

BLACK SOX SCANDAL



Vol. 2, No. 1, April 2010

Research Committee Newsletter

Leading off ...

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Chairman's Corner

By Irv Goldfarb

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It isn't often that one finds themselves in the perfect situation, a favorable set of circumstances that basically has no downside. It just doesn't happen all that often. But it has in my case.

After enjoying the benefits of SABR in relative obscurity for almost 10 years, I was appointed interim chairman of the newly organized Black Sox Scandal Research Committee last fall, and trust me on this, the appointment was based more on the flexibility of my schedule than on any special insights I might have had into the most infamous chapter in baseball history. (My colleagues, listed on Page 2 of this newsletter, are the true brains behind this operation.)

But as the saying goes, I may be dumb but I'm not crazy, and since I had been looking for the opportunity to do what I could to remember the great Gene Carney, the father of this committee, it was my honor to have my name

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The "Eight Men Out," including Joe Jackson, far left, and Happy Felsch, center, appeared in the same box score just twice. Once was during the 1917 World Series. See Page 5. (Photo credit: Bain Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress)

SABR 40 a treat for B-Sox fans

By Jacob Pomrenke

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If you book it, they will come.

The 40th annual SABR national convention, scheduled for Aug. 5-8, 2010, at the Sheraton hotel in downtown Atlanta, promises to be a memorable one for Black Sox Scandal aficionados.

The Magnolia Chapter planning committee has approved two special events that focus on the South's beloved son,

"Shoeless" Joe Jackson, whose involvement in the 1919 World Series fixing has been fiercely debated for nearly a century.

The South Carolina native is the subject of a featured panel discussion, "Shoeless Joe Jackson, the Black Sox Scandal and Its Aftermath — A Retrospective," from 9:30-11 a.m. on Saturday, Aug. 7.

The panelists for this summer's event include:

◆ **Furman Bisher**, retired sports columnist

for the Atlanta Journal-Constitution; Bisher interviewed Joe Jackson for "Sport" magazine in 1949, two years before the slugger's death.

◆ **David Fleitz**, author of the 2001 biography "Shoeless Joe: The Life and Times of Joe Jackson"; Fleitz also appeared on the 1919 World Series panel at SABR 34 in Cincinnati.

◆ **Mike Nola**, founder of the Shoeless Joe Jackson Virtual Hall of

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► CONVENTION

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Fame at blackbetsy.com in 1995; Nola has been one of the foremost experts on Jackson for more than two decades.

◆ **Daniel Voelker** and **Paul Duffy**, from the law firm of Freeborn & Peters, LLC, of Chicago, who co-authored “Black Sox: It Ain’t So, Kid, It Just Ain’t So,” which appeared in “Chicago Lawyer” magazine in September 2009; the article was based on their research of the Eliot Asinof papers at the Chicago History Museum.

Afterward, SABR 40 convention planners are offering a chartered bus trip to Greenville, S.C. — the city where Jackson grew up and lived most of his life — for a tour of the Shoeless Joe Jackson Museum and Baseball Library, and a minor league baseball game between the Rome Braves and Greenville Drive at 7 p.m.

The museum, at 356 Field Street in the historic West End of Greenville, opened in June 2008 inside the former house where Joe and Katie Jackson lived.

The house was dismantled in 2006 and moved three miles to its current location, where it was reassembled and deeded to the nonprofit foundation that runs the museum.

The facility holds dozens of artifacts, photo-



Joe and Katie Jackson's former home in Greenville, S.C., is now the home of the Shoeless Joe Jackson Museum and Baseball Library in the city's historic West End.

(Photo credit: Shoeless Joe Jackson Museum and Baseball Library)

graphs, film clips and books related to the life and career of “Shoeless Joe.”

Convention planning chairman Terry Sloope says tentative plans call for the bus to leave the Sheraton Atlanta around 2:35 p.m. on Saturday, Aug. 7.

Participation will be on a first-come, first-served basis, limited to the first 50 people who reserve spots and pre-pay for the event.

The cost is \$29 per person and it includes the round-trip bus ride, admission to the museum and tickets to the ballgame.

Members and their families can sign up for the trip when they register for the SABR convention.

Registration became available on the SABR 40 website last week at convention.sabr.org.

at 2 p.m. Friday, August 6, at the Sheraton Atlanta.

If you are interested in making a brief research presentation during the committee meeting, please contact chairman **Irv Goldfarb** (irvin.j.goldfarb@abc.com) or vice chairman **Jacob Pomrenke** (buckweaver@gmail.com.)

Also of interest to our members: The Deadball Era Research Committee meeting will be held at 8 a.m. Saturday, Aug. 7.

The full program for SABR 40 is still being confirmed, but it clearly will be a memorable weekend for Black Sox fans.

For a complete listing of panels, committee meetings, research presentations and special events being planned, please check the convention website at convention.sabr.org.

We look forward to seeing you all in Atlanta!

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Making a Hall of Fame case for Ray Schalk

“Ray Schalk: A Baseball Biography,”
by **Brian E. Cooper**
McFarland & Co., 2009

By Rich Hoffman
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Today, when the ever-popular question “Is he a Hall of Famer?” is attached to a ballplayer’s name, we immediately cite the distance between his final statistics and those magic numbers: 3,000 hits, 500 (or should it be 600?) home runs, .300 career batting average.

One glance at the career numbers of Ray Schalk — 1,345 hits; 11 career home runs; .253 batting average — does not automatically qualify the stalwart who manned the catcher’s box for Charles Comiskey’s Chicago White Sox for 17 years. Brian E. Cooper’s “Ray Schalk: A Baseball Biography” leaves no doubt in the mind of the reader as to “Cracker” Schalk’s worthiness.

As the author says at the close of the book’s preface, “Schalk was the yardstick against whom other catchers were measured.”

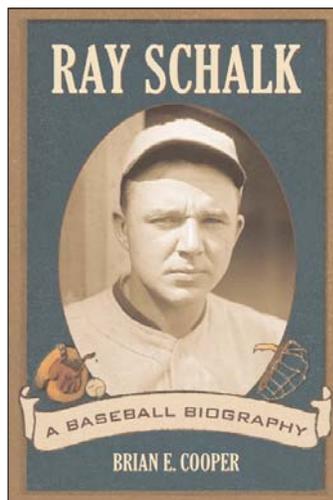
My formative baseball years were the playing days of Carlton Fisk, Johnny Bench and Thurman Munson in the 1970s; as such, the only thing I knew of Ray Schalk before reading Cooper’s book was that he was the catcher for the infamous Black Sox squad of 1919, which, upon encountering Cooper’s book, conjured

memories of Gordon Clapp depicting the thoroughly frustrated backstop in John Sayles’ 1988 film, “Eight Men Out.” Cooper’s research provides the reader with a true sense of Schalk’s values: hard work, honesty, loyalty and integrity; the author makes it easy to understand why Clapp’s movie character is so disgusted by the performance of his teammates.

Taking the reader back to Schalk’s humble beginnings in the “hardscrabble area” of Litchfield, Ill., Cooper reveals a young Schalk who impressed all who saw him play, despite his un-catcher-like (5 feet, 9 inches; 165 pounds) build.

To that end, the book is somewhat of a *The Little Engine That Could* story ... Schalk first donned a semi-pro uniform at the tender age of 15, when he received \$2.50 a game playing for the hometown Litchfield Arcos (actually, he received “not a dime for his efforts” in this first game — a 9-inning affair that followed his own 9-inning high school game — into which he was thrown when the Arcos’ regular catcher did not show).

Shortly after signing with the Chicago White Sox at age 19, Schalk was thrown right to the lions, learning that he would play in the game that he thought he would merely watch prior to dressing for the first time. And the initiation did not get any easier ... Schalk faced future Hall of



Famer Chief Bender in his first major league at-bat (a groundout to third.)

Schalk’s career spanned 18 years (1912-29), all but one playing for and eventually managing (’27 and ’28) the White Sox. He caught Hall of Fame spitballer Urban “Red” Faber — the subject of Cooper’s first biography — for 15 years, to this day the longest tenure for a Hall of Fame pitching/catching battery. He roomed with Hall of Fame second baseman Eddie Collins on White Sox road trips. And he proved loyal to the “Old Roman,” White Sox owner Comiskey, even after being passed over for the managerial job many thought he rightly deserved.

As portrayed by Cooper, Ray Schalk did things the right way in life: he surrounded himself with good people, as the aforementioned names suggest; he went back to Litchfield, where he graced the hometown-organized Schalk Day each October, playing in an annual exhibi-

tion with any number of his major league friends. And he found love the old-fashioned way: he met Lavinia Graham in his late teens in a neighboring small town; they courted for five years despite his traveling the country as a professional athlete; they wed in the parlor of her childhood home; and they were married 53 years, until Schalk’s death in 1970 at the age of 77.

Cooper is to be applauded for his treatment of the Black Sox scandal. Despite his having nothing to do with the fixed World Series of 1919, Schalk’s legacy does, unfortunately, carry the baggage of the scandal. And to that end it would be easy for an author to drift into the tantalizing world of Black Sox discourse. Three of the book’s 31 chapters speak directly to the game’s most infamous black eye (they are chapters 12-14, which is quite appropriate, given that 1919 fell just shy of the midpoint of Schalk’s career).

Appropriately, the book is subtitled “A Baseball Biography”; but Cooper does a tremendous job of presenting Schalk’s personal life, as well. As was true of most ballplayers of his era, Schalk held offseason jobs ranging from insurance sales to bowling alley ownership; his Evergreen Towers bowling center in Chicago was a lucrative business venture for nearly 20 years for Schalk. Cooper follows in

► **Continued on Page 4**

A look at what might have been

“It Ain’t So: A Might-Have-Been History of the White Sox in 1919 and Beyond,”
by Michael T. Lynch Jr.
McFarland & Co., 2010

By Mark Ruckhaus
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If preconceived notions mean anything, when I volunteered to review this book, I thought of authors such as Harry Turtledove and John Birmingham.

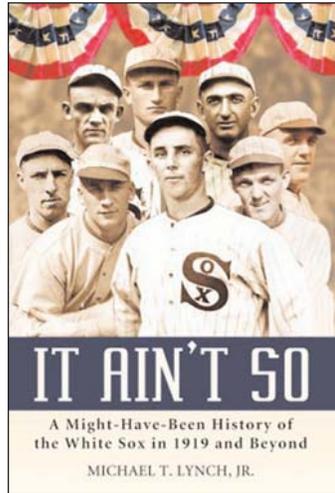
Well, maybe not so much Turtledove as one of his recent efforts involved lizards with some human tendencies being the dominant life form on an alien planet. Throw in some made-up words and it appeared he just phoned it in.

But enough of panning a poor Turtledove effort.

What I was expecting from Lynch was an alternative history with a baseball angle, two of my favorite types of reading merged into one. In this one, the White Sox are clean and careers reach a natural end. Might they dominate the American League and how might that affect the way the game was played are two questions I hoped he was going to answer.

After all, without the World Series fix, though there would have been a Judge Landis, he might have remained on the Federal bench in Chicago.

Instead, what Lynch did



involved little creativity whatsoever. He took a baseball simulation — and there are a number such as APBA, Strat-O-Matic and Diamond Mind — and through a career progression/regression program incorporated into the one he used (Out of the Park), arranged for Joe Jackson and the boys to finish the careers which were unceremoniously cut off just before the end of the 1920 season and reported the findings in a 347-page book.

OK, the White Sox more than held their own for the first five years after that ignominious World Series, Joe Jackson was a surefire Hall of Famer and even Lefty Williams turned out to be a 300-game winner.

But, 347 pages and \$39.95 for that?

You can run a sim, work a good piece of fiction around that and come up with a fine alternative history book. Let’s try this: The White Sox, winners or not

in the latter part of the 1910s, were a cliquish bunch. How long might they have hung together had they played a clean Series? Might it all have come crashing down in 1921 or ’22 anyway? What happens with the National Commission triumvirate still in place? With rumors of the 1918 World Series possibly not being on the level, might gambling have still been pervasive and might rumors have floated around about later World Series been fixed? Or might they have been more than rumors?

The White Sox acquired some fine players during the 1920s, such as Willie Kamm, Johnny Mostil and Bibb Falk. But with Buck Weaver, Jackson and Happy Felsch already established, might those players have ever been signed or might the established veterans have been traded?

And the best part of the above is that, with alternative history, there’s no real right or wrong. There might be the ridiculous, as with Turtledove and those lizards. But there’s no real wrong in alternative history. Plus, unlike Lynch’s effort, it involves both knowledge of the real subject while also being creative.

While I have no doubt that Lynch knows the subject matter, to me, there was no creativity involved and his efforts clearly belie the book’s title.

► SCHALK

Continued from Page 3

varying detail the lives of Schalk’s siblings and children; despite all their father’s successes in life, both of his children faced myriad personal struggles, especially in their adult years.

Ray Schalk was inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1955. His is the lowest batting average of any position player enshrined. Baseball historian and statistician Bill James has since ranked Schalk as only the 35th-best catcher in major league history.

In his preface, Cooper points out that his aim in writing this book “was not to judge Schalk’s worthiness” of membership at Cooperstown; however, the experience certainly fortified the author’s belief that Schalk’s plaque is, indeed, right where it belongs. When those automatic numbers (3,000; 500; .300) have not been posted, we fans use our own criteria to decide whether or not we would induct a player whose name enters that so-common conversation.

Though I have no business casting a vote for HOF membership, one thing is certain: after reading Brian E. Cooper’s “Ray Schalk: A Baseball Biography,” “Cracker” would certainly get my vote.

Eight Men In — the same box score

By Jacob Pomrenke
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Their names are linked in history as the “Eight Men Out” — the Chicago White Sox players who were permanently banned from professional baseball for their roles in fixing the 1919 World Series.

Before the scandal broke, however, they were more well-known as the key cogs on a dominant American League team that came close to capturing three pennants in four years: Pitchers Eddie Cicotte and Claude “Lefty” Williams, the White Sox’s top two starters; third baseman George “Buck” Weaver, the team’s feisty former captain; Arnold “Chick” Gandil, acquired from Washington to provide stability at first base; infielders Charles “Swede” Risberg and Fred McMullin, youngsters brought up from the Pacific Coast League; strapping center fielder Oscar “Happy” Felsch, Chicago’s most powerful slugger; and the biggest star of them all, left fielder “Shoeless” Joe Jackson, who had the sweetest swing in baseball.

But for as many stories as have been written about the players known as the “Black Sox,” only twice did they all appear in the same box score together. No one noticed at the time, of course — it would be a few years before the eight ballplayers were automatically associated with each other.

And while Weaver and Cicotte were with the club for most of the decade, the eight of them were only together from 1917-19 — with the war-shortened season of 1918 coming in between.

Naturally, because two were starting pitchers, both games involved some heavy lineup maneuvering,

The Score of the Fifth Game

| CHICAGO. | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------|-----------|----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| AB. | R. | H. | TR. | 2B. | 3B. | HR. | BB. | SH. | SB. | PO. | A. | E. |
| J. Collins, rf. | 5 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| McMullin, 3b. | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 0 |
| E. Collins, 2b. | 4 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 |
| Jackson, lf. | 5 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Felsch, cf. | 5 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 2 |
| Gandil, 1b. | 5 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Weaver, 3b. | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 9 |
| Schalk, c. | 5 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Russell, p. | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Cicotte, p. | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Risberg | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Williams, p. | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Blynn | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Faber, p. | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Total | 37 | 8 | 14 | 16 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 27 | 15 | 6 |

| NEW YORK. | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------|-----------|----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|
| AB. | R. | H. | TR. | 2B. | 3B. | HR. | BB. | SH. | SB. | PO. | A. | E. |
| Burns, lf. | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 |
| Herzog, 2b. | 5 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Kauff, cf. | 5 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 |
| Zimmerman, 3b. | 5 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Fletcher, ss. | 5 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 3 |
| Thorpe, rf. | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Robertson, 1b. | 5 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 |
| Holke, 1b. | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Risberg, c. | 3 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| Sallee, p. | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Peritt, p. | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 40 | 5 | 12 | 14 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 24 | 9 | 3 |

a Batted for Cicotte in sixth inning.
b Batted for Williams in seventh inning.

SCORE BY INNINGS.

| | | | | | | | | | |
|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| Chicago | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 3 | —8 |
| New York | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | —5 |

Double plays—McMullin and Gandil; McMullin, E. Collins, and Gandil.
Left on bases—Chicago, 10; New York, 11. First base on errors—Chicago, 1; New York, 4. Bases on balls—Off Russell, 1; Sallee, 4; Cicotte, 1. Hits and earned runs—Off Russell, 2 hits and 1 run, (none out in first inning); Sallee, 23 and 7 runs in 7 1/2; Cicotte, 8 and 2 runs in 6; Peritt, 1 and 0 in 2-1/2; Williams, 2 and 1 in 1; Faber, 0 and 0 in 2. Struck out—By Cicotte, 1; Sallee, 2; Williams, 3; Faber, 1. Time of game—2 hours, 37 minutes. Umpires—O’Loughlin behind the plate; Klein at first; Higier at second; Evans at third.

The box score from Game 5 of the 1917 World Series in The New York Times — one of only two games in which all “Eight Men Out” appeared.

especially by the standards of the Deadball Era. Manager Clarence “Pants” Rowland was forced by ineffectiveness or injury to mix and match his players more so than he normally would — but the moves helped his team win both games.

The first game with “Eight Men In” occurred October 13, 1917 — Game 5 of the World Series between the White Sox and the National League’s New York Giants.

With the best-of-seven Series tied 2-2, Rowland called on veteran left-hander “Reb” Russell to start for the White Sox. The hard-throwing Mississippi native started only 24 games in the regular season because of constant injuries; however, five of his 15 victories were shutouts and he had been given nearly two weeks to rest his arm.

The Giants countered with “Slim” Sallee, a junkballing lefty who was expected to give trouble to Chicago’s most dangerous hitters, Joe Jackson and future Hall of Famer Eddie Collins. Sallee also forced Buck Weaver — who raised his batting average nearly 60 points in 1917 after he began switch-hitting that season — to bat from his weaker right side.

Weaver, having started at third base for most of the year, was the team’s starting shortstop for the Series. After Weaver broke his wrist in early August, Rowland inserted utility infielder Fred McMullin at his position. McMullin performed so well that when Weaver returned in mid-September, Rowland left Mac where he was and replaced Swede Risberg at short instead. Risberg’s .203 batting average did not make the decision a difficult one.

The rest of the lineup was stable: Jackson, Felsch and John Collins in the outfield; Gandil and Eddie Collins on the right side of the infield; Ray Schalk, another future Hall of Famer, behind the plate. This imposing roster produced 100 wins in the regular season, still a Sox franchise record.

In Game 5 at Comiskey Park, Reb Russell’s arm was not right from the start. He lasted all of eight pitches and didn’t record an out. A walk to George Burns, a single by Buck Herzog and an RBI double by Benny Kauff ended the lefty’s day before he broke a sweat.

Enter Eddie Cicotte, the Sox ace who had pitched a seven-hitter to win Game 1 a week earlier and sustained a hard-luck loss in Game 3, when Rube Benton shut out Chicago, 2-0.

Cicotte was used to working in relief — he had done it 14 times in 1917, in addition to his team-high 35 starts. Rowland wasn’t afforded the

➤ **Continued on Page 6**

CICOTTE WRENCHES ANKLE AS SOX GRAB BATFEST, 9 TO 5

— Chicago Tribune headline from May 9, 1918

► EIGHT

Continued from Page 5

luxury of having much depth on the mound, using eight pitchers all year.

As Chicago's "stopper," Cicotte was often called upon to save the day.

Working on two days' rest in Game 5, Cicotte held the Giants to just two runs in the first inning, thanks to heads-up defense by Weaver and McMullin, who each threw out runners at home plate.

Cicotte kept the Sox in the game for six innings, allowing eight hits and two runs (one unearned), until he was replaced by a pinch-hitter: Risberg. The Swede cut the Giants' lead to 4-2 in the sixth with an RBI single to score Weaver.

Lefty Williams then took over for his only appearance of the Series. At 24 years old, Williams was the youngest member of Rowland's pitching staff and despite a sparkling won-loss record of 17-8, his 2.97 ERA was the team's highest.

Williams struck out the side in the top of the seventh but allowed another run in between the outs to give the Giants a 5-2 lead.

But in the bottom half, the future Black Sox played a crucial role in the game-tying rally. Chick Gandil drove in

Joe Jackson and Happy Felsch with an RBI double, then scored the tying run on a throwing error by Sallee.

The next inning, after Red Faber replaced Williams, Eddie Collins singled in the go-ahead run and Jackson and Felsch followed with run-scoring base hits to give the Sox an 8-5 victory in Game 5. They wrapped up the Series two days later, as Faber earned his record-tying third victory of the Series.

The next — and last — time that the "Eight Men Out" all appeared in a game was May 8, 1918.

This time, it was the durable Eddie Cicotte who needed his teammates to pick him up.

The defending World Series champions started strong, winning five of their seven games in a rain-soaked April. But as the calendar turned to May, and with a world war raging in Europe, they began to lose more games in a forgettable season — and, not so coincidentally, they lost most of their top stars at the same time.

First, team captain Eddie Collins went down. The second baseman injured his knee and was out for a week, ending his consecutive games streak at 477, a mark for second basemen that stood until another White Sox Hall of Famer, Nellie Fox, broke it in 1958.

This forced Rowland to shift his infield around — Swede Risberg went from shortstop to second base, Weaver from third to his old spot at short and McMullin was put in at third. Gandil, of course, remained at first base.

Cicotte entered the May 8 game at Cleveland having lost his first four starts, the last two in one-run decisions.

He didn't last long in this one, but it wasn't because of his pitching. In the second inning, Cicotte hit a two-out single off the Indians' Bob Groom to drive in Gandil and McMullin. But when he stepped on first base, Cicotte twisted his ankle so badly that the game was delayed 10 minutes before he hobbled off the field.

Cicotte, too, missed more than a week of games.

Ace reliever Dave Danforth replaced him, but didn't make it out of the third inning before allowing three runs and giving way to rookie Frank Shellenback, making his major league debut.

The lanky right-handed spitballer — who went on to win 295 games in the Pacific Coast League after he wasn't allowed to continue using his wet pitch in the big leagues in 1920 — set down Cleveland for four innings, as Chicago rallied to take the lead for good in the fifth, on RBI hits from Jackson,

Felsch and McMullin. Shellenback's performance earned him the first of his 10 major league wins.

He tired in the seventh, however, and was replaced by Lefty Williams, who had been shelled 7-1 by the Indians the day before. Williams didn't allow a hit in the final 2.1 innings as the White Sox won 9-5.

But the championship team wasn't together for much longer.

The following day, Happy Felsch left the team to tend to his ailing brother in Texas and Chick Gandil went to the hospital with a stomach virus, missing a few games.

Then, the big blow came on May 10: Joe Jackson's number was selected by his local draft board in Greenville, S.C., and he left the team to go work in a New Jersey shipyard.

With U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Enoch Crowder's "work or fight" order looming over the major leagues, Lefty Williams and Happy Felsch went to work in war-essential industries soon after. In August, Swede Risberg joined the Army, Fred McMullin enlisted in the Navy and Eddie Collins became a Marine.

Only Gandil, Weaver and Cicotte remained with the team for the entire year.

But they would all return for one more fateful season together, in 1919.

The mysterious ‘Rachael Brown’

Unlocking the identity of an obscure defendant in the Black Sox trial

By William Lamb

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Quietly nestled among the renowned sports names charged in the Black Sox scandal is that of an obscure figure, one Rachael Brown.¹

Based on surviving evidence, it appears that Brown was indicted by the Cook County grand jury almost entirely on the word of Lefty Williams, who identified the negotiators of the fix with the Sox players as “two fellows introduced as Brown and Sullivan ... the gamblers from New York.”²

Defendant Brown, however, was never taken into custody on the indictment. Nor did he ever make an appearance, either personally or via counsel, in a Chicago courtroom. From the time of the scandal until today, Rachael Brown has remained largely a cipher, a scandal actor whose identity has never been conclusively established.

In the order in which they appeared on the public stage, here are snapshots of the most likely candidates for the role of Black Sox defendant Rachael Brown.



Abram Braunstein, commonly known as Rachel Brown: A contemporary of Arnold Rothstein, this individual was a small-time Manhattan gambler

who first came to public attention via his connection to Louis “Bridgie” Webber, a key prosecution witness in the trial of the notorious Rosenthal murder case.

Those proceedings culminated in conviction with death sentences for five men, including corrupt NYPD Vice Squad Lieutenant Charles Becker.

While in a jail cell awaiting his fate, Becker claimed that Rosenthal’s killers had had an earlier target, namely “‘Rachel’ Braunstein, Webber’s partner in a 42nd Street gambling house and known in the gambling fraternity as Rachel Brown.” See *The Washington Post*, Oct. 29, 1912.³

According to Becker, a prospective new trial witness named Jack Sullivan would testify that Rosenthal’s slayers had plotted to kill Rachel Braunstein and take his half of the gambling partnership.

Sullivan “learned of it, ... told Braunstein and escorted him to a steamship” on which Braunstein escaped to Spain, as reported in *The Boston Globe*, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, Oct. 29, 1912.

In due course, this allegation precipitated the issuance of a subpoena for “Rachel Brown of 123 Manhattan Avenue,” served while Brown was appearing

in magistrate’s court to answer a disorderly conduct charge that stemmed from a fight.

Indignant, Brown disclaimed knowledge of the reason why the subpoena had been issued and “asserted that since the Becker trial he had been hounded and threatened on many occasions,” as per *The New York Times*, March 6, 1914.

After that, Brown apparently tried to stay out of the public eye. But four years later, “Rachie Brown, the old partner of Bridgie Webber” was back in the news after being netted in a police raid of the newly opened Picadilly Club in Manhattan. The arrestee identified himself as fish dealer Aaron Braun but vice detectives immediately recognized him as “the genuine ‘Rachie Brown.’” See *The Boston Globe*, Dec. 9, 1918.

The following summer, Brown was in custody again, arrested during a raid on a disreputable gambling resort in Saratoga, as reported in *The Saratogian*, July 29, 1919. After much foot dragging by local officials cozy with gaming interests, a specially convened Saratoga County grand jury returned gambling-related indictments against 48 targets, including Abram (Rachie) Brown, as per *The Saratoga*

Sun, Aug. 20, 1920.⁴

None of the above received mention when newspapers nationwide ran stories about the forthcoming indictments of Joseph “Sport” Sullivan and Brown, “an otherwise unidentified gambler from New York City,” in connection with the Cook County probe of the 1919 World Series. See e.g., *The Chicago Tribune*, Sept. 30, 1920.

Within days thereafter, however, it was reported that “Rachie Brown, a gambler said to have been deeply involved in the Series plot, has left New York City and gone to Europe. His departure is regarded by underworld gossips as proof that he was mixed up in the baseball plot. He (Brown) had been known as a ‘steerer’ for Rothstein’s gambling operations.” See unidentified news item reprinted in *The Sporting News*, Oct. 7, 1920.⁵ (See also, *The Schenectady Union-Star*, Oct. 5, 1920: “Rachel Brown, partner of Bridgie Webber ... and indicted by the Cook County grand jury in Chicago for world series fixing” left on an ocean liner.)

Such reports, however, were quickly contradicted by “several men of wide acquaintance in the

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gambling ring” who had talked with Brown several days after his purported getaway ship had sailed. See *The New York Times*, Oct. 6, 1920.

This is probably so because the following month, “Rachel Brown” and co-defendant Jules Formel were apprehended on Broadway and then transported upstate to answer the Saratoga charges, as reported in *The New York Times*, Nov. 22, 1920. The sensation of the ensuing trial of Formel is captured in the headline, “Rachie” Brown Turns State’s Evidence, Granted Immunity, published in *The Saratoga Sun*, Dec. 31, 1920.

Later in the proceedings, “Rachie Brown, indicted in the world’s series baseball scandal,” was identified as the roulette wheel operator in the Formel gambling resort. See *The New York Times*, May 13, 1921.

That report notwithstanding, if this Brown was indeed the same Rachael Brown indicted by the Cook County grand jury, there appears to have been no effort made to extradite him to Chicago. And after May 1921, Abram Braunstein, commonly known as Rachel/Rachie Brown, disappears from public view.



Nat Evans, New York gambler and business associate of Arnold Rothstein:

Although never assigned the role during his lifetime, Nat Evans has been deemed the alter-ego of defendant Rachael Brown by most present-day Black Sox authors.

Polished and personable, Evans was a well-heeled New York gambler who junior-partnered various Rothstein casino ventures (while avoiding involvement in the more unsavory rackets — labor racketeering, drug smuggling, fencing stolen property, etc. — that AR financed).

The most notable Rothstein-Evans collaboration was their joint ownership of The Brook, a Saratoga mansion with stables acquired in 1919 and transformed into a high stakes casino catering to wealthy patrons attired in formal evening dress. The two were also partners in a succession of Manhattan and Long Island gaming places.

During the Cook County grand jury probe, Evans’ name was only mentioned in passing. According to published accounts of testimony by former Cubs owner and racetrack regular Charles Weeghman, Rothstein was reputed to have masterminded the World Series fix with Evans, Abe Attell, Nicky Arnstein, Max Blumenthal and other Rothstein operatives abetting him. See e.g., *The Chicago Tribune*, Sept. 26, 1920. Evans, however, was never charged by the grand jury.

On April 1, 1921, Evans and Rothstein

friend/sometimes bodyguard Sidney Stajer were observed acting suspiciously at a St. Louis hotel and detained on charges of convenience.

A brief news account of the matter described Evans as “the missing link” of the current baseball scandal but Evans denied any connection to the affair, interposing the stock gripe that he had lost money betting on the White Sox. See *The New York Times*, Apr. 2, 1921.

And because no connection was then drawn between Evans and the indicted Rachael Brown, Evans was promptly released on bond and went about his way.

In the decade following the acquittal of the Black Sox defendants, Evans was generally held in high regard, particularly by the New York turf and boxing press.

His presence at important horse races and championship fights was routinely noted, the name Nat Evans appearing in print alongside that of such notables as Mayor Jimmy Walker, Florenz Ziegfeld, Babe Ruth, Irving Berlin, Conde Nast, James J. Corbett and Bernard Gimbel.⁶ There was even a middling 1920s racehorse named for him.⁷

By the time that Nat Evans died in February 1935, whatever tenuous connection he may once have had to the Black Sox scandal was, at most, a dim memory.

The current equation of Nat Evans to scandal defen-

dant Rachael Brown finds its genesis in a 1959 biography of Arnold Rothstein by former New York Post reporter Leo Katcher. In Katcher’s slim account of the World Series fix, Evans was portrayed as Rothstein’s advisor and negotiating agent with the Black Sox players.⁸

A far more expansive treatment of Evans’ supposed role in the fix was provided four years later when “Eight Men Out” was published. In Eliot Asinof’s seminal account of the scandal, Rothstein and Evans decided that Evans “would be known simply as ‘Brown’” when dealing with the corrupt players.⁹

In 1966, however, the Evans = Rachael Brown proposition was rejected by Black Sox contrarian Victor Luhrs. To Luhrs, Nat Evans and “Rachael Brown, a gambler from Boston,” were separate personalities, with Evans, using the pseudonym “Brown,” paired with Sport Sullivan in dealing with the players while “other Rothsteinians (like) Nicky Arnstein and Bostonian Rachael Brown played more remote roles in engineering the fix and betting.”¹⁰

The two Browns scenario, however, has not prevailed in recent Black Sox literature, with the works of David Pietrusza, Gene Carney and Susan Dellinger all subscribing to the now-conventional view that Nat Evans was the fixer indicted by the grand jury

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as Rachael Brown.¹¹



Rachel Brown, Rothstein's lady bookkeeper:

Some of the latest work on the Black Sox scandal adds an interesting twist to the Nat Evans/Rachael Brown equation.

This thesis accepts employment of the alias Brown by Evans while dealing with the Black Sox players but also places a female bookkeeper employed by Rothstein, named coincidentally enough Rachel Brown, abetting the fixers' work in Cincinnati and Chicago.

The wellspring of this take on the case is a brief passage in the Katcher biography of Rothstein that states, "Evans went to Cincinnati taking Attell and Rachel Brown with him," the author having earlier explained that "Mrs. Brown was Rothstein's chief bookkeeper," dispatched by AR to keep track of all the bets.¹²

The involvement of this lady bookkeeper in the fix was thereafter accepted uncritically by various Black Sox authors, including scandal authority Gene Carney.¹³

Also stirred into the mix was Carney's waggish theory that Evans may have registered at the Sinton Hotel as Brown so that he and Rachel could share a room

(read: bed) without risking arrest on morals charges. See Carney, "Notes from the Shadows of Cooperstown," No. 324/March 12, 2004, and No. 337/Aug. 20, 2004.

That theory, in turn, was presented as fact by Susan Dellinger in her engaging 2006 look at the fix from her grandfather Edd Roush's perspective.

In this telling, loyal Rothstein bookkeeper Rachel Brown was portrayed as a gentile Englishwoman and the current paramour of Nat Evans who "liked the idea of posing as 'Mr. Brown' in Cincinnati so they could be together."¹⁴

Among the things that undermine the plausibility of such tales is the absence of corroboration. No contemporary account of Rothstein associates, for example, includes a female bookkeeper named Rachel Brown.

Nor is such a person mentioned in Carolyn Rothstein's life with Arnold-type memoir.¹⁵

This reduces the exponents of Rachel Brown the lady bookkeeper to dependence upon Leo Katcher's 1959 Rothstein biography.

But Katcher (1911-1991) was only a boy during Rothstein's heyday and had no personal contact with his subject, relying instead on old news clips and 30-year-old memories of AR.

And as for the lady bookkeeper, the provenance of Katcher's allusion to Rachel Brown cannot be investigat-

ed, for no sources for his two fleeting references to her are provided.

But more than the paucity of verifiable proof belies the existence of female bookkeeper Rachel Brown.

For the identity of Rothstein's longtime bookkeeper was not a secret to his contemporaries and was, in fact, amply revealed to the public in reportage of the contentious litigation that attended the probate of Rothstein's deathbed will.

The actual Rothstein bookkeeper was a man named Samuel Brown, one of AR's three co-executors. See e.g., *The New York Times*, Nov. 17, 1928, describing Samuel Brown as "the executor who was Rothstein's bookkeeper and confidential secretary"; *The Washington Post*, Nov. 17, 1928, referring to the affidavit of Samuel Brown "who managed Rothstein's business affairs at the main office"; *The New York Times*, Nov. 18 and 28, 1928, alluding to "Samuel Brown, bookkeeper and confidential secretary to Rothstein" and "an old friend of the gambler"; *The New York Times*, Dec. 29, 1928, application for fees by the lawyer for Carolyn Rothstein cites the hostile attitude of the will's original executors including "Samuel Brown, his bookkeeper." See also, Rothstein, C., p. 247, wherein Mrs. Rothstein recalls that as AR lay dying in a hospital bed, she "got a hold of Samuel

Brown, a man who worked for Arnold," to free up the cash needed to cover immediate expenses.¹⁶

Finally and at the risk of overkill, it should be noted that no contemporaneous account of fix events, by either Black Sox player or gambler, places any kind of female in the scandal narrative.

Commentary

Given the 1920-21 reportage of East Coast newspapers, it seems likely that indicted Black Sox defendant Rachael Brown was widely presumed to be Abram Braunstein, commonly known as Rachel Brown in New York gambling circles.

The whereabouts of Braunstein/Brown in the run-up to the Black Sox trial — free under bond on Saratoga gambling charges but periodically in a Saratoga County courtroom — were publicly reported but the disinclination of Cook County authorities to seek his extradition to Chicago is understandable.

For without the testimony of a cooperative Black Sox player, the prosecution had no way of proving the charges lodged against defendant Brown (or the fugitive Sport Sullivan, either).



More than 40 years after the acquittal of the Black Sox defendants, Eliot

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Asinof's celebrated "Eight Men Out" cast Rothstein lieutenant Nat Evans in the role of "Brown," one of the financier's negotiators with the players.

Although 8MO is notably without sources, the confirmed deaths of Rothstein, Evans, Bill Burns, Billy Maharg, David Zelcer and Carl Zork and probable, if unreported, demise of Braunstein and Sullivan left only one fix insider available to Asinof when he began his researches in the early 1960s: Abe Attell.¹⁷

Asinof's reliance on Attell, a cheerfully corrupt character not overly troubled by the need for historical accuracy, is, of course, problematic.

Yet from his position at the heart of the fix action in Cincinnati and Chicago, Attell was unquestionably in a position to know the true identity of defendant Rachael Brown.

And given the risks involved and the amount of money at stake, the assignment of the capable and trusted Evans, as opposed to the small-time Braunstein or some other nonentity, to handle Rothstein's interests in the fix makes sense.

What does not make sense, however, is Evans' adoption of the alias Brown, the surname of Rothstein bookkeeper

Samuel Brown.

Given the universe of phony names available to the fixers, the goal of concealing AR's connection to the scheme was hardly promoted by Evans' use of an alias that corresponded to the name of a known Rothstein associate.

Yet this curiosity repeats itself elsewhere in the scandal.

Black Sox defendant David Zelcer, the Des Moines gambler paired with Attell in dealing with the players, employed the alias Curley Bennett, notwithstanding the real-life existence of Joseph "Curley" Bennett, a Tammany foot soldier and all-purpose villain known to work as a steerer and/or bodyguard for Rothstein.¹⁸

The same lack of forethought attends the prominent role in the fix assigned to Attell himself, a noisy, indiscreet Lilliputian known on sight to thousands of sports fans from his storied ring career.¹⁹

The Little Champ's long association with AR — Attell was yet another Rothstein bodyguard — was one more telltale sign that Rothstein was financing the fix.

In the end, two possibilities suggest themselves here:

Rothstein's complaint that he had been victimized by the unauthorized use of his name by the World Series fixers was true.

Or perhaps, like other

criminals, Arnold Rothstein was something less than the genius portrayed by his biographers.

Conclusions

Given the critique of views held by others, it seems only fair to close this piece by submitting the writer's own conclusions to scrutiny.

Accordingly, based on review of the surviving judicial record and an analysis of Black Sox scholarship, it is my view that:

◆ Whatever his initial misgivings about involving himself in the plot, Arnold Rothstein, the only underworld financier known to keep a huge bankroll at his fingertips, agreed to underwrite the fix of the 1919 World Series;

◆ That the number of fix agents commissioned by AR is debatable. On this score, the Sullivan/Brown tandem were almost certainly Rothstein agents. Less clear is whether the Attell/Bennett group was also commissioned by AR or whether it merely used Rothstein's name to advantage without AR's authorization²⁰;

◆ That at the time the fix was in motion, there was a small-time New York gambler commonly known as Rachel or Rachie Brown. His real name was Abram Braunstein;

◆ That the person described by Lefty

Williams as "Brown ... the gambler from New York" was not Braunstein, aka Rachel/Rachie Brown (who had only recently been arrested in Saratoga), but more probably trusted Rothstein associate Nat Evans;

◆ That the first name Rachael utilized in the indictments was likely the product of: (a) prosecutor/grand juror exposure to East Coast newspaper coverage which assumed that Brown, the otherwise unidentified New York gambler mentioned during leaked grand jury testimony, must refer to Braunstein, Gotham's notorious Rachel Brown; or (b) now-lost grand jury testimony by AL President Ban Johnson about gambler identity uncovered by detectives in the league's employ; or (c) most intriguingly, testimony by a helpful Arnold Rothstein, taking advantage of his grand jury appearance to shield the valued Nat Evans at the expense of the disposable, arrest-prone Braunstein/Brown;

◆ That despite charging a Rachael Brown in the Black Sox indictments, neither the State's Attorney's Office nor the grand jurors knew who this defendant Brown really was;

◆ That the uncertainty about the true identity of defendant Brown was entirely satisfactory to Rothstein;

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◆ That Rachel Brown, the lady bookkeeper first discovered by Rothstein biographer Leo Katcher in the late 1950s, is apocryphal.



In the final analysis, all of the above is no more than informed guesswork. For the fact remains, the measures necessary for conclusive identification of the Rachael Brown indicted by the Cook County grand jury — arrest, fingerprinting, lineup, courtroom identification, etc. — were never effected.

That being so, and given the passage of time and the fragmentary nature of the surviving evidence, the true identity of defendant Rachael Brown may simply never be known, remaining yet another unsolved Black Sox mystery.

End notes

1. Rachael is the variant of the Brown first name that appears in the indictments returned by the Cook County grand jury.

2. Statement of Claude (Lefty) Williams, dated Sept. 29, 1920, and part of the grand jury record. After the names of those indicted had been publicly leaked, the grand jury subsequently received testimony from Joe Gedeon that identified Sport Sullivan and “R.R. Brown of New

York as the men back of the bribing” of the players, as reported in *The Boston Globe*, Oct. 27, 1920.

3. Note that the Americanized version of the common German/Jewish surname Braun is Brown. Properly pronounced, the two names sound identical.

4. Throughout the proceedings in Saratoga, the accused was referred to as Brown, not Braunstein. Press reports used the first names Abram and Abraham interchangeably, but the immunity agreement signed by the parties employed the name Abram.

5. An unflattering wire service dispatch on the flight of Brown commingled facets of the gambler’s connection to Arnold Rothstein with those of the urbane Nat Evans. See *The Schenectady Union-Star*, Oct. 5, 1920. This precipitated even an astute Rothstein biographer to confuse the two men. See Pietrusza, David, “Rothstein: The Life, Times and Murder of the Criminal Genius Who Fixed the 1919 World Series,” Carroll & Graf, New York, 2003, p. 417, n. 186. Apart from resort to the alias Brown, however, Abram Braunstein and Nat Evans were two distinct and very different men.

6. See e.g., *The New York Times*, June 26, 1929 and June 22, 1932. The generosity of Nat Evans and “other wealthy sportsmen” in hosting disabled WWI veterans at the Palestine Emergency Fund boxing show drew the praise of respected sports scribe James P. Dawson in

The New York Times, Oct. 28, 1928.

7. The racehorse Nat Evans won an occasional small-track feature race, as noted in a *Washington Post* headline dated Sept. 24, 1927. The horse’s owner, Mrs. M. Stajer was presumably a relation of Rothstein and Evans friend Sidney Stajer.

8. Katcher, Leo, “The Big Bankroll: The Life and Times of Arnold Rothstein,” DaCapo Press, New York, 1959, pp. 145-147.

9. Asinof, Eliot, “Eight Men Out,” Henry Holt & Company, New York, 1963, p. 3. While a minor detail, Asinof leaves unexplained just how the grand jury came to attach the first name Rachael to fix conspirator Brown.

10. See Luhrs, Victor, “The Great Baseball Mystery: The 1919 World Series,” A.S. Barnes & Company, Inc., So. Brunswick, NJ, 1966, p. 144. In identifying Rachael Brown as a gambler from Boston, Luhrs merely repeated Ban Johnson’s description of Brown in his career retrospective interview published by *The Chicago Tribune*, March 10, 1929.

11. See Pietrusza, pp. 150, 163, 171-172; Carney, Gene, “Burying the Black Sox, How Baseball’s Cover-Up of the 1919 World Series Fix Almost Succeeded,” Potomac Books, Inc., Washington, D.C., 2006, p.251; Dellinger, Susan, “Red Legs and Black Sox: Edd Roush and the Untold Story of the 1919 World Series,” Emmis Books, Cincinnati, 2006, pp. 187-188.

12. Katcher, p. 147, then p. 145.

13. A Buck Weaver biography differentiates the Rachael Brown

alias used by Nat Evans, “a Rothstein henchman active in the conspiracy” from Rachael Brown, “a woman (who) may have been an employee of Rothstein’s in one of his gambling houses.” See Stein, Irving, “The Ginger Kid,” Elysian Fields Press, Dubuque, Ia., 1991, p. 246; or see “the grand jury indicted Rachael Brown as a conspirator without ever figuring out that she was only a Rothstein bookkeeper who had been dispatched to Chicago and Cincinnati to keep track of his bets,” in Dewey, Donald & Acocella, Nicholas, “The Black Prince of Baseball: Hal Chase and the Mythology of Baseball,” Sports Classic Books, Toronto, 2004, p. 329; while Carney, p. 243, simply accepts the Katcher claim that “Mrs. Brown was Rothstein’s chief bookkeeper” and present in Midwestern cities to assist Evans and Attell in doing her employer’s bidding.

14. Dellinger, p. 188.

15. Rothstein, Carolyn, “Now I’ll Tell,” *The Vanguard Press*, New York, 1934. The only female AR employee mentioned therein is a secretary named Freda Rosenberg.

16. According to his widow, Arnold Rothstein was his own chief bookkeeper, almost obsessively keeping track of the accounts that he maintained in his little black books.

17. In a subsequent work, Asinof acknowledged that Abe Attell was his primary 8MO informant. See Asinof, Eliot, “Bleeding Between the Lines,” Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New

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York, 1979, pp. 103-109.

18. See Pietrusza, pp. 153, 178. Between the World Series fix and the trial of the Black Sox defendants, the real Curley Bennett and Rothstein were publicly tied together in press coverage of a high-profile securities theft case.

See The New York Times, May 20, 1920.

19. Whatever his foibles, Abe Attell was a great fighter, the undisputed featherweight (126-pound) champion from 1903 until 1912. When younger brother Monte Attell captured the bantamweight (118-pound) crown in June 1909, the Attells became the first siblings ever to hold world boxing titles simultaneous-

ly. For his accomplishments inside the ring (if not for his escapades outside of it), Abe Attell has been enshrined in several boxing halls of fame.

20. During 1923 bankruptcy proceedings involving the securities firm Fuller & McGee, Rothstein grudgingly acknowledged his acquaintance with Sport Sullivan. See Rothstein, C., p. 178, for a verbatim account of

AR's testimony. There is, however, no verifiable link between Rothstein and the St. Louis gamblers recruited to revive the fix after the player/gambler falling-out that followed the double-cross of Game 3. On this score, the writer is skeptical of the elaborate tri-partite (including the Carl Zork group) scheme postulated in the Pietrusza biography of AR.

► CHAIRMAN

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attached to the chairmanship of this group, for however long I was needed.

As I have written elsewhere, Rick Huhn and I prepared for that first committee meeting last summer in Washington, D.C., with some trepidation, worried that perhaps we'd be introducing our new group in front of a handful of early-rising SABR members, attending more out of curiosity than anything else.

We couldn't have been more wrong. Obviously, the intoxicating lure of the 1919 World Series and all the storylines it entails, can never be underestimated: The ballroom was filled that morning, and after wrestling with the hotel's DVD player to start our presentation, Rick and I basically sat back in awe as a roomful of the country's sharpest baseball minds debated different aspects of our new committee and

what the best ways were to get us off the ground.

Subsequently, over the past nine months, my inbox has been peppered with introductory e-mails generated by our Yahoo! group, informing me every time a new member signs on.

And almost immediately a number of these new signees approached us with ideas for research presentations and papers, underscoring yet again the enthusiasm and knowledge that resides within SABR-nation.

Now, along comes SABR 40 and the story gets better: Almost as if they had designed the convention with this committee in mind, the Magnolia Chapter has confirmed two events focusing on the Black Sox and their most famous player.

I won't go into the details here, since you've no doubt already noticed Jacob Pomrenke's story on Page 1, announcing both of these events in full, a panel discussion on Saturday

morning centering on Joe Jackson and the scandal, and a trip to the Shoeless Joe Jackson Museum in Greenville, S.C., later that day, followed by a minor league game in Greenville on Saturday night.

I'm not sure at what point you first got the Black Sox Bug, but for me it was at SABR 34 in Cincinnati, where Gene Carney had organized a 1919 panel and I sat in the audience, awed by the facts that he had at his fingertips. As you can imagine, to now be connected with the group that Gene began, and to help sponsor a panel featuring his favorite subject, is personally special to me.

Making this year's panel even more special is the presence of Furman Bisher, the legendary sports columnist who interviewed Joe Jackson more than 60 years ago.

I remember sitting at my kitchen table as a teenager on hot summer nights, poring over the latest Sporting News (back

when that publication was actually a baseball newspaper — remember that?) and reading Bisher's columns, soaking up his take on the National Pastime.

OK, enough. I think I'm gushing. But obviously, I'm excited about this committee and the upcoming events at SABR 40. (And yes, I realize that a bus ride from Atlanta to South Carolina might seem a bit lengthy, but the chance to see a professional baseball game in Joe Jackson's hometown?! Stop — I'm *verklemt* already!)

So be prepared, Black Soxers: SABR 40 might be the best convention yet for those of us who believe that this period in baseball history was its finest.

We hope you'll attend all of our related events, from the chance to see Rick and I battle the obstinate DVD player at Friday afternoon's committee meeting, to the game in Joe's hometown on Saturday night.

See you on the bus to Greenville!