseball players captured big money by appearing in vaudeville. Rube Waddell took a turn on the boards soon after he became a star on the diamond, first appearing with a theater company in September 1903. “Turkey” Mike Donlin also capitalized on “vaude,” teaming up with Mabel Hite, a longtime star comedienne. The two of them worked up an act together. Turkey Mike remained in show business long after both his marriage and his career in baseball were over, finally landing in Hollywood, where he appeared in minor movie roles. Joe Tinker, of Tinker-to-Evers-to-Chance fame, started doing a monologue in 1910, and then did a skit, “A Great Catch,” with Sadie Sherman. Christy Mathewson and Chief Myers, batterymates for the New York Giants, did a skit called “Curves,” with May Tulley, that was written especially for them by Bozeman Bulger.

On October 21, 1911, *Variety* reported the following activities for ballplayers: The “Athletics’ Big 3—Jack Coombs, Chief Bender and Cy Morgan” were booked by Alf T. Wilton for Dockstader’s of Wilmington at \$2,500 a week. The three ballplayers were teamed with the Pearl sisters, Kathryn and Violet, in a sketch called “Learning the Game.” The diamond’s star comedian,

Germany Schaefer, teamed with Grace Belmont to launch a career in vaudeville but sadly discovered that his humor fell flat on the boards. Other ballplayers who daubed on greasepaint in 1911 included McHale, Buck O’Brien, Larry Gardner, and Bradley of the Boston Red Sox, who toured the New England area, while Doc White of the White Sox and King Cole of the Cubs worked in theaters around Chicago. Ty Cobb entered the “legit” theater, appearing in *The College Widow*. Cobb was lavishly entertained wherever the show appeared, and this forced him to remain up well into the wee small hours of the morning. These demands taxed his “nerves,” and Cobb quit the show on January 3, well in advance of the projected end date of March 1. Charles Faust, the “Jinx boy” with the Giants, also played “pop” houses.

John McGraw did well in vaudeville with a monologue titled “Inside Baseball,” but he chose to remain in New York rather than take it on the road. “After seeing John McGraw on the stage,” sportswriter Hugh Fullerton remarked, “we feel more and more tempted to compare Cap Anson with William Gillette” (*Chicago Tribune*, January 7, 1913). Gillette being the leading dramatic actor of the day, the reader was given to understand that Fullerton wasn’t overly impressed by Muggsy.

Rube Marquard made his vaudeville debut in 1911, appearing with Annie Kent at Hammerstein’s. The next year he teamed up with a beautiful headliner, Blossom Seeley, in a skit called “Breaking the Record.” Marquard sang and the couple did a dance together, the Marquard Glide. They later married. The rush of baseball stars to the footlights prompted Fullerton to comment that “the reason so many ball players go into vaudeville is that no one will pay \$1,500 a week for them to jump over Niagara Falls.”<sup>6</sup>

As the result of an imbroglio with the National League in the spring of 1910, Cubs catcher Johnny Kling was fined \$750. He hit on the scheme of appearing on stage at a vaudeville theater to raise the money. The Morris Agency booked him for a week of monologue at the American Music Hall in Chicago. Kling sent word that he didn’t think he could draw many people “just talking” and suggested a billiard act instead.<sup>7</sup>

Kling was a pocket-pool champion, and happily someone thought to match him against Chicago’s own

CHICAGO DAILY TRIBUNE, 18 FEB. 1911



**After demonstrating in *Runaway Colt* (1895) that he was no actor, Anson many years later, in 1911, turned to vaudeville and an act that consisted of a baseball monologue written by George M. Cohan, who happened to be an avid fan.**

Knight of the Cue, Pop Anson. The match came off on the stage of the American Music Hall on Monday, April 25, 1910, a miserable spring day with rain and snow. The game between the Pirates and the Cubs was cancelled because of the bad weather, and ballplayers and baseball fans filled the theater to cheer the contest. World-champion pool player Willie Hoppe was enlisted to referee the match.

The action was described in the next day's edition of the *Chicago Daily Tribune*:

As an introduction to the match between two ball players, moving pictures of the Cub-White Sox series were shown. Then the manager of the theater presented Anson, whom he called, "The father of baseball." Kling was introduced, and must have felt good over the noise that greeted his appearance. After shaking hands with Capt. Anson he made the following speech:

"I want to thank you, ladies and gentleman—and Mr. Morris—in behalf of me."

These words made a tremendous impression. Jack Lait rang the gong and the pool match was on. You could almost see most of the shots by the aid of a mirror back of the table. Kling broke the balls and Anson had a majority at the end of the frame. John evened it up after the second break, and the score was 15 all. Neither player was up to his game, and Kling's average suffered through errors. Anyhow, John won out by the tight score of 25 to 23, and then there were curtain calls for both heroes. On this second attempt Kling said:

"I want to say that I came back to play ball."

He then made a hurried but graceful exit. Capt. Anson really shone as a speech maker, and won that battle even if he did lose the pool game.

### Anson in Greasepaint

Anson was encouraged by this experience, and he decided to strike out on his own in vaudeville, doubtless influenced by the handsome wages Kling and other ballplayers were earning.

The record of Anson's vaudeville appearances in 1910 is scanty. Apparently he didn't do too well. On January 1, 1911, Sid Mercer of the *New York Globe* lobbied for a National League pension for Anson, writing that "the Cap has taken another wallop because the vaudeville he was counting on to pull him through his hard times has come a bloomer."<sup>8</sup>

From the disaster that was *A Runaway Colt*, Anson had learned that he could not pretend to be an actor. He announced that the great showman George M. Cohan, who was also a devoted baseball fan, had prepared a monologue for him.<sup>9</sup> In Pop's new act, he was presented as Captain Anson, the living baseball legend. He spun yarns about his celebrated days on the diamond, speaking of the great players he competed both with and against. Pop recreated the glory days when both he and the men in the audience were young. Very simply, Anson talked about baseball to the adoring fans that filled the theater.

On January 26, Pop made his first appearance at a New York theater since *A Runaway Colt* and tested his new act at a testimonial for William H. Wood. He prefaced his monologue:

"I'm doing this because I need the money. That's on the square. I need the money. I've got out of politics and

billiards and I've got to find something else. My contract is a funny one. I'm being paid by the laugh; for a giggle I get \$1; for a laugh, \$5; for a scream, \$10; and for a round of applause \$25."<sup>10</sup>

Anson got his round of applause that night, and the results of his new monologue were encouraging. On February 3 the *Chicago Daily Tribune* reported,

The West side, which has had Cap Anson for so many shinning [sic] years in baseball, will have him in vaudeville. Yep. The Cap has joined out and pleasing to relate—for he needs the money—he is getting by with it in excellent conformation.

Following this success Anson made his formal vaudeville debut in Chicago at the Hamilton Theatre on February 6, 1911. Pop's friends bought out all the box seats and flocked there to support him.<sup>11</sup> As luck would have it, Anson arrived at the theater at the exact moment that a spontaneous labor dispute halted the entire show.

The organization representing vaudeville artists was the White Rats of America. They and the Federation of Labor were in conference with the theater about the form of contract used by management. The actors refused to appear on stage until this issue was resolved. The theater was packed, and the audience was restless. Anson, not being a member of the White Rats, was urgently requested to make an immediate appearance on stage while the negotiations were under way. Without taking time to don his costume, Pop went onstage.

The veteran was given a round of applause as he strode to the front of the stage. . . . With as firm a grasp on his subject as he used to get on the wagon tongue which he laced out those stinging hits at the west side park, the captain went lightly from incident to incident like a butterfly, except that he stood in one spot. He touched on baseball things, ancient and modern, running the gamut from Mike Kelly to Johnny Evers.

Taking his hearers into his confidence, he explained that his second try at histrionics honors was due to his need for money with which to buy a ball club.

He admitted:

"I can't act, can't dance, can't sing, and that leads me to the conclusion that some one must be crazy, myself, the people who hired me, or those who listen to me."



DAILY NORTHWESTERN (OSHKOSH, ILL.), 26 JAN. 1911

**Anson would preface his monologue by explaining that his "contract is a funny one. I'm being paid by the laugh; for a giggle I get \$1; for a laugh, \$5; for a scream, \$10; and for a round of applause \$25." He got his applause.**

The veteran was given a recall and recited a poem on the "Courtship of Swat." This went along smoothly until "Cap" reached a line about pay day, where he tripped, a bad spot to trip on. [*Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 7, 1911]

Following this success, Anson was engaged as the headliner at Chicago's Wilson Avenue Theatre for the week of March 24.<sup>12</sup> Up until this time, apparently, Anson was acting as his own agent and doing his own booking. Now, the triumph of his Cohan monologue allowed him to enter the world of vaudeville more seriously. On March 4, 1911, *Variety* announced, "Cap. Anson, the veteran baseballist, has booked with Gus Sun to play all the towns of the Central league. He will open at Zanesville, O., April 23."

The Sun circuit, owned and operated by Gus Sun (born Gus Klotz in Toledo, Ohio, in 1868), was perhaps the most important of the small-time circuits. Sun booked its acts at fourth- and fifth-grade houses, primarily in midwestern states.<sup>13</sup> The redeeming value of the Sun circuit was as a proving ground for new acts. Gene Tunney and Jack Dempsey broke in with Sun. The acts that proved popular left the Sun circuit immediately. Acts that remained on it season after season never could shed the derogatory mantle of "small-time."

Later that year, Pop, along with many other entertainers, donated his services to a worthy cause. A monster

benefit was arranged for New York Giants secretary Fred Knowles, who had contracted a fatal illness. It was held on November 10 at New York City's Wallack's Theatre, which was jammed, and more than five hundred people were turned away.

Sam H. Harris arranged for the greatest theatrical bill ever seen in the city. Luminaries included George M. Cohan, Al Jolson, Mabel Hite, James J. Corbett, and Adrian C. Anson. Each of them took a turn entertaining the crowd. Pop made a speech and then concluded his act with a dance.

Many baseball souvenirs were contributed and auctioned off for Knowles's benefit. Frank Baker's World Series home-run bat went to George M. Cohan for \$250. Baseballs autographed by Mathewson, Marquard, Bender, Coombs, and Cy Morgan brought from \$5 to \$20 each. More than \$3,500 was raised at this event.<sup>14</sup>

In May 1913, Anson upgraded his act by joining the Sullivan and Considine circuit, a marked step up from Sun.<sup>15</sup> *The Sporting Life* reported on October 4, 1913:

Cap Anson is to appear in this city [Philadelphia] at the Liberty Theatre week of Oct. 6. Some time ago Cap was engaged as a feature to present a witty base ball monologue in Western vaudeville and has just completed a tour of 25 weeks over the Sullivan and Considine circuit.

Anson's career in greasepaint now rolled along in fine style. He had taken up golf and lugged his clubs with him on tour. Somehow, he found time to get in a game almost every day. He said that prior to establishing this exercise routine his weight had shot up to 233 pounds, but now that he was golfing regularly he was as fit as ever.

When Woodrow Wilson, well known as a baseball fan, was inaugurated as president in March 1913, Anson, loyal as always to the Democratic Party, wired his congratulations from Salt Lake City, where he was appearing:

Having been city clerk of Chicago on the Democratic ticket and also slightly connected with baseball, it pleases me greatly to know that you have gone to the front for the great national game of baseball. I am convinced now that I made no mistake in voting for you.<sup>16</sup>

Wilson was a golfer as well as a baseball fan, and Anson's wire led to an invitation to play a round of

golf with the new president. The two men toured the links while Anson was in the capital the following October for a theater engagement. When Anson arrived in Washington on October 10, he headlined the bill at the Cosmos Theatre. He was advertised as "the father of baseball, the man who invented and developed the bunt, the double steal, the hit and run, 'place hitting,' and other scientific plays of the game."<sup>17</sup>

F. F. Proctor's Fifth Avenue Theatre in New York City hosted a "Baseball Week" beginning December 7, 1913. The bill consisted of twelve acts, three of which featured baseball players. Lillian Lorraine, a singing comedienne, was the headliner.

Pitcher Rube Marquard and his charming spouse Blossom Seeley presented a skit, written by Thomas J. Gray, "The Suffragette Pitcher." "The team does the same act as of yore," wrote "Plain Mary," the critic for *Variety*. "Rube doesn't improve as an actor, and if it were not for Miss Seeley holding up the turn he would be hopeless. Rube has a good natured smile, though, and that helps some. His tango at the finish is a scream."

Plain Mary wasn't much kinder to Charley Dooin, a major-league catcher, and James McCool in her report on their song sketch "Baseball in Ireland." "Dooin and McCool are showing the same act they have had for a couple of years," she observed. "They work like full fledged actors now. The men talk a lot about baseball and recite. The two ballads are the feature of this act. The singing isn't too bad, that is, if you are not too particular."

Anson's act lasted seventeen minutes. Plain Mary's evaluation:

Captain Anson, billed as "The Grand Old Man of Baseball," is offering a monologue by Geo. M. Cohan. The talk is all right in its way, but the way Captain Anson gets it over is no riot. He appears to have plenty of confidence and goes so far as to announce he knows he is good. However, he gets the sympathy of the audience by telling them he is old and poor and needs the money. As many fell for it, the Captain captured plenty of applause. At that, he has a little something on Rube Marquard for dancing, but you can never be forgiven for that recitation, Capt. So long as the public doesn't take him seriously as an actor, Captain Anson can get by on his reputation as a famous ball player. He has played in the west. This is his first New York showing.

DAILY NORTHWESTERN (OSHKOSH, ILL.), 26 JAN. 1911



Cap Anson circa 1910.

Anson had grown as a performer, gaining poise and polish. By now he was a veteran of the boards and, with skillful writing and directing, put on an impressive turn, as indicated by this review of his performance at the Forsyth Theatre in Atlanta in 1914:

So it is time to say a few words about Pop Anson. Of course Pop is first and foremost and always a ball player to the army of fans. He says he can't sing, dance, can't do any of the things that a regular actor ought to do, but at that—take it from me—he is better than many an alleged real actor Atlanta has suffered.<sup>18</sup>

At the end of the 1915 vaudeville season, Anson signed on with the B. F. Keith circuit. Now he had finally made the big time. It also marked the end of his career as a “single.” “Old Cap Anson,” *Variety* reported on November 8, “the Adrian C. Anson of Chicago baseball fame of the earlier days—is getting tuned up for vaudeville. Pop and his two daughters are rehearsing an act which will include a varied baseball picture display under Al Laughin’s stage direction. Ring W. Lardner is writing some talk for Anson. A Chicago debut is being fixed for next fortnight.”

Pop’s new act, Capt. Anson & Daughters, included his middle two daughters, 32-year-old Adele and 27-year-old Dorothy. His youngest daughter, Virginia Jeanette, remained at home and cared for Pop’s wife, Virginia, who was in poor health. After a protracted illness, she died on February 21, 1916. Virginia was 56 and had been married to Anson for more than forty years. Her remains were removed to Philadelphia, her hometown, for interment.

The new act was divided into two parts. The first was quite formal, whereas the finale involved audience

participation and capitalized on Anson’s baseball ability. Anson’s entrance was heralded by a rousing rendition of “Take Me Out to the Ball Game,” written by Jack Norworth. Many years later, Dorothy Anson Dodge claimed that Anson introduced this song as a favor to Norworth while their act was appearing in Baltimore.<sup>19</sup> (See Timothy A. Johnson’s article at page 138.)

Dorothy and Adele made their entrance dressed in fur-trimmed evening gowns. While music played softly in the background, they chanted: “Cap Anson, the greatest man that baseball ever knew./The pitcher feared him, the bleachers cheered him./And he led the league in 1493.” With this introduction, Anson made his entrance. He wore formal evening clothes and tails while delivering his monologue. He began by lauding his old teammates and rivals, comparing these stars of the past to the luminaries of the present day. To no one’s great surprise, the old-timers prevailed, at least in Pop’s opinion.

For the finale, the trio changed into sports clothes. Anson was resplendent in his old Chicago uniform, and he wielded a silver bat presented to him by the Notre Dame alumni. The girls hauled out a huge bag filled with papier-mâché baseballs that A. G. Spalding & Co. produced especially for Anson. The girls now sang, “We’re going to take you to the game/Where dear old Daddy won his fame.” They tossed the lightweight baseballs out to members of the audience, who then pitched them to Pop. Anson assumed his famous batting stance and drove the mock baseballs all over the theater. After the supply of baseballs had been exhausted, the girls and Anson marched offstage to the tune of “Take Me Out to the Ball Game,” concluding their act.

“Cap’ Anson and his two imposing looking daughters hit in the high average class as a baseball sketch,” read the review in *Variety* after the performance of October 23, 1916, at the B. F. Keith Theatre in Philadelphia.

The “Grand Old Man” of baseball does a neat bit of work with his reminiscence stuff and the audience seemed willing to take him more seriously as a vaudeville offering than for his baseball achievements. The girls add to the picture as well as helping out with a couple of songs.

From Philadelphia, the troupe traveled to Buffalo, Syracuse, and other cities throughout the Northeast. On January 29, 1917, they arrived back home in Chicago,

where they appeared at the Majestic Theatre. The review in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* the next day was glowing:

**ANSON AS ACTOR GETS .400 MARK**

After playing the New York State league and making the circuit of New England and International, Cap Anson jumped back to the major league cities yesterday, and revived the days of his baseball triumphs with a vaudeville skit at the Majestic. Cap shared honors with his two daughters, Adele and Dorothy, and the three interspersed a lot of dance steps, some tunes, some poetry, and a great deal of baseball lore with Ring Lardner quips. Ring wrote the sketch and the poems.

Part of the skit gave Pop Anson a chance to show how spry he is, despite his 64 years. He instructed the orchestra to strike up a tune so he could foot the intricate steps of the chicken reel, and also figured as a waltzer before the act was finished. Baseball friends and a box of billiard playing associates were out in front to give the old leader of the White Stockings a hand.

*Variety* joined in the chorus of praise for Capt. Anson & Daughters:

Much interest was centered locally in the [Chicago] vaudeville debut of Capt. Anson and his two daughters. The applause was spontaneous and the audience clamored for more. Act much better than Anson's most sanguine friends expected and the entire turn was very well received. Pop acquitted himself like a stage veteran and when it comes to dancing shows Mike Donlin up.<sup>20</sup>

For the next four years, Capt. Anson & Daughters crisscrossed the continent and enjoyed great success. Their last known vaudeville performance was at B. F. Keith's Theatre in Washington, D.C., on April 28, 1921. By then Adele and Dorothy were married and had families of their own. Their career on the boards came to an end, and so did Pop's.

**The Final Curtain**

Anson began his career as a vaudevillian at the bottom, performing in hardscrabble theaters that played continuous shows and charged only a dime for admission. He doggedly worked at his craft, improving both his material and his delivery. He never became a major headliner, but he was an undeniable success. At the pinnacle of his career he appeared on big-time bills that headlined such stars as Irene Castle, Blossom Seeley, and Sophie Tucker.

Anson's popularity in vaudeville was undiminished by time, as evidenced by his returning to the same cities, and indeed to the same theaters, year after year.

In January 1922, Anson was engaged to manage the new Dixmoor Golf Club. Construction of the course and clubhouse was expected to be completed in the spring.<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile, he actively promoted the club and recruited new members by appearing at public links in Chicago while attired in knickers.<sup>22</sup>

Anson was suddenly stricken while taking his daily constitutional on April 8, 1922. He was rushed to St. Luke's Hospital and operated on for a glandular condition. The initial reports indicated that he was resting well and not in serious condition. He responded nicely to the treatment, and because of his fine physical condition the attending physicians were confident of his recovery. But then he took a sudden turn for the worse and within a few hours died of apparent heart failure on April 14, three days before he would have turned 70.<sup>23</sup>

The entire world of baseball mourned Anson. His funeral on Sunday, April 16, 1922, was attended by hundreds of baseball fans and men high in business and political circles. Players of the Chicago American team, along with their opponents from the Detroit team, attended in a body. Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis, baseball's new commissioner, eulogized Anson, who was interred at Oakwood Cemetery, Chicago. Another modest tribute to Anson came on February 3, 1923, when the new Dixmoor golf course was completed, its second hole named in his honor.

Anson did not leave an estate, and the National League paid for his funeral expenses. Virginia's remains were relocated to lie alongside Pop, also at the expense of the National League.

A movement was immediately begun to raise funds for a fitting memorial in recognition of his contributions to the growth of the game. Anson's papers indicated that he wanted his gravestone to bear the simple legend:

Here lies a man who batted .300.

When the imposing monument was dedicated on September 16, 1923, the inscription read:

He Played The Game.<sup>24</sup> ■

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am indebted to the entire staff of the Robert Marston Science Library, University of Florida, Gainesville, but especially to Missy Shoop, for the many courtesies and the professional assistance I received while using their outstanding facility. Rob Edelman provided very useful information, and I appreciate his assistance. Gabriel Schechter kindly provided important information. Howard Rosenberg was most generous in sharing data from his Cap Anson biographical series. Mary Bast's rigorous editorial critique and insightful suggestions resulted in significant improvements to this article.

## NOTES

1. *The Sporting News*, 24 June 1899.
2. Robert H. Schaefer, "Anson on Broadway," *The National Pastime* 25 (2005): 74–81.
3. *A History of Vaudeville*. <http://english.cla.umn.edu/GraduateProfiles/KSurkan/4403/ville.html>.
4. <http://uwadmnweb.uwyo.edu/AMS/963/amst2010/studproj/vaudeville/vaudeville.htm>.
5. Joe Laurie Jr., *Vaudeville: From the Honky-Tonks to the Palace* (New York: Henry Holt, 1953), 118.
6. *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 7 January 1913.
7. *Variety*, 30 April, 1910.
8. *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 1 January 1911.
9. *Ibid.*, 31 January, 1911.
10. *The Daily Northwestern*, 26 January 1911.
11. *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 5 February 1911.
12. *Ibid.*, 17 March 1911.
13. Laurie, *Vaudeville*, 235–37.
14. *Washington Post*, 11 November 1911.
15. *Los Angeles Daily Times*, 5 May 1913.
16. *Ibid.*, 12 April 1913.
17. *Washington Post*, 12 October 1913.
18. *Atlanta Constitution*, 28 April 1914.
19. This claim was made in an undated newspaper interview found in the files at the Baseball Hall of Fame Library. The interview celebrated the occasion of Anson's centennial, placing the publication date on or about April 11, 1952. It should be noted that Jack Norworth published "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" in 1908, and that it was an instant success. Anson & Daughters did not appear in Baltimore until 1916, making Mrs. Dodge's claim suspect. Interestingly, *Variety* records that "Capt. Anson Co." and Jack Norworth appeared on the very same bill at the Maryland Theater in Baltimore during the week of October 23, 1916. Perhaps this coincidence led to Mrs. Dodge's confusion.
20. *Variety*, 2 February 1917.
21. *Ibid.*, 27 January 1922.
22. *Ibid.*, 18 January 1922.
23. *Los Angeles Daily Times*, 15 April 1922.
24. *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 16 September 1923.

# I Never Get Back

## How “Take Me Out to the Ball Game” Succeeds in Celebrating Failure

Timothy A. Johnson

In this centennial year of “Take Me Out to the Ball Game,” here is a close look at the melody of what for many fans represents the musical embodiment of the national pastime. Composed in 1908 by Albert Von Tilzer, with words by Jack Norworth, this song famously captures the essence of baseball as experienced by fans at the ballpark—the experience of joining with the crowd, buying the traditional ballpark food, cheering, being a good sport, and understanding the rules of the game. Bud Selig called the song “a major factor in the transformation of a trip to the ballpark into a communal event for all to enjoy.”<sup>1</sup>

The full song actually consists of verse 1, chorus, verse 2, and then the chorus repeated, although it is only the chorus that usually is sung at the ballpark and that most fans know. “Katie Casey was baseball mad,” according to the first line of the lyrics. Her “beau” called to ask if she wanted to see a show. She “said no,” and it is in her voice that the chorus, beginning “Take me out to the ball game,” is sung. In verse 2, Katie jeers the umpires and, when the score is tied, she works to “cheer up the boys” by making them “sing this song” (repeat chorus).

“Take Me Out to the Ball Game” is believed to be the third-most frequently performed song in the United States, after the national anthem and “Happy Birthday.”<sup>2</sup> “It has a melody that was born with us,” as Carly Simon put it, “and will live on forever.”<sup>3</sup> That melody, angular and memorable, coupled with the swaying rhythm, has come to suggest American culture itself, and its distinctive melodic shape is one reason the song has sprung such deep roots in our American consciousness.

What do I mean by “its distinctive melodic shape”?<sup>4</sup> Consider two other popular songs, both of them associated with baseball—“The Star-Spangled Banner” and “God Bless America.” Their melodic shapes are more

normative. I will describe them in terms of an analytical method that is based on the work of Heinrich Schenker (1868–1935), an Austrian music theorist, pianist, music editor, and writer, whose work on tonal music has become the most influential in music theory in the United States. Many of Schenker’s students, fleeing the Nazis, emigrated to the United States where they became established professors in some of our most distinguished educational institutions in music, such as the Mannes College of Music, the City University of New York, Columbia University, and the New England Conservatory of Music.<sup>5</sup> Schenker’s theory was developed for classical music from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but it may be applied effectively to most popular music of the last three centuries. Recent books by scholars working in the field have focused on popular music ranging from Tin Pan Alley to the Beatles.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the music to which this theory applies ranges from Bach to Brahms and Mahler, and from Scott Joplin to Norah Jones and 50 Cent. The theory was designed for tonal music—that is, music in a key, or, for readers for whom the terms *tonal* and *key* are not so meaningful, what may be referred to simply as *music*.

I will employ Schenker’s theory of melodic structure to show how “Take Me Out to the Ball Game” deviates from this theory in an important way, and I will uncover an essential link between the structural shape of the melodic line and the text and meaning of the song. Although my analytical approach is based on a complex theory of music, in writing this article I have taken care to make it intelligible to nonmusicians.

Put simply, one of the main tenets of Schenker’s theory of tonal music is that all melodic lines eventually descend to the tonic note (or the first note of the scale), which Schenker claimed was the origin of tonality. He

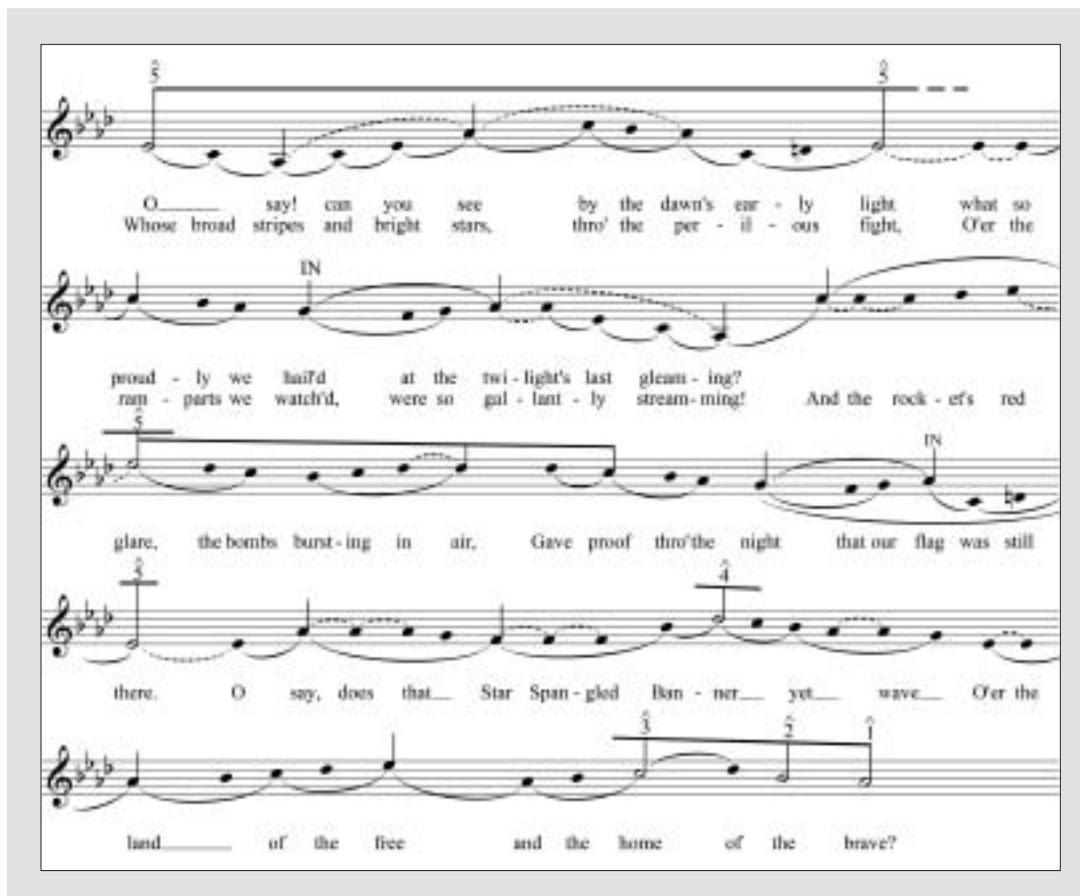


Figure 1. “The Star-Spangled Banner.” An analysis of melodic shape.

compared this behavior of melodic lines to the scientific principle of gravity: In the same way that objects respond to gravity, descending to earth, melodic lines respond to the attractive force of the tonic note (the first note of the scale, or the key) through a stepwise (or gradual) motion to this note. This fundamental descent of the structural melodic line is the linchpin of Schenker’s theory, and an understanding of this process in any musical composition yields important insights about the melodic line. However, some melodies have other shapes that a Schenkerian analytical approach can help illuminate, as we will see later in “Take Me Out to the Ball Game.” An analysis of the structure of a melody depends on harmony, but, in my description of the music of three baseball-related songs, I will discuss only the melody—the familiar tunes that baseball fans know and sing.

### The Star-Spangled Banner

The most frequently heard song at the ballpark since

World War II is without a doubt the national anthem, “The Star-Spangled Banner,” with words famously penned by Francis Scott Key in 1814, set to a tune written decades earlier by John Stafford Smith (1780). Beginning in 1942, the national anthem has been sung before every major-league game, and this practice extends to the minor leagues and many amateur levels of baseball.<sup>7</sup>

The melodic analysis, shown in figure 1, reveals a heavy emphasis on scale step 5 for much of the song. This note begins the song and returns at the end of the first phrase (“dawn’s early *light*”). Scale step numbers signify the steps of the scale (where 1 is the tonic note, or key, and the other numbers are successive notes above that tonic note). Scale step numbers mark only the most important hierarchical notes, which also are indicated by open note heads. Those who do not read music should follow the words in the figures in order to keep their bearings. Also pay attention to the notes with vertical

lines (called stems) extending up from them. They designate the notes' structural importance.

Straight horizontal lines (called beams) connect stepwise patterns of notes (adjacent notes in a scale in a single direction) and also repeated structural notes (such as the first two open notes, each of which are scale step 5). These beamed patterns have a special significance and indicate the most structurally important connections between notes. A beam connects the first two notes marked as scale step 5, and the dashed beam afterward implies the continuation of this beam. Other connections between notes are shown by curved lines (called slurs), which group notes together. Dashed slurs indicate the continuation or repetition of a note.

As the song continues after the repetition of the first part of the verse, shown with lyrics overlaid to save space because of the direct repetition of the melody, scale step 5 becomes even more prominent. The rising line, "And the rocket's red *glare*," leads to another scale step 5, this time at a higher level of pitch (which many people find very difficult to sing). This higher level emphasizes scale step 5 in a profound way, often punctuated by flyovers or spontaneous fireworks at ballparks. The beam continues from before and continues over this note, connecting this scale step 5 with the prior ones, before another beam leads down as "the bombs bursting in *air gave proof*." Eventually the passage arrives back at the initial note, scale step 5, confirming "that our flag was still *there*"—for many ballpark crowds, a moving moment.

As the chorus of the song begins, the melodic line starts to succumb to the force of musical gravity, and the structural melodic line (shown by the numbered notes 4-3-2-1 and a beam to connect them) moves down to the tonic note. First the structural melodic line connects directly from scale step 5 at its higher level ("the rocket's red *glare*") to scale step 4 one note below it ("that Star Spangled Ban-*ner*"). Then the passage quickly descends through scale steps 3-2-1 on the last words of the song ("*home of the brave*"). The significance of this descent is that the melodic line comes to rest on scale step 1 as the song ends; the force of gravity has prevailed, and the song arrives at a satisfactory conclusion, from both a patriotic and a Schenkerian perspective.

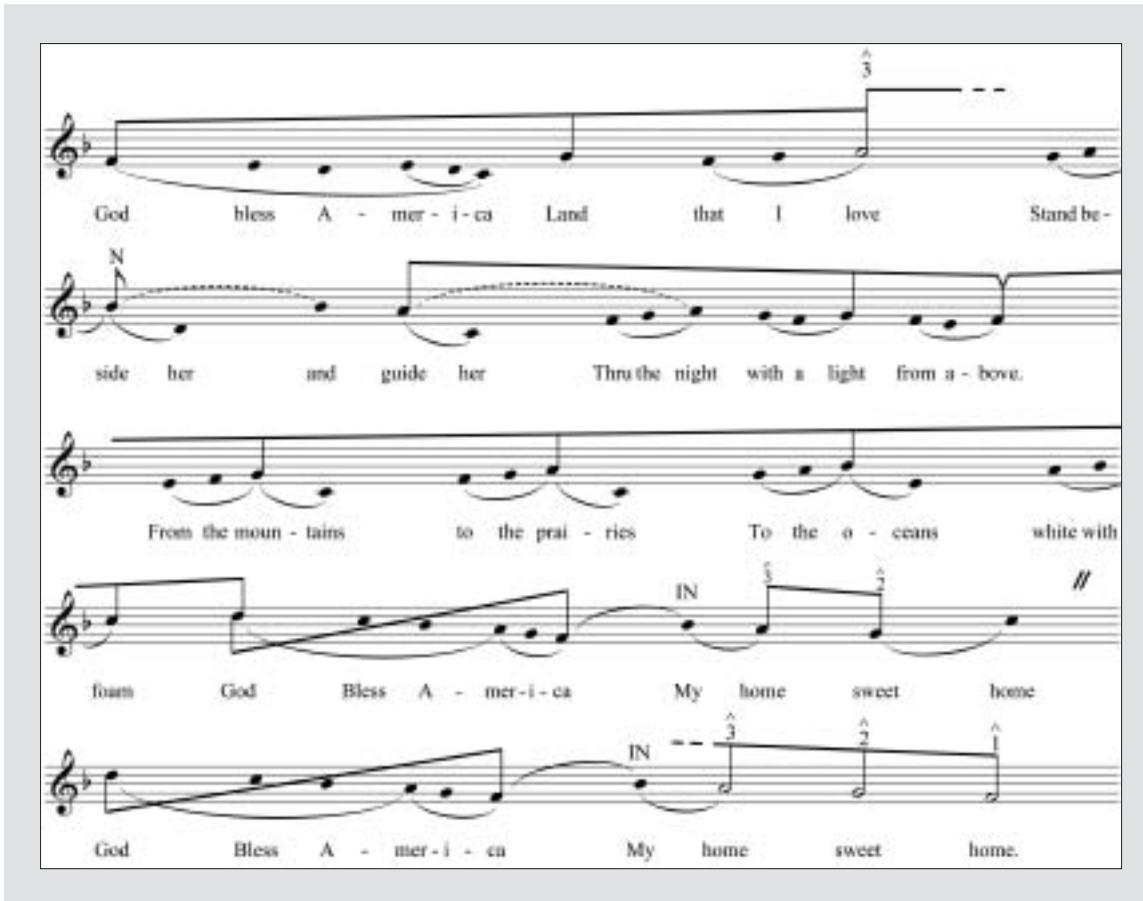
### God Bless America

Another song heard frequently at ballgames, especially since September 2001, is "God Bless America" by Irving Berlin (1939). At some ballparks, even now, it remains the song of choice for the seventh-inning stretch, most visibly and perhaps appropriately at Yankee Stadium, while other parks reserve the song for special occasions and holidays. Some fans may always link the song to baseball through its ubiquity at the end of the 2001 season. "I've stood, with the rest of the fans, and the ballplayers, who come out and stand in front of the dugouts," as Ira Berkow poignantly put it. "It is moving. The game stops dead in its tracks and we remember."<sup>8</sup>

At an Atlantic City Surf game that I attended the following season, I experienced what for me was the most moving performance of "God Bless America" at a ballpark. The public-address announcer with a roving microphone stood next to a fan in the club level in the middle of the seventh inning and asked him to sing "Take Me Out to the Ball Game." But the gentleman took the microphone and said, "I don't want to sing 'Take Me Out to the Ball Game,' I want to sing 'God Bless America.'" With his beautiful baritone voice he immediately launched into the song. But on the field the players were not prepared for this change in plan. Unlike the players at Yankee Stadium who stand solemnly in front of the dugouts, the players here were already warming up. One by one they began dropping their gloves and taking off their caps. And they stood with all of us in a beautiful, unscripted tribute to our country and those who lost their lives on that horrible day. Too often the singing of "God Bless America" at ballparks seems overly produced—more of a show than a tribute. But this spontaneous act by a bunch of independent-league ballplayers bestowed on that moment and on that song an authenticity that I will never forget. For that evening in May 2002, the lumps in our throats and the tears in our eyes were real.

Given its strong association with baseball over the past several years, the chorus of "God Bless America," shown in figure 2, provides a fitting second example of melodic shape for us to examine. Unlike "The Star-Spangled Banner," which begins with a numbered, structural note, "God Bless America" begins by leading

"GOD BLESS AMERICA" BY IRVING BERLIN. © COPYRIGHT 1938, 1939 (RENEWED)  
 THE TRUSTEES OF THE GOD BLESS AMERICA FUND. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.



**Figure 2. "God Bless America." An analysis of melodic shape.**

up to the initial structural note, scale step 3, through a gradual stepwise pattern that emphasizes the importance of the words "God," "Land," and "love" (as shown by the stemmed notes beamed together at the beginning of figure 2).

The goal note of the opening section is enhanced by a structural neighbor note (marked N); a neighbor note is one that lies immediately next to another note in the scale. As the song progresses, the structural melodic line begins an early descent to the tonic note—"with a *light* from *a-bove*" (again, shown by a beam).

The ensuing passage is the most dramatic in the song. The line (beamed together in the figure) gradually climbs on each new noun, "from the *moun-tains* to the *prai-ries* to the *o-ceans* white with *foam* . . . *God*." This thrilling rise compensates for the early descent to the tonic note and helps prepare for the ultimate descent of the structural melodic line at the end of the song. But meanwhile another neighbor note, this time an incomplete neighbor

(marked IN), leads to a beamed line, from scale step 3 to scale step 2, that appears to be headed to the tonic goal. But this final descent is interrupted (shown by the two short diagonal lines at the end of the fourth line of music) as the signature line of the song repeats. This title phrase, "God bless America," reverses the long ascent described previously and descends quickly through the same series of notes (drawn together in the figure by the diagonal beam running through it, representing the melodic unfolding of the outer notes). And so the mountains, prairies, and oceans are musically linked with God's blessing in a direct way. Finally, the structural melodic line, established initially in the opening line of the chorus, succumbs to tonal gravity in the last line, as the song itself arrives at its point of rest, "*My home sweet home*."

### Take Me Out to the Ball Game

In the previous two baseball-related songs, we have seen how the structural melodic line follows a stepwise path

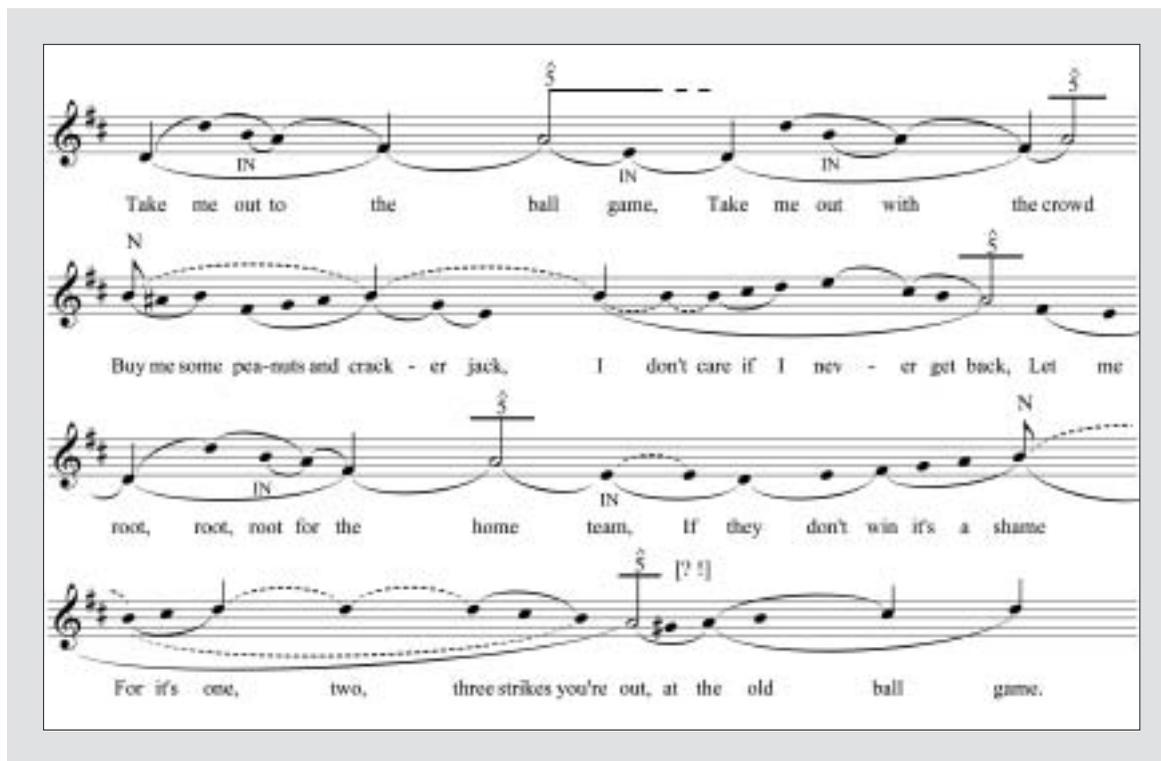


Figure 3. “Take Me Out to the Ball Game,” chorus. An analysis of melodic shape.

to the tonic note (or scale step 1) over the course of each song. Nearly every piece of tonal music follows this pattern in one way or another, although occasionally a piece will defy it, this force of tonal gravity. To appreciate why a melodic line forms some alternative shape, it helps to understand the reasons for deviation from the theory. Often, in music with texts, unusual melodic shapes can be explained through a close examination of the words.

“Take Me Out to the Ball Game” is one of the few tonal songs that do not adhere to this aspect of Schenker’s theory. Here the melodic line ends with an ascent rather than a descent, and even melodic analysis fails to identify a line that descends properly to the tonic.

As shown in figure 3, the melodic structure of the chorus of “Take Me Out to the Ball Game” features, instead of the expected descent to the tonic note, a different shape based on a neighbor-note pattern (an idea introduced in my discussion of “God Bless America,” where it plays a less significant role). The opening line establishes the importance of the neighbor-note pattern, where the angular melodic fragment “take me *out to*” forms an

incomplete neighbor (shown as IN). This basic idea permeates the melodic shape of the entire chorus, and this same melodic shape dominates the verse.

The first scale step number occurs on the word “ball,” as is fitting for a song about baseball. After another incomplete neighbor and a repeat of the opening gesture, scale step 5 returns “with the *crowd*.” As the crowd turns their attention to food, a large-scale neighbor-note pattern begins to take shape, expanding the idea introduced in the first four words of the chorus. This neighbor note appears three times—marked with stems, connected with dashed slurs, and emphasized initially with an N and a flag (the curly line at the top of the stem). This neighbor-note pattern gets back to scale step 5 simultaneously as the words of the text also “get *back*.” Scale step 5 gets back after that wonderful double negative, which is included in the original lyrics but which crowds sometimes seem reluctant to sing.

Another repetition of the opening gesture lands on scale step 5, as we “root, root, root for the *home* team.” Then a neighbor note again expands on the initial neighbor pattern, this time providing ironic emphasis to the

“shame” felt by the fans of the home team “if they don’t win.” The neighbor note here pulls the emphasis away from the primary note (scale step 5) as the crowd’s attention wanders to speculate about the outcome of the ballgame, just as the food distracted their attention earlier in the chorus. This neighbor note returns to scale step 5 after the song’s climax, “one, two, three strikes you’re out,” structurally emphasizing the final word and the result of the play, while the rhythmic organization of these words emphasizes the strikes through pauses.

The song ends, not with the usual stepwise descent to the tonic note (5-4-3-2-1), but with a quick ascent to the tonic note. The melodic shape fails to succumb to the force of gravity and descend properly and gradually to its goal. Instead the melodic structure remains on scale step 5, suspended with nowhere to go. How often, at the end of this song, have you felt like there was something more, something missing? I always feel like singing it again, and many ballparks follow a performance of this song either with an instrumental reprise of it or with another musical selection.

This failure of the melodic line to reach its rightful goal is embodied in the text. Instead of celebrating a run or a victory, the song celebrates the act of striking out, the batter’s utter failure. “For it’s one, two, three strikes you’re out” presents a paradox from the fan’s point of view, where the batter is unable even to hit the ball into fair territory. There is no spectacular hit to drive in runners—no heroic walk-off home run, no victory for the home team—and the structural melodic line, as understood through Schenkerian analysis, aptly reflects this failure. As with baseball-mad Katie, the song’s protagonist who excitedly declares, “I don’t care if I never get back,” the melodic line never gets back either. Striking out is represented musically, in a deep structural way, by the failure of the melodic line to reach its rightful goal—its home, its origin—through a proper descent to the tonic.

This analysis of the chorus reveals that its melodic shape features pattern repetition rather than the usual descent. From this perspective the song creates its own pattern of expectation, a series of neighbor notes, fulfilled through repetition. The song itself is not a failure. Rather, it sets up and achieves other goals through different means. ■

## NOTES

A version of this article originally was presented at the Twentieth Cooperstown Symposium on Baseball and American Culture (Cooperstown, N.Y., National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, June 2008).

1. Allan H. “Bud” Selig, introduction to *Baseball’s Greatest Hit: The Story of Take Me Out to the Ball Game*, by Andy Strasberg, Bob Thompson, and Tim Wiles (New York: Hal Leonard Books, 2008), xiii.
2. *Baseball’s Greatest Hit*, 10.
3. Carly Simon, foreword to *Baseball’s Greatest Hit*, ix.
4. David Headlam offers a music analysis of the complete song, including the verse, in two sections of *Baseball’s Greatest Hit*. There Headlam provides a brief analysis “in layman’s terms” (86–87) as well as a more extensive analysis “for those . . . who can keep score!” (151–54). Headlam in his enlightening analyses takes a different approach to the music of this song and comes to different conclusions.
5. David Carson Berry, “Schenkerian Theory in the United States: A Review of Its Establishment and a Survey of Current Research Topics,” *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Musiktheorie* 2, no. 3 (2005).
6. Allen Forte, *Listening to Classic American Popular Songs* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001); Walter Everett, *The Beatles as Musicians: Revolver through the Anthology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); and Walter Everett, *The Beatles as Musicians: The Quarry Men through Rubber Soul* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).
7. *Baseball’s Greatest Hit*, 133.
8. Ira Berkow, “Sports of the Times: Eager to See the Return of Peanuts,” *New York Times*, 11 October 2001, section S, late edition, final.

## Contributors

**DAVE BALDWIN** is author of the baseball memoir *Snake Jazz* (Xlibris, 2008). He and his wife are retired and live in Yachats, Oregon.

**JASON CHRISTOPHERSON**, author of *Baseball in Eau Claire* (Arcadia, 2003), is working on a comprehensive history of Eau Claire baseball. He lives in Wisconsin with his wife and two children.

**DAVE ESKENAZI** is an investment advisor and NWSABR member based in his native Seattle. He lives several miles north of Sicks' Stadium with his wife and two sons.

**HENRY D. FETTER** author of *Taking on the Yankees: Winning and Losing in the Business of Baseball* (Norton, 2003), received a McFarland–SABR Baseball Research Award for an earlier version of his article “Revising the Revisionists: Walter O’Malley, Robert Moses, and the End of the Brooklyn Dodgers,” which will appear in a forthcoming issue of *New York History*.

**MARK FIMOFF**, an electronic engineer, is author of the “Mystery Photo” column in the SABR Pictorial History Committee Newsletter.

**JAMI N. FISHER** is the American Sign Language Program coordinator and instructor at the University of Pennsylvania. She is a coda—child of deaf adults—and works to promote understanding and awareness of American Sign Language and Deaf cultural issues among deaf and hearing communities.

**RANDY FISHER** is a founding member of the William “Dummy” Hoy Committee, which promotes awareness and recognition of Hoy’s accomplishments as a deaf baseball player in the major leagues. He has been researching the history of deaf baseball players for more than twenty years.

**ROGER GODIN**, a SABR member since 1977, is author of *The 1922 St. Louis Browns: The Best of the American League’s Worst* (McFarland, 1991). He serves as team curator for the Minnesota Wild of the NHL and has written and researched extensively about hockey as played by Americans in the United States.

**TOM HARRIS** is a lifelong baseball fan and has interviewed several retired players.

**TIMOTHY A. JOHNSON** received the 2004 SABR–Sporting News Award for Baseball Research for his book *Baseball and the Music of Charles Ives: A Proving Ground* (Scarecrow Press, 2004). He is associate professor and chair of graduate studies in music at Ithaca College.

**DAN LEVITT** is author of *Ed Barrow: The Bulldog Who Built the Yankees’ First Dynasty* (Nebraska, 2008) and coauthor, with Mark Armour, of *Paths to Glory: How Great Baseball Teams Got That Way* (Brassey’s, 2003), which won the Sporting News–SABR Baseball Research Award.

**DAVID MANDELL** practices law in Connecticut and has written about legal issues and baseball.

**BILL NOWLIN** is vice president of SABR and author of twenty books on the Red Sox. He wants to thank Gene Sunnen for providing some inspiration to take the study of heckling seriously.

**JAMES E. ODENKIRK**, professor emeritus from Arizona State University in Tempe, is the author of *Frank J. Lausche: Ohio’s Great Political Maverick* (Orange Frazer Press, 2005) and *Plain Dealing: A Biography of Gordon Cobbledick* (Spider-Naps, 1990).

**JIM REISLER**, a SABR member for more than twenty years, is the author of *A Great Day in Cooperstown: The Improbable Birth of Baseball’s Hall of Fame* (Carroll and Graf, 2006) and *Babe Ruth: Launching the Legend* (Macmillan, 2004).

**ERIC SALLE** is a CPA in Bellevue, Washington, where he lives with his wife and two daughters.

**BOB SCHAEFER**, in a forty-year career in the aerospace industry, participated in the Apollo, Shuttle, and Space Station Freedom programs. Since retirement he has conducted extensive research in nineteenth-century baseball. He has won the McFarland–SABR Research Award three times.

**ANDREW J. SCHIFF** is author of “*The Father of Baseball*”: *A Biography of Henry Chadwick* (McFarland, 2008), the first full-length book devoted to the Hall of Fame journalist

**LEVERETT T. SMITH JR.**, a member of SABR since 1973, is author of *The American Dream and the National Game* (Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1975). Since the mid-1990s he has reviewed books for the Bibliography Committee Newsletter.

**STEVE STEINBERG** is author of *Baseball in St. Louis, 1900–1925* (Arcadia, 2004) and coauthor, with Lyle Spatz, of *1921: Babe Ruth, John McGraw, and the Battle for Baseball Supremacy in New York* (Nebraska, 2010). He has a baseball-history website, [www.stevesteinberg.net](http://www.stevesteinberg.net).

**BILL SWANK** is the author of six books and numerous articles about baseball. He was a guest of MLB for the Special Negro Leagues draft held in Orlando in 2008.

**DICK THOMPSON**, a baseball researcher and historian, was the author of *The Ferrell Brothers of Baseball* (McFarland, 2005) and more than twenty articles for SABR publications. He was editor of the book *Society for American Baseball Research* (Turner, 2000). A SABR member since 1979, he lived in Dartmouth, Massachusetts. Thompson died in January 2008.

**ANDREW WELTCH**, a writer and public-relations consultant in Cardiff, Wales, is editor of the Welsh baseball website [www.welshbaseball.co.uk](http://www.welshbaseball.co.uk) and is currently researching the hundred-year history of the England–Wales baseball international.