

NINETEENTH CENTURY NOTES

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SOCIETY FOR AMERICAN BASEBALL RESEARCH

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WHEN WAS THE FIRST MATCH GAME PLAYED BY THE KNICKERBOCKER RULES?

By FREDERICK IVOR-CAMPBELL

AS WE ALL KNOW, BASEBALL CELEBRATES its sesquicentennial in 1995, the 150th anniversary of the the date, September 23, 1845, when the Knickerbocker Base Ball Club of New York organized and formally adopted the rules they had drawn up over the summer. These rules may or may not resemble those by which the founding Knickerbockers had been playing baseball since 1842 or 1843. We may never know whether the new rules changed their game radically or minimally. What is historically important about these new rules, though, is not how much or little they differed from previous rules, but that they were written down, formally adopted, and (perhaps most important) set in type and printed.

We rightly observe as baseball's birth date the day the Knickerbockers organized and adopted their new rules. By organizing a ball club with written rules they gave their game substance, gave it a life that could grow and mature. Still, baseball might have withered and died had the Knickerbockers not bothered to put their rules in print. The importance of printing has been well known since Gutenberg developed movable type in the mid-1400s. Rules written by hand into a club's records are available to club members—one at a time—who go to where the records are kept. Rules printed, however, even in a limited edition designed for club members only, are much more likely to reach the wider world.

The Knickerbockers did not organize to play other clubs, but to play among themselves. One of the organizers' principal activities in the summer of 1845 was to recruit enough members to form a club large enough to field two teams. Formerly, it had been "customary for two or three players, occasionally during the season, to go around in the forenoon of a pleasant day and muster up players enough to make a match." However pleasant they made it sound when they wrote up their history twenty years later for Charles A. Peeverly's *Book of American Pastimes* (1866), after two or three years of game-by-game recruiting the original Knickerbockers must have been ready to find a less time-consuming way of gathering players for a match. The solution: formally organize as a club, with a core of members and regularly scheduled game days. (That the theory proved to be flawed—as the Knickerbockers subsequently discovered when too often not enough members showed up to play—need not concern us here, except to stir our gratitude that the founding Knicks didn't foresee the problem. Had they been more prescient, they might never have organized, and their game might never have developed beyond a local pick-up pastime.)

Since 1947, at least, when Robert Henderson's *Ball, Bat and Bishop* slew the Doubleday myth and restored the Knickerbockers to the founders' throne, baseball has found cause to celebrate two birthdays: not only September 23,

1845, but also June 19, 1846, when the Knicks lost to the "New York Club" in what was viewed as the first inter-club game played by Knickerbocker rules. On June 19, 1846, for the first time, the Knickerbockers played somebody other than themselves. Recent research has shown that, while the game may have been the *Knickerbockers'* first against an outside foe, it may not have been the first inter-club game played by their new rules.

In 1980 Melvin L. Adelman, then a young assistant professor at the University of Illinois, Chicago Circle, published his discovery of a report in the *New York Herald* of a game played October 24, 1845, between "the New York Base Ball Club" and "the Brooklyn players," a game described as a "return match." Adelman didn't find a report of the earlier match, but several years later Harvard graduate student Edward L. "Ted" Widmer (who is now a member of SABR and of our committee) found a report of the earlier game in the *New York Morning News*. The account, headlined "Base Ball Match," describes the "friendly match of the time-honored game of Base . . . between eight members of the New York Ball Club and the same number of players from Brooklyn," played at Hoboken's Elysian Fields on October 21.

The question that concerns us here is: Were these games played by the Knickerbocker rules that had been adopted just a month earlier? or were they played by some

other rules in vogue at the time?

There is no way to know for sure, but there are clues that suggest the Knickerbocker rules were used. First, the grounds where the first of the two games was played—Elysian Fields, Hoboken, N.J., apparently the home grounds of the New York Club—were also the grounds where the Knickerbockers had “settled” shortly before organizing as a club. (The second game was played in Brooklyn, on the grounds of the Star Cricket Club.) The Knickerbockers had already played several intra-club games at Elysian Fields between the date they organized and the first New York–Brooklyn game, so the New Yorkers, if not the Brooklynites, could well have grown familiar with the way the Knickerbockers played the game.

Second, the game was played “for the first twenty-one aces—three out, all out,” both elements of the Knickerbocker rules. They may have been elements common to other players’ rules, too, of course, but the fact that they are mentioned specifically in the newspaper account suggests that not everyone played by these rules. Perhaps for most groups who played the game the number of aces—runs—it took to win the game and the number of outs per inning were matters to be negotiated before each game. Even the Knickerbockers, in their intra-club games, didn’t always adhere to the 21-ace rule. In any case, the first New York–Brooklyn game was played under at least two of the rules the Knickerbockers had settled upon a month earlier.

Third, and probably most significant, the names of two umpires—Johnson and Wheaton—and one New York player—Tucker—in both games have counterparts on the Knickerbocker Club membership list. It is more than likely that one or more of these three were Knickerbocker Club members. If so, it is reasonable to suppose that the games employed the Knickerbocker rules, which, even if they had not yet been published (the earliest known copy bears a date of 1846), were at least formalized in the club records.

But couldn’t the clubs be presumed to have played by their own rules? The way the Brooklynites are described, it is probable that they were not a formally organized club, but simply a pickup squad of cricketers. (Adelman has shown a correspondence in names between several Brooklyn players and members of the cricket club on whose grounds the second game was played.) But it could be argued that the New Yorkers were a regular club with rules of their own. Knickerbockers who in later life recalled these early days, however, described the New York club as lacking formal organization; perhaps they were similar to the way the Knickerbockers were in the years before they established themselves as a club.

So: if the New York and Brooklyn opponents in these October 1845 games were not members of formally organized baseball clubs,

and if one, two, or three Knickerbocker club members participated in the games:

then, since the first game of the New York–Brooklyn series was played at the Knickerbockers’ home grounds,

and since two of the game rules used were Knickerbocker rules,

it is reasonable to suppose the games were played wholly under the rules that had been codified and formally adopted by the Knickerbockers just a month earlier.

These may be the first baseball games ever reported in the press. The accounts reprinted below are based on photocopies supplied by JIM MOORE (Albany), game of October 21, and DEAN SULLIVAN, game of October 24. Sullivan will include both accounts in his *Early Innings*, a documentary history of nineteenth century baseball forthcoming from the University of Nebraska Press. Moore has also provided the committee with a photocopy of a 1990 *New York Times* article describing TED WIDMER’s discovery of the October 21 game account (available free of charge to committee members who request it, or for 50¢ copy and postage charge to non-committee members).

[Game of October 21, 1845, per *New York Morning News*, October 22, 1845]

Base Ball Match.

A friendly match of the time-honored game of Base was played yesterday at the Elysian Fields, Hoboken, between eight members of the New York Ball Club and the same number of players from Brooklyn. A cold wind from the North made the day somewhat unpleasant for the spectators, yet a large number, among whom we noticed several ladies, assembled to witness the sport. Play was called at 3 o’clock, P.M. Umpires—Messrs. Johnson, Wheaton and Chase. The toss was won by the Brooklyn players, who decided in favor of giving their antagonists the first innings, and accordingly Hunt took up the bat, and the game commenced. The match was for the first twenty-one aces—three out, all out. Hunt made a single ace, but before another was added to the score, three of the New Yorkers went out in rapid succession, and the bats were yielded to Brooklyn. Many of the Brooklyn players were eminent cricketers, but the severe tactics of the N.Y. Club proved too effective, and they soon resigned their innings to their opponents, not scoring one.

New York now took her second chance, and the score began slowly to tell. During this innings, four aces were made off a single hit, but by the arbitrary nature of the game, a single mistake sometimes proving fatally irretrievable, they were soon driven to the field again. The second innings of the Brooklyn players proved alike disastrous, and the close of the third still left them, all their tickets blank. On the fourth innings the New York Club made up their score to twenty-four aces. The Brooklyn players then took their fourth, against hopeless odds, but with undiminished spirits. They were, however, forced to yield with a score of four only, and the New Yorkers were declared winners with a spare three and a flush of twenty. The fielding of the Brooklyn players was, for the most part, beautiful, but they were evidently not so well practiced in the game as their opponents.

The following abstract shows the aggregate of the four innings:

NEW YORK BALL CLUB.

Runs.	Hands out.	Runs.	Hands out.
Davis..... 5		Case..... 2	2
Tucker ... 2	3	Vail..... 3	1
Miller..... 4	1	Kline 2	3
Winslow.. 4	2		
Murphy... 2		<u>24</u>	<u>12</u>

BROOKLYN PLAYERS.

Runs.	Hands out.	Runs.	Hands out.
Hunt..... 2		Sharp 1	1
Gilmore... 1	2	Whaley.... 1	1
Hardy..... 1	2	Ayres..... 1	1
Forman.. 1	2		
Hine..... 1		<u>4</u>	<u>12</u>

At the conclusion of the match, both parties sat down to a dinner prepared by McCarty in his best style; and the good feeling and hilarity that prevailed, showed that the Brooklyn players, though defeated, were not disheartened. A return match will be played on Friday next, commencing at 1 o'clock P.M., on the grounds of the Brooklyn Star Club, Myrtle avenue. Those who would witness genuine sport, should improve the opportunity.

[Game of October 24, 1845, per *New York Herald*,
October 25, 1845]

BASE BALL PLAY.—The subjoined is the result of the return match between the New York Base Ball Club and the Brooklyn players, which came off on the ground of the Brooklyn Star Cricket Club yesterday. Messrs. Johnson, Wheaton and Van Nostrand were the umpires.

NEW YORK BALL CLUB.

Hands out.	Runs.
Davis..... 2	4
Murphy... 0	6
Vail..... 2	4
Kline..... 1	4
Miller..... 2	5
Case..... 2	4
Tucker.... 2	4
Winslow.. 1	6
<u>12</u>	<u>37</u>

BROOKLYN CLUB.

Hands out	Runs.
Hunt..... 1	3
Hines..... 2	2
Gilmore... 3	2
Hardy..... 2	2
Sharp..... 2	2
Meyers.... 0	3
Whaley.... 2	2
Forman.... 1	3
<u>12</u>	<u>19</u>

[Note: One number in the Brooklyn "hands out" column is erroneous, but there is no way of knowing which one.]

BOOK REVIEWS

Encyclopedia of Major League Baseball Teams. By DONALD DEWEY AND NICHOLAS ACOCCELLA. HarperCollins, 10 E. 53d St., New York, NY 10022. 1993. xx+595 pages. Cloth, \$35.

Reviewed by DEAN A. SULLIVAN.

In their new book Dewey and Acocella devote over twenty per cent of their text to nineteenth century clubs. Eighty-one clubs—including several, like the Cincinnati Players' League club, which never played a game—are examined. The authors define a team as any club playing in any one "officially acknowledged league," excluding, therefore, all National Association clubs. Clubs which transferred to another league or city are treated separately.

Each club history includes its league, years of existence, total won-lost record, ball parks, and other nicknames—many of which, including in some cases the club's given "primary" name, I have never seen before. Following the text is a year-by-year record, which includes the names of managers and records in post-season play. Unfortunately, since nineteenth century World Series and Temple Cup matches are not "officially acknowledged," they are not included, though they are generally described in the text.

The *Encyclopedia* not only recites annual records but, most impressively, describes the behind-the-scenes politics which (in my opinion) is the most interesting facet of this era. For instance, in the history of the Detroit Wolverines (NL, 1881-1888), the authors explore the issue of corruption in part by discussing two incidents involving the Wolverines in 1882: the contract jumping of catcher Charlie Bennett, and the dishonesty of umpire Dick Higham, who sought to make Detroit lose so he and his gambling

associates could profit.

Bits of trivia are inserted in sidebars. Due to the structure of the book, much information is repeated, but I can't think of any important information the authors have neglected. Some of the repetition, however, is contradictory. Both Curry Foley (Buffalo, 1882) and George Hall (Philadelphia, 1876) cannot have been the first player to hit for the cycle. Three different trades—the 1899 Louisville-Pittsburgh and Cleveland-St. Louis franchise transfers, and the Mathewson-Rusie trade just afterward—are described as "the most one-sided trade in baseball history." Charles Comiskey and Buck Freeman are each credited with being the first player to promote a product.

The few errors I detected seem to result from the authors' over reliance on secondary sources which perpetuate myths. Morgan Bulkeley did not become National League president in 1876 when his name was picked from a hat—he was chosen as part of a concession by Western NL organizers William Hulburt and Charles Fowle to their Eastern counterparts. Cap Anson does not deserve all the "credit" for barring blacks from the majors. (Frankly, even if Anson had been a bosom buddy of Frederick Douglass, prejudice, growing rapidly during this Jim Crow era, would have won out.) Furthermore, Anson did not originate the hit-and-run play, platooning, or, perhaps, the pitching rotation. Bill James has argued persuasively that others pioneered these advances and that Anson's self-promotion is responsible for this misinformation.

The only other problem I have with the *Encyclopedia* involves the lack of footnotes and, most troubling, an index. Though the bibliography is fairly extensive, Dewey and Acocella include only one nineteenth century book:

George Tuohey's 1897 history of the Boston club. They mention in the text much information I have not seen before, although I am familiar with most of their listed sources. Where did it come from? Was this material gleaned from secondary sources, or did it emerge from original research?

Despite its problems, I wholeheartedly recommend this invaluable book. It's well worth the \$35 cost.

Baseball in 1889: Players vs. Owners. By DANIEL M. PEARSON. Bowling Green State Univ. Popular Press, Bowling Green, OH 43403. 1993. ii+234 pages. Index. Cloth, \$42.95; paper, \$15.95.

Reviewed by FREDERICK IVOR-CAMPBELL.

There are many ways for baseball historians to narrow their focus for the purpose of covering topics in greater detail than general histories can provide. There is the biography which focuses on one person, the team history which covers a single club, and books that cover a single facet of the game like fielding, or ballparks, or uniforms. None of these approaches are represented as fully as they might be in the study of nineteenth century baseball, but the most neglected approach to the early game might be the study of a single baseball year. There are books and articles that trace single *teams* through single seasons, but few that attempt to cover a nineteenth century season as a whole. In *Baseball in 1899* Daniel Pearson provides a prototype for a kind of study I would like to see more of.

Pearson chose an important and interesting season to write about. Not only was 1889 the year that brought the players' revolt to a head, but it featured great pennant races in both major leagues. In the American Association Brooklyn edged up on St. Louis throughout the summer, finally passing them as August gave way to September, and holding off an end-of-season St. Louis surge to end the Browns' three-year reign at the top. The National League race was even more exciting, as New York overcame a mediocre start to pass Boston in August, then traded first place with the Beaneaters through the rest of the season, triumphing only at the very end by a single game.

Pearson's objective is more grandiose than mere description of an exciting baseball season: "to provide . . . some insight into the sporting aspect of working class culture in the late 1880s." Happily, he has buttressed his case with telling glimpses of specific players and owners rather than settle for the demographic studies that pass so often as history these days. And he describes in detail the exciting season on the field, though, wisely, he has chosen to focus on the two top clubs in each league rather than try to deal with all sixteen teams.

Unfortunately, the plan is nobler than the building. Pearson's writing is pedestrian, for the most part, and his analysis only occasionally rises above the superficial. This is a scholarly effort, but its in-text documentation (there are no footnotes) is sometimes inadequate, and—horror of horrors, for a book with so many characters and topics—there is no index. Even his descriptions of the pennant races

lack the interest they should have, as the reader continually struggles to keep in mind who plays for whom, and where, relative to each other, the contesting teams stand at each point in the race.

Some of the problems with *Baseball in 1889* may stem from Pearson's untimely death before the book's publication. And it is important not to overstate the negative, for this is an important book, one that every historian and would-be historian of nineteenth century baseball ought to own. Pearson's concept is one that deserves emulation, and we can learn from the book's shortcomings what to beware of in our own study. There is much positively good about the book, too. Pearson deals with many intriguing issues, like Brooklyn owner Charles H. Byrne's apparent influence over American Association umpires, and the way scheduling and replaying (or not replaying) rained-out games can affect pennant races. And he provides a considerable amount of information about many important baseball figures of the day.

Legends of Louisville: Major League Baseball in Louisville 1876-1899. By PHILIP VON BORRIES. A&M Publ. Co., 6346 Orchard Lake Rd., Suite 201, West Bloomfield, MI 48322. 1993. 153 pages. Paper, \$14.95.

Reviewed by DEAN A. SULLIVAN.

Finally, Philip Von Borries' *Legends of Louisville* is out. Unfortunately, I found that the long wait—I first became aware of his research around 1988—was not worth it.

Von Borries states in his introduction that *Legends* is not a "historical prose book." Instead, it is a succession of biographical sketches of prominent Louisville players (and one, Moses Walker, who never donned a Louisville uniform). He concentrates on telling interesting stories about all of these players, as well as providing some statistical data. While the stories he tells are not always accurate, the biographies of Pete Browning (20 pages) and Guy Hecker (10 pages) are quite good. They contain detailed biographical information unavailable elsewhere about each man prior to and following his career. Clearly Von Borries has done his homework on these players. If only he had taken as much care with the rest of the book. *Legends* is supplemented by a number of fascinating photos, some of which I hadn't seen before.

However, even a book clearly geared for the general public should be accurate, and the arguments it makes should be adequately supplied by those facts. Von Borries' research, unfortunately, is often cursory and sloppy, and his unbridled boosterism for all things Louisvillian leads him to propose some rather odd viewpoints.

For instance, Von Borries believes that, if not for the 1877 gambling scandal, Louisville might still have a National League franchise today. He nominates no less than nine Louisville players—plus additional American Association stars—to Hall-of-Fame status, including non-immortals like Gus Weyhing, Silver King, Will White and Tommy Leach. He describes David Nemec—a knowledgeable,

competent baseball writer, to be sure—as “this spectacular genius,” and refers to his trivia books as “the magical works of this country’s finest historical writer.” While outspoken authors are always refreshing to read, a reader of a non-fiction work must be able to distinguish the difference between satire and reality.

Von Borries frequently deletes pertinent information if it detracts from the time-honored stories he tells. He describes Curt Welch’s “\$10,000 slide” without mentioning that Welch scored uncontested on a wild pitch. He mentions that Moses Walker played very poorly in his 1884 major league debut in Louisville, but ignores the harsh treatment the Eclipse fans gave him, as well as the 1881 incident in which Fred Pfeffer and several other Eclipse teammates walked off the field in protest of Walker’s appearance in a semipro game in Louisville. Von Borries reveals the irony of having a former player, John Haldeman, expose the dishonesty of four Louisville ex-teammates in 1877, but does not discuss Haldeman’s links to the club’s ownership (he was the son of team president and newspaper publisher Walter Haldeman, and owned a share of stock), nor that he actually played only one major league game, in 1876. By including this additional information—all readily available

in a variety of books and articles—Von Borries not only would have shown more respect to the sport and to the intelligence of his fans, but would also have made *Legends* more interesting and useful.

Some of his facts are wrong. On the first page of his introduction he states that Louisville’s first baseball game occurred in 1865, even though Louisville historian George Yater, in his recent history of the Falls City, found evidence of games played by organized teams as early as 1860. This fact, as well as others ignored by or unknown to Von Borries, were repeated in my master’s thesis on the growth of baseball in nineteenth-century Louisville, which Von Borries could have examined at the Filson Club, a prominent historical society where he conducted some of his research.

In writing one of the first modern books devoted solely to a nineteenth-century club, Von Borries could have produced a fascinating and valuable book. Although he fell short, hopefully enough people will buy *Legends of Louisville* and absorb his enthusiasm for nineteenth-century baseball to provide a market for future, better books on the subject.

MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

NEW MEMBERS

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY COMMITTEE welcomes to membership:

DAVID BALL, 783 Summit Ave., Cincinnati, OH 45204

DAVID CREETH, 3039 Foothill Blvd., La Crescenta, CA 91214

FRANK CUNLIFFE, 295 Parkway Dr., Pittsburgh, PA 15228-2127

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NEW ADDRESSES

FRANK D’AMICO, 225 Baker St., #4, W. Roxbury, MA 02132

DANIEL HAYES, 1771 Elbert Dr., Roanoke, VA 24018-7837.

NORMAN L. MACHT, 2A Elmhurst Rd., Baltimore, MD 21210

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JOHN ROCA, 230 Irving, Apt. 205, Toledo, OH 43620

RAY SCHMIDT, 13848 Rockbluff Way, Lockport, IL 60441

DEPARTURES

The following have dropped out of SABR: Rex H. Doane, Erik S. Hinckley, Todd S. Klatt, Martin LaCoste, Rich Langs, and Elliott Witkin.

A REQUEST

If you move, please let *NCN* know. Address changes are not automatically forwarded from SABR central to the research committees.

HELP WANTED

The Umpires and Rules Committee is compiling *game-by-game compilations of umpires* for every major league season. Much of the work is completed or in progress, but researchers are still needed for several nineteenth century National League and American Association seasons. If you would like to volunteer, contact committee co-chair Larry Gerlach (950 N. Bonneville Dr., Salt Lake City, UT 84103).

JEFF SAMORAY (28478 Ridgebrook Rd., Farmington Hills, MI 48334-3465) who is researching the nineteenth century *history of Detroit baseball*, would appreciate suggestions where information and pictures about early Detroit baseball might be found.

BILL CAHILL (9101 Shore Road, Brooklyn, NY 11209) sends the following *Brooklyn Eagle* clipping from the days when Ebbets Field was new. He would like to know what happened to this astonishing collection of Atlantic Club baseballs. Anyone have an answer?

ATLANTIC TRIUMPHS EBBETS FIELD FEATURE

In addition to being the finest high-class, up-to-date baseball park in the world, Ebbets Field, the new home of the Brooklyn Superbas, promises to develop into a museum of baseball history. At any rate, the first step in that direction was taken yesterday, when President Charles H. Ebbets and Directors Edward and Stephen W. McKeever announced the purchase of the case of balls won by the famous Atlantics during the '50s and '60s. They will occupy a prominent position in the rotunda at Ebbets Field, where all the fans, young and old, may admire the evidences of past triumphs by a Brooklyn club on the diamond.

There are about one hundred baseballs in the collection, suitably inscribed with the scores of games played with the most famous teams of their time. Included among the number is the ball won in the great eleven inning battle with the Cincinnati White [sic] Stockings in 1870, when the Atlantics stopped the wonderful winning streak of the Western team that started in the spring of 1869 and was not checked until more than a year by the Brooklyn veterans.

The case of balls was given by the club to the late Charley Johnson, who won fame as the backer of John L. Sullivan in his prime. They were displayed at Johnson's cafe on lower Fulton street until a short time ago, when they were turned over to Johnson's nephew. A year or so ago, Jack Chapman, a member of the famous Atlantics, tried to raise a fund for the purchase of the historic collection in order to present it to the Brooklyn Museum of Arts and Sciences, but the effort was not successful. It is claimed by the Brooklyn Club owners that the exhibit at Ebbets Field will be more appropriate. Other historical features will be added from time to time.

MORE FOR THE RESEARCHER'S LIBRARY

(Additions to the book list begun in the July 1992 NCN)

Ashe, Arthur R., Jr., *A Hard Road to Glory: Baseball*. 1993. The baseball section of Ashe's important work on African-American athletes is now available in this separate volume. It includes 15 pages of text on the nineteenth century plus a 9-page listing of players whose careers in baseball began before 1901.

Dewey, Donald, and Nicholas Acocella. *Encyclopedia of Major League Baseball Teams*. 1993. (See review, this issue.)

Gershman, Michael. *Diamonds: The Evolution of the Ballpark from Union Grounds to Camden Yards*. 1993. "Insight and entertainment, significant photos." (Fred Ivor-Campbell)

Guttmann, Allen. *From Ritual to Record: The Nature of Modern Sports*. 1978. "It may not be too great an overstatement to say of this book what has been said of Plato and philosophy, that all sport analysis theory is a footnote to Guttmann. Penetrating and influential insights, with a chapter on baseball." (FI-C)

Pearson, Daniel M. *Baseball in 1889*. 1993. (See review, this issue.)

Ward, John Montgomery. *Base-Ball: How to Become a Player*. 1888; rpt. 1993.

AMONG THE PERIODICALS

Goslow, Charles Brian. "Fairground Days: When Worcester Was a National League City (1880-82)." *Historical Journal of Massachusetts*, 19:2 (1991), pp. 133-154.

Malloy, Jerry. "The Birth of the Cuban Giants: The Origins of Black Professional Baseball." *Nine*, 2:2 (Spring 1994).

Overfield, Joe. "'Deacon' White: The Man the Hall of Fame Forgot." *BisonGram*, 10:7 (Oct.-Nov. 1993), pp. 28-30.

Rygelski, Jim. "Baseball's 'Boss President': Chris Von der Ahe and the Nineteenth Century St. Louis Browns." *Gateway Heritage*, 13:1 (1992), 42-53.

Smith, Ronald A. "Lee Richmond, Brown University, and the Amateur-Professional Controversy in College Baseball." *New England Quarterly*, 64:1 (1991), pp. 82-99.

White, Richard. "Baseball's John Fowler: The 1887 Season in Binghamton, New York." *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History*, 16:1 (1992), 7-17.

Wright, Jerry Jaye. "From Giants to Monarchs: The 1890 Season of the Colored Monarchs of York, Pennsylvania." *Nine*, 2:2 (Spring, 1994).

[If you have written or read a periodical article about nineteenth century baseball, please let NCN know so it can be listed in this column.]

FREDERICK IVOR-CAMPBELL

COMPILER'S COMMENTARY

ERROR, ERROR

ERROR HANDED ME A PAIR OF APPLES as I was compiling the Summer issue of NCN, and I ate them both. On page 4 (top left) I wrote that town ball had been abandoned in Cooperstown for 1915-style baseball. I was wrong, and Tom Heitz reassures us all on page 7 of this issue that town ball is alive and flourishing in Cooperstown. It would, of course, flourish more flourishingly if scribblers would stop announcing its demise.

Also, I suggested (p. 5, lower right) that Daniel Pearson, author of *Baseball in 1889*, was not a member of SABR. Wrong! He was indeed a SABR member before his untimely death last January, two months before his book appeared. (Which points to another problem; it was misleading to list Pearson's March publication in a listing of fall books.)

Some of you received copies of NCN with one or both errors corrected (they were caught before the mailing was

completed), but I left a third one for everybody: the date at the top of page 3 says "Spring 1993"; this page was, of course, like the rest of the newsletter, part of the *Summer* issue.

Also, I found the names I had lost of two readers who pointed out the omission of Bobby Mathews from the list of National Association pitchers with winning records (summer issue, p.8): belated thanks to Bob Richardson and Dean Sullivan.

ON DEFINING "MAJOR LEAGUE"

By JACK LITTLE

[Compiler's note: NCN received three responses to the question: Was the American League a major league in 1900? RALPH HORTON voted "no," although "it might have been as good as (or better than) the 1884 UA and the 1914-15 FL," which he would not classify as major leagues if the choice were up to him. LEFTY BLASCO, a leader in the move to reclassify the 1900 AL, argued that the large number of former and future major leaguers in the AL that year (when many major leaguers entered it from the downsized National League) warrants its elevation to major league status. Response to a similar poll by SABR's Records Committee was also mixed, with the balance of opinion tipped toward letting stand AL president Ban Johnson's acceptance of minor league status for his league in 1900. JACK LITTLE, in the article below, nicely describes the difficulties in defining "major league."]

QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN RAISED as to what constitutes a major league. Does the American League of 1900 count? What about the Union Association of 1884? Why not the United States League?

The Union Association, Players' League and Federal League regarded themselves as major leagues. Did the American League claim to be a major league in 1900? My understanding is it didn't. SABR's Records Committee will no doubt look into this.

Player quality is one measure of a major league. Usually you hear about who played in other major leagues before and after the subject. This reflects better on some teams in the UA than others. Could some teams be minor league and play in a major league? How about some of today's lesser teams? The 1993 New York Mets didn't always play or act major league. Did San Diego become a minor league team about midseason after it traded several top players? Will people in the future decide they weren't major league and leave them out?

If there were objective standards, could a league be major some years and not others? In 1890 some sources paid little attention to the American Association. Okay, the National and Players' leagues are the two major leagues. Did the Association somehow stop being major league? If so, how?

I have been told that the United States League isn't major league because it didn't finish the season. Does this

mean UA teams that didn't finish were not major league? What about replacement teams? Are they just in *The Baseball Encyclopedia* for completeness? Do the encyclopedias represent a consensus of wiser heads? Is this a subject for a SABR poll?

My answer is, there are no objective standards for major leagues. It might be good if there were, but I can't think of any. So I conclude this is a matter of opinion, not right and wrong.

THIS AND THAT

BID MCPHEE'S SUPERIOR FIELDING is well known to members of this committee. MIKE ELLIS has come up with an intriguing observation that helps confirm McPhee's superiority. "According to the data in the fielding register of *Total Baseball*, 2nd ed.," Ellis writes, "Bid led the league 25 times in positive categories (PO, A, DP) without ever leading the league in errors at his position. I can find no other player who led his league as many times in positive statistics without leading in errors at least once. (Bill Mazeroski came close with 22 league-leading figures, but led in errors in 1961.) I think this is a remarkable record, especially when you consider that all his league leading totals were attained prior to the addition of a glove to his 'locker.'"

THE "TWISTER" SHOWS UP as one of four pitches credited to Stan Yerkes by the Cortland (N.Y.) *Standard* around 1897, reports TONY KISSEL. Kissel concludes that if Yerkes' other three pitches—"speeders," "teasers" and "drops"—are fastballs, slowballs, and sinkers, then twist-ers must be curves.

LEATHERSTOCKINGS THRIVE IN COOPERSTOWN

IN 1993 THE LEATHERSTOCKING Base Ball Club of Cooperstown, N.Y., a pioneer in reviving the nineteenth century game, enjoyed its busiest season ever. Tom Heitz, club president and one of its founders in 1984-85, reports that the Leatherstockings played 27 practice matches, and 13 full demonstration matches on their home field, the Village Crossroads at Cooperstown's Farmers' Museum. The team also played at Eckley Miners' Village at Weatherley, Pa., Cazenovia, N.Y. (where they helped celebrate a bicentennial), the Adirondack Museum at Blue Mountain Lake, N.Y., and at Keystone College, La Plume, Pa. (where a ball field was dedicated honoring Christy Mathewson, who attended Keystone Academy in the 1880s).

Over their nine seasons, the Leatherstockings have played primarily under the Massachusetts rules of 1858 (town ball), but the club has also demonstrated games under the 1838 Beachville Canadian rules, the 1845 Knickerbocker rules, and the 1856 Hamilton, Ohio (modified New York) rules. The club has also demonstrated rounders and other primitive stick and ball games.

Club members will be featured in the first segment of Ken Burns' baseball documentary, scheduled to air in the fall of 1994. The Leatherstockings are the oldest town ball club in continuous existence, and the most active of several that have sprung up from Dover, Del., to Osaka, Japan. They number nearly fifty volunteers, including men and women, and children as young as twelve. "We have provided a lot of support to other clubs and museums over the years," Heitz notes. "We are interested in promoting town

ball, and welcome invitations to play other clubs."

LBBC distributes informational packages, including a vendor's source list for equipment and costuming, rules, handouts and other instructive material on early baseball. Those interested in the club's 1994 schedule or wishing to receive the informational material should contact Heitz at LBBC, PO Box 901, Cooperstown, NY 13326. The telephone, fax, and 24-hour message number: (607) 547-4118. The club office: 89 Main St., Cooperstown, second floor.

REPORTS FROM THE PROJECTS

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION HISTORY PROJECT

Project director BOB MCCONNELL reports that as of November 26 he had volunteers or possible volunteers for Baltimore, Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Louisville, Milwaukee, Pittsburgh, Richmond, St. Louis, Rochester, Toledo, and Washington. Volunteers are still sought for day-by-day newspaper research on the AA clubs in Boston (1891), Brooklyn (1884-90), Cleveland (1887-88), Columbus (1883-84, 89-91), Kansas City (1888-89), New York (1883-87), Philadelphia (1882-91), and Syracuse (1890). If you are interested in researching one of these cities, or would like more information about the project, contact McConnell at 210 West Crest Rd., Wilmington, DE 19803.

BASEBALL ONLINE NEEDS YOU!

The Baseball Online project (see *NCN*, Summer 1993, p. 2), in addition to its general need for readers to compile data on baseball books and articles, has specific needs that members of our committee are particularly qualified to address. First, assistance is needed to help organize the project as it affects nineteenth century research. Andy McCue, one of the project's directors, explains that "for organizational purposes, we have a numerical coding system which is less than complete for some areas, and we also have a list of search terms that is constantly being improved. Your committee's expertise could be put to good use."

A second way a member of the Nineteenth Century Committee could aid Project Online, McCue says, "would be contacting committee members and finding information about materials which should be included. I'm sure your committee members have file folders and cabinets with articles tucked away, lists of books they've used for one project or another. These are the kinds of things we need." Third, "we need help in getting that material properly catalogued.

"Once that is done, we should be able to feed citations back to your committee members as they need them. For example, I know many committee newsletters contain lists of articles of interest. Currently, anyone who wants information on those articles has to plow through back newsletters to find the one citation needed. Once Baseball Online is up to full speed, researchers could send us a request about Buck Ewing or the Union Association or the fly rule and we could send back a list of the citations we have, both

those developed with your committee and those that came from other parts of the project."

Also, McCue urges committee members, "if you have any projects or ideas of your own—articles on the Union Association, for example, or on King Kelly, or the Haymakers of Troy—let us know. We want you to pursue areas that interest you."

Baseball Online, a SABR project sponsored by the Bibliography Committee as a service to all SABR researchers, is perhaps the most ambitious project ever undertaken by SABR. To insure its success, all SABR committees need to supply volunteers. If you would like to serve Baseball Online, contact Andy McCue at 4025 Beechwood Pl., Riverside, CA 92506 (phone 1-909-787-4954).

NINETEENTH CENTURY BALLPARKS PROJECT

BOB BAILEY, who heads this project to write essays on the ballparks of all cities where nineteenth century major league games were played, reported in the most recent Ballparks Committee newsletter that researcher/writers are still needed to work on 20 of the 53 cities, ranging in size from New York City to Meadville, Pa., and including Brooklyn, Albany, Troy, Syracuse, Elmira, Weehauken, Hoboken, Jersey City, Elizabeth, Newark, Ft. Wayne, Indianapolis, Chicago, Baltimore, Springfield, Mass., Pittsburgh, Richmond, and Euclid Beach, Ohio.

The Nineteenth Century Committee is cooperating with the Ballparks Committee on this project. If you are interested in researching a city's ballparks, or want more information about the project, contact Bailey at 12129 Briargate Ln., Goshen, KY 40026, or phone (502) 228-5269.

MORE NINETEENTH CENTURY STARS

The publication date of *More Nineteenth Century Stars* has been moved from late 1994 to early 1995. SABR's board of directors made this slight shift in dates at its September meeting, for budgetary reasons. Editorially, *MNCS* is on track for completion in the fall of 1994.

NINETEENTH CENTURY NOTES

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