

Beating the Bushes



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BASEBALL RESEARCH ACTIVITIES IN SAN DIEGO

By Tom Larwin

SULLIVAN FAMILY BASEBALL RESEARCH CENTER

In 2000 a partnership was formalized between the city of San Diego Library and the San Diego Ted Williams SABR Chapter. The primary result of this partnership was creation of a Baseball Research Center (BRC) at the city's Central Library. In 2013 a new Central Library was opened and the BRC was relocated and renamed the Sullivan Family Baseball Research Center. The new library is located at 330 Park Boulevard in downtown San Diego, a couple of blocks from Padres' home at Petco Park.

One of the notable early acquisitions for the BRC were 326 microfilms obtained from the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 2006. Included were: minor league contract cards (which list all contracts signed by players in Organized Baseball, their releases, suspensions, etc.), MLB questionnaires (including the Negro Leagues and All-American Girls Professional League), Black Sox scandal records, *The Sporting News* and *Sporting Life*.

An even more significant acquisition for the BRC occurred in 2014 when the city of San Diego Library and SABR chapter were recipients of a large baseball research archive from the estate of Bill Weiss, longtime minor league statistician. More on the Bill Weiss Archive is discussed in the following article.

Other research donations that have been received by the BRC include:

- Cubs *VineLine* newsletter, 1986-2016, donated by Eric Hanauer (346 issues).
- Cubs Scrapbooks, 1876-2010, compiled by Elwood Scharf.
- Larry Zuckerman: ballpark research, both major and minor league parks, including drawings, historical write-ups, and notes. This collection includes ballparks from 1800s through 2000.
- Willie George: career records of thousands of players.
- Carlos Bauer: minor league statistical compilations and his collection of minor league unpublished season averages.
- Marc Okkenen: early minor league roster material.

If you want to check out the BRC further go to this link:
<https://www.sandiego.gov/public-library/central-library/sullivan-family-baseball-research-center>

While there are thousands of baseball-related publications catalogued and on the BRC shelves appointments can be scheduled to aid any research requests. If you have questions or have desire to use any of these collections please contact our BRC liaison for the Central Library, Peter Miesner, or me, as representative of our SABR chapter:

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THE BILL WEISS ARCHIVE

William J. 'Bill' Weiss was born in Chicago, Illinois, on June 2, 1925, and died in San Mateo, California, on August 17, 2011. He was a lifelong fan of the game and made baseball research his profession. From 1948 through the early 2000s Weiss's life was fully dedicated to baseball and he served as statistician for many minor leagues west of the Mississippi River—including the Pacific Coast, Pioneer and California Leagues—during that period.

In 2013 all of Bill Weiss's baseball research collections—books, periodicals, scoresheets, records, files—were donated to the Baseball Research Center (BRC) in San Diego and, with Library support, have been curated by members of the Ted Williams SABR Chapter, and other independent researchers. Much of the archive's 1,000+ books have already been catalogued and are on shelves in the Library's 8th floor BRC.

As a complement to the shelved material a significant effort is underway to digitize items that are not in book form and statistical summaries, correspondence, scoresheets, questionnaires, bulletins and newsletters that represent a vast baseball research trove. Additional detail on some of these unique items is summarized below.

The archive includes **player questionnaires** from 1945 through to the early 2000s. One of Weiss's regular baseball activities was to assemble biographical information on newly signed professional baseball players. The way he accomplished this task was by sending questionnaires directly to players following their first appearance in a professional game. His first questionnaires date from 1945 and his last were from nearly 60 years later. Spanish language questionnaires were used for players from Spanish-speaking countries. Weiss used the information from these questionnaires to prepare "organizational sketch books," the forerunner to today's Media Guides. It is estimated that there are over 120,000 questionnaires in the Weiss Archive.

Of this total most questionnaires are from players who never reached the major leagues. To date almost 20,000 questionnaires have been digitized and generally cover players from the 1940s-50s. Digitization continues and is expected to take several years.

WILLIAM J. WEISS
BASEBALL STATISTICS • PUBLICITY

JUN 24 1981

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PLEASE COMPLETE THIS QUESTIONNAIRE AND RETURN IN ATTACHED ENVELOPE. IF NECESSARY, USE THE REVERSE SIDE OF THIS SHEET.

FULL NAME: Anthony Keith Gwynn
NICKNAMES: TOBY OR T POSITION: OUTFIELD
ANCESTRY OR DESCENT: _____
DATE OF BIRTH: MAY 9, 1960 PLACE OF BIRTH: LOS ANGELES
HOME ADDRESS (Street and City): 3524 DEVA LOS ANGELES, CA
HEIGHT: 5'11" WEIGHT: 185 BAT (L OR R): L THROW: L
IF MARRIED, YOUR WIFE'S FIRST NAME: ALICIA IF YOU HAVE ANY CHILDREN, PLEASE LIST NAMES AND AGES: _____
PLEASE GIVE NAME OF HIGH SCHOOL ATTENDED AND YEAR GRADUATED: LONG BEACH POLY 77
IN WHICH SPORTS DID YOU LETTER IN SCHOOL?: BASEBALL (75, 76, 77) BASKETBALL (75, 76, 77)
IF YOU ATTENDED COLLEGE, PLEASE LIST NAME, NUMBER OF YEARS ATTENDED AND DEGREES, IF ANY: SAN DIEGO ST 4 YES
IN WHICH SPORTS DID YOU LETTER IN COLLEGE?: BASKETBALL, BASEBALL (78, 79, 80, 81)
LIST ANY INTERESTING EXPERIENCES WHILE PARTICIPATING IN SCHOOL OR COLLEGE SPORTS (TEAM OR INDIVIDUAL CHAMPIONSHIPS, EXCITING GAMES, ETC.): WONCE IN COLLEGE I HIT 2 20 FT JUMPERS IN DIFFERENT GAMES TO WIN THEM 1979 VS TEXAS EL PASO VS COLORADO ST
OFF-SEASON OCCUPATION: _____
HOBBIES: PING PONG
FIRST CLUB IN PROFESSIONAL BASEBALL: PADRES YEAR: 81
WHAT SCOUT SIGNED YOU TO YOUR FIRST PROFESSIONAL CONTRACT?: JACK DITTO

As an example Tony Gwynn's questionnaire was filled out in June 1981 after he just turned 21 and is a good example of just one of the 120,000. He was signed to his first contract on June 16, 1981—several days earlier than the questionnaire he filled out—and began his professional career in the Northwest League (Class A) playing for Walla Walla. On the questionnaire Gwynn admits that he already went by the nickname of "T", and listed his hobby as "ping pong." He wrote that his most interesting experiences were in basketball at SDSU: "...two last second 20 foot jumpers in different games to win them..."

As with Gwynn's, each of these questionnaires tells a different story, written from a young man's perspective at the very start of their professional career, each of whom were hoping for a future in the "big leagues."

For most of these questionnaires the value may lie with family histories. One such example concerns a ball player by the name of Ken Elsie.

Signed as an 18-year old Elsie managed to play 259 games as a minor leaguer in Class C-D from 1940-42 before World War II interrupted his career. You could say that he was lucky since Elsie survived 39 months of infantry service and was able to return and resume his regular life again, which included professional baseball. His questionnaire, dated April 17, 1946, asked what his ambition was in baseball, and his answer was: "to make the major leagues." The questionnaire had another question which asked about any unusual

experience while in the service. He answered the question noting that there were “too many to mention...” But, then Elsie continued to write spilling into the margins and taking up 2/3rds of the flip side of the form getting into some detail about the battles he encountered concluding with the fact that 115 men out of 228 were lost. Well, Elsie never made it to the majors, nor is there any record that he again played pro ball. He has passed away but we were able to locate his son and sent him the questionnaire. Several weeks afterwards we received this note:

“I am sending this note to thank you for sending the papers you sent to my son Ken that husband Kenneth, a baseball player has filled out. Our whole family was so thankful to receive them. It has been such a long time ago. Again thank you so much, Lorraine Elsie

Final season averages of 1,726 non-MLB league seasons have been digitized in pdf format. These are mostly the “official” averages and most also include “less thans.” The seasons start with 1939 and range through 2009 and the vast majority of seasons cover the minor leagues. However, others include independent, collegiate, winter, and Australian leagues. Many of these leagues cannot be found in any of the *Guides*. While not yet available via internet, if interested in a particular league season feel free to contact Tom Larwin. If interested in all files then let me know and we can mail you a DVD for \$15 (by check payable to San Diego Ted Williams SABR).

Game-by-game daily sheets which record player performances by game exist for 22 leagues and covers 1,837 team-seasons. They range from 1948 Far West League through the 2003 California League season. The primary leagues are: Arizona (1984-96), Arizona Instructional (1962-88), California (1949-2003), California Collegiate (1966-78), Northwest (1955-89), Pacific Coast (1950-88), and Pioneer (1952-89). These files have been organized and are available on an appointment basis. These records will eventually be digitized.

We have **official game scoresheets** for over 100 minor league seasons, the oldest being from the 1939 Pioneer League. While there are scorecard examples, most are the summaries produced by the game's official scorer upon conclusion of the game, and sent to the league statistician to compile official league averages. These will be digitized.

In early 2016 we had a presentation by Carlos Bauer addressing the question: How Good were Scorekeepers and Statisticians in the Minor Leagues? Using the official scoresheets he recalculated the league statistics for the Pioneer League's inaugural 1939 season. His conclusions found 40 data errors including inconsistencies in game statistics such as:

- A batter having a HR but credited with 0 RBIs
- Several games where HRs allowed by pitchers did not match HRs hit by the batters
- A batter having one at bat and 3Ks
- In one case, a player in 99 games played had his batting average going from .199 to .270

Plus, Bauer found some new players not listed in the 1940 *Guide*.

The archive includes a wide variety of **minor league publications**, from leagues and teams, including annual media guides, and record/sketch books. In all, there are 529 publications from 41 leagues, starting in 1938 through 2011. There are also team game programs and collections of several league newsletters. These will be digitized.

Other parts of the archive's minor league materials include: a complete run of *National Association Bulletins* (the minor leagues) listing all player transactions from 1934 through 1992; *Minor League Digests*, 1936-98; and *National Association Orange Books*, 1977-94 (in each case several years are missing). These will be digitized.

Of a more general research nature the archive includes:

- 257 U.S. baseball guides (including seven from the 1870s).
- 55 international baseball guides (including a 1906 Spalding Spanish-American edition and ones from Canada, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Japan, Mexico, Puerto Rico).
- Nearly 2,400 MLB yearbooks and media guides dating from 1956 on.
- “Clip files” filling 24 banana boxes full of player photos, and newspaper and magazine articles; these files are in manila folders and organized in alpha order.
- Periodicals: *Baseball Magazine*, 1908-50 (435 issues); *TSN Baseball Yearbook*, 1981-89; *Baseball Stars*, 1949-57; *Complete Baseball*, 1949-61;

(Continued from page 3)

Inside Baseball, 1952-62; *Sports Stars*, 1950-53; *Inside Sports*, 1953; *Our Sport*, 1953; *Sport Life*, 1948-53; *SPORTSInc.*, 1987-89; *Baseball Digest*, 1942-2011 (493 issues); and *SPORT*, 1946-1992 (360 issues).

- 49 “Box Score Notebooks” compiled by Lt. J. R. Murray, USNR, covering 27 leagues between 1943 and 1946.

...and many baseball publications that cannot be found in any public library.

For further information on the Weiss Archive feel free to contact either Peter Miesner or Tom Larwin.

WHEN I WAS TWELVE AND LIVING IN QUEBEC

By Bill Young

When I was twelve and living in Quebec,
Joe Adcock came to play a baseball game.
I had his baseball card: he looked the same.
And when his Braves stepped out, I strained my neck
To search him out beneath the tower lights,
Tho' dusk o'erwhelmed their meager amber glow.
And later, when he struck that rising blow,
In awe I watched it pierce the boundless night.

I'm older now, but there are times when I
Am all alone and still, no one around,
I'll picture Joe, his game-worn bat held high,
Spring-tight and grim, spikes planted in the ground,
Just waiting 'til the pitcher, fast grown old,
Curves one inside.

Then he uncoils his soul.

Francisco Mejia's 50 Game Hitting Streak

By Joseph Wancho

It may not have garnered the same interest as Joe DiMaggio or Pete Rose, but Francisco Mejia captured the attention of northeast Ohio in 2016. Mejia was the starting catcher on the Lake County Captains, the low Class A affiliate of the Cleveland Indians. On May 25, 2016 Mejia began a hitting streak that stretched 50 games.

The 20-year old switch-hitter from the Dominican Republic was signed by the Indians at the tender age of 16. Mejia was assigned to the Rookie League in Arizona in 2013. He showed a high aptitude for hitting, as he batted .305. He continued his fine work with the lumber, batting .282 with the Mahoning Valley Scrappers of the New York-Penn League in 2014.

But like all young players, Mejia found the going got a bit tougher as he ascended the Indians minor league chain. The 19-year old Mejia was promoted to Lake County in 2015. His average plummeted to .242. As Mejia says, the direction he received was “come to the stadium, let's go play”. But there were other reasons for why Mejia's production had taken a sudden plunge. His mother was at home in the Dominican Republic, bedridden after undergoing back surgery. “I wasn't playing really good,” Mejia said. “I was slow. I had no energy. I was thinking about my mom and my family. This year it's different. She's at home and good, and I'm playing good. I'm comfortable and not afraid of anything.”

The Indians held him back at the low Class A team in 2016. He was after all only 20 years of age and perhaps a little more seasoning was needed for the young backstop. And although he may have been young in body, his baseball acumen was wise beyond his years. Mejia entered the season with a fresh outlook, but also with a new regimen of preparations. “This year I got a better approach, better routines,” Mejia said. “I got routines this year.”

Mejia started 52 games in 2016 for the Captains, batting a superb .347. In 60 games total, Mejia led the club in hits (80) Home Runs (7) and RBI (51). “I don't think you ever expect anyone to put together a streak that long,” Captains hitting coach Kevin Howard said. “Francisco is talented at getting the barrel of the bat on the ball. He keeps himself under control and does things with the bat other players can't do.”

His success earned him a promotion to the advanced Class A Lynchburg Hillcats of the Carolina League on June 26. Despite the new league, new pitchers, Mejia kept on hitting. "It's his gifted hand-eye coordination ability to put the barrel of the bat on the ball," Hillcats Manager Mark Budzinski said. "The guys that are a little more aggressive and can hit the ball out of the zone hard, which he can do, that's where you tend to see guys that can extend those hit streaks longer."

After his promotion, Mejia received another surprise when he was selected to participate in Major League Baseball's Futures Game in San Diego during All-Star weekend.. Indian's top prospect Clint Frazier was also named to participate. Mejia was selected as a member of the World team with Columbus (Cleveland AAA affiliate) third baseman Yandy Diaz while Frazier was to represent Team USA. All three players gave a good account of their skills. Mejia went 1-3 with a single on the day. The World team prevailed 11-3.

Mejia extended his hitting streak on July 7 to 33 games with a seventh inning single as the Hillcats beat the Salem Red Sox, 8-2. The streak reached 39 games on July 26 when he singled in the second inning in Lynchburg's 5-3 victory over Wilmington.

As is bound to happen around the end of July, rumors abound as the Major League trading deadline approaches. Top prospects names are thrown around as possible moves are discussed and tracked leading up to August 1. Mejia was a high-end prospect and his name was bandied about with regularity. As it turned out, it was for good reason. On July 30, 2016, Cleveland packaged Frazier with three other prospects to the New York Yankees for relief pitcher Andrew Miller. They also put together a prospect package, which included Mejia, to Milwaukee for catcher Jonathon Lucroy. But Lucroy almost immediately exercised the "no-trade" clause in his contract and the deal was squashed. Although he understood the Indians motivation, he was thrilled when the trade was a no-go. "I was happy to stay with my friends," Mejia said. "It's tougher when you're going to be with people you don't know."

Mejia was also doing a superb job behind the plate. He was developing into a top-flight receiver. For the 2016 season, he was charged with six passed balls. That was

down from 16 that he had charged to him in 2015. Also, he threw out 43 percent (30 of 69 would be base runners. "You're dealing with not only calling a game from a mental standpoint, working with a pitching staff, blocking balls, you've got all the gear on in the hot weather, foul tips off of you, you've got to make 100-some throws a night," Budzinski said. "It is impressive to see a guy that can kind of maintain that through the course of a season and stay strong physically, mentally, emotionally."

The hitting streak appeared to be over at 49. On August 13, Mejia reached base twice, via an error and a walk. The error was on a ground ball down the left field line that eluded Winston-Salem third baseman Gerson Montilla. The scoreboard flashed "ERROR" for those keeping score in the stands. But an hour after the game, official scorer Malcolm Haley changed the error to a double. "It was a ground ball to third," Winston-Salem manager Joel Skinner said, meaning the call should not have been changed. "It's exciting for [Mejia], I'm sure. What an accomplishment. But that specific play, I mean, I didn't even think twice about it."

The streak was alive at 50!

But that is where it would end. On Sunday, August 14, 2016, Mejia took the collar against Winston-Salem. But Mejia was the proud owner of the fourth longest streak in minor league history. It tied Otto Pahlman's 50-game hit streak for the Danville (IL) Veterans in 1922.



It was the longest such streak since Ramon Mejia's 55-gane streak in 1954. Joe Wilhoit of the Wichita Jobbers owns the top mark with 69. What was the other top mark for hitting streaks? Why it was no other then "Joltin Joe", who hit in 61 straight games in 1933 when he was with the San Francisco Seals. Francisco Mejia's streak was the longest by a switch-hitter and by a catcher.

"It has not been easy for him," said Carter Hawkins, the Indians' director of player development. "This has not been put on a silver platter. He's moved levels, he's traveled around to different All-Star Games, he's been a name that came up in trade rumors. There have certainly been a lot of different reasons or potential excuses to end this streak, but I think just focusing on his work and focusing on what he can do and what he can control has really helped him out."

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Mejia was honored by MiLB for Best Individual Performance in 2016. Heading into the 2017, Mejia is rated as the number four prospect in the Cleveland Indians organization.

“He’s still in A-Ball, he’s still extremely young, he’s still learning a lot of things about the baseball game,” Hawkins said. “If he continues to improve, if he continues to have the consistent approach at the plate, if he continues to improve behind the dish and manage a pitching staff, we absolutely see him as a guy that can help us out in the major leagues down the line.”

THE BLOOMFIELD-LONG BRANCH CUBANS/ASBURY PARK SEA UR- CHINS:

THE 1914 ATLANTIC LEAGUE CLUB THAT NEVER WAS

By Bill Lamb

Minor league baseball reference works consign last place in the 1914 Class D Atlantic League to a club with a cumbersome moniker: the Bloomfield-Long Branch Cubans/Asbury Park Sea Urchins. But there is something peculiar about this club and its putative name. Located just north of Newark, Bloomfield, New Jersey has been the hometown of six major league ballplayers¹ and its long connection to the game is thoroughly documented. Yet, no trace of a Bloomfield minor league ball club appears in town annals.² No memorial to the club exists in Bloomfield, and longtime town residents have never heard of it. Even the Historical Society of Bloomfield has no knowledge of the club’s existence.

Inquiry into these circumstances has yielded the following conclusions: (1) Bloomfield’s Atlantic League franchise existed mostly on paper; (2) the Bloomfield club never took the field in its namesake community; it played all of its games either on the road or in Asbury Park, until the franchise was formally transferred to Asbury Park in early July 1914; (3) there is no connection whatsoever between this Bloomfield-Asbury Park team and the Long Branch (or briefly Newark) Cubans, a formidable World War I-era club that was a member of the 1914 Atlantic League and other baseball circuits; (4) when, how, and

why modern baseball reference works came up with Bloomfield-Long Branch Cubans/Asbury Park Sea Urchins as a name for an Atlantic League team is unknown, but (5) the club name Bloomfield-Long Branch Cubans/Asbury Park Sea Urchins has no historical basis, as no so-named club was ever in existence. Discussion of these points begins some 40 miles south of Bloomfield in Long Branch, New Jersey.

THE LONG BRANCH CUBANS

A century ago, the Jersey Shore town of Long Branch was a popular seaside resort, catering particularly to wealthy New Yorkers seeking to escape Manhattan’s mid-summer heat. One of its tourist diversions was a first-class semi-pro baseball team that played on weekends and holidays. The infusion of Cuban players into the Long Branch club and its ensuing rise in baseball’s esteem followed the arrival of the Henriquez brothers in 1911.

Born in Colombia, Carlos (sometimes called Charles) and Ricardo (Dick) Henriquez were sons of a prosperous Latin American real estate adventurer who had relocated his family to New York City in 1886.³ In their early 20s at the turn of the century, the two brothers were smart, ambitious, and entrepreneurial. They were also exceptionally well-educated. Like their older brother George, Carlos and Dick Henriquez were graduates of both Seton Hall College and Columbia Medical School (although only George and Carlos actually practiced medicine; Dick went into real estate). A member of the baseball team while at Columbia, Dick continued playing amateur and semi-pro ball after his school days, and seems even have played a game for the 1907 Newark Sailors [then] of the Class A Eastern League.⁴ In the summer of 1911, he became the first baseman-manager for the Long Branch club, and thereafter interested Carlos in the team. In time, the well-heeled Dr. Henriquez assumed financial control of the nine, installing himself as Long Branch club president and Dick as club VP.

Using connections in Cuba (their late mother was Cuban, and the Henriquez family may have resided in Havana for a time before emigrating to New York), the Henriquezes set about stocking the Long Branch roster with experienced Cuban professionals. In short order, future major league stalwarts like pitcher Dolf Luque (a 194-game winner in 20 MLB seasons) and catcher Mike Gonzalez (a 17-season major league vet and later briefly a manager of the



Long Branch Cubans

St. Louis Cardinals) began appearing in Long Branch livery. They were followed by shortstop Jack (Jacinto) Calvo, catcher Ricardo Torres, outfielder Angel (Pete) Aragon, and pitcher Jose Acosta, each of whom would go on to brief tenures in the major leagues. Given the rigid racial segregation of the era, however, the Henriquezes avoided engaging non-white Cuban players.⁵ Still, the caliber of Long Branch talent was sufficient to give major league clubs a competitive test in exhibition game play – researcher David Skinner calculates the Cubans’ record as a respectable 10-24 against big leagues opposition⁶ – and made the club far superior to most lesser foes.

In 1913, the Henriquez brothers placed their club in the six-team Class D New York-New Jersey League. With Luque (22-5) and Angel Villazon (20-8) leading the pitching staff and with a heavy-hitting lineup that included a now 34-year-old Dick Henriquez batting .320 in his final campaign as a player, the 65-29 (.691) Long Branch Cubans breezed to the NY-NJ League pennant, a comfortable 18½ games ahead of the second-place Poughkeepsie Honey Bugs. When league officials subsequently proposed expanding to an eight-club circuit for the 1914 season, Long Branch was supportive.

LEAGUE REORGANIZATION AND THE ADMISSION OF A BLOOMFIELD CLUB INTO THE 1914 ATLANTIC LEAGUE

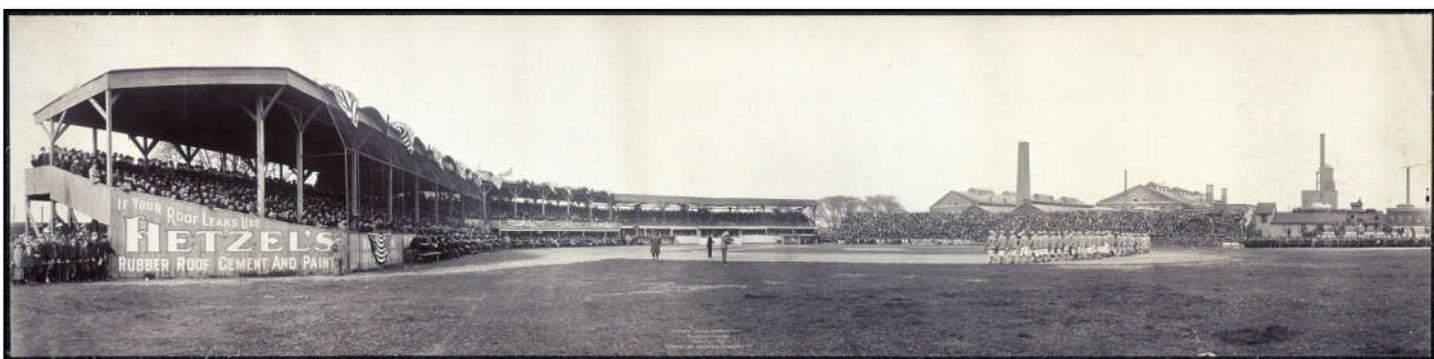
Bloomfield in the early 1900s was a hotbed of athletics, especially football and baseball. Future St. Louis Cardinals owner Sam Breadon, a Montgomery Street resident as a young adult, was a 145-pound end and the team captain of the town’s crack turn-of-the-century amateur football club.⁷ But baseball was the community’s top sports dog, with the semi-pro Bloomfield Baseball Club achieving local renown in the decade prior to WWI. In early February 1914, a Bloomfield weekly newspaper reported a rumored movement afoot to enter a Bloomfield team in Organized Baseball.⁸ A month later, that rumor took substance at a gathering of NY-NJ League club leaders at the Hotel Wallick in Manhattan.

The agenda for the March 14, 1914 league meeting was a demanding one, taking on questions of affiliation, franchise approval, territorial rights, and playing grounds. In attendance were representatives from each of the clubs aspiring to admission to the reconstituted circuit, with Carlos Henriquez appearing on behalf of the Long Branch

Cubans. Local businessmen Samuel Jaeger and Sidney R. Lang represented a hopeful Bloomfield franchise. In early business, the attendees formally adopted the name Atlantic League for their circuit.⁹ They then turned to weightier concerns. To further Organized Baseball's efforts to stymie entry into the greater New York City area by the upstart Federal League, Charles H. Ebbets, Jr., president of the Class AA International League Newark Sailors, and IL President Ed Barrow had been prevailed upon to relax Newark's territorial stranglehold on the city in favor of an Atlantic League club. Thus, Henriquez's Long Branch club would become the Atlantic League Newark Cubans, with a license to play home games at Newark's Wiedenmayer Park on those weekends and holidays

set about completion of internal chores, devising a 100 game playing schedule; setting a \$25 cents admission fee for all Atlantic League games; placing a \$1,250 cap on annual player salaries, and establishing the division of game day receipts.¹⁴ Middletown mayor and club boss Rosslyn M. Cox was appointed Atlantic League president, while Henriquez assumed the post of league VP. The meeting thereupon adjourned.

Once the Bloomfield delegation had returned home, club backers promptly appointed Jaeger the club president. He would also serve as Bloomfield manager. Out-of-town newspapers identified the new club boss as president of the Bloomfield Athletic Club, a member of the Bloomfield Board of Trade, and a prominent local businessman.¹⁵



Wiedenmayer Park

when the Sailors were on the road.¹⁰ In return for the International League's beneficence, the meeting attendees declined to even consider affiliation with the Federal League, barring the FL's agent from admittance to the conference room.¹¹ The Atlantic League would join of the National Association of Professional Base Ball Clubs, Organized Baseball's designated overseer of minor league ball clubs.

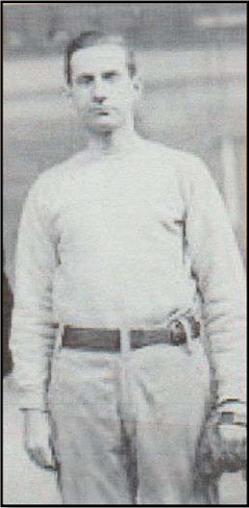
A similar territorial dispensation was granted the new Bloomfield club, provided that it, too, did not schedule home games that conflicted with Newark Sailors' home dates. The Bloomfield club was then assigned the playing roster of the Kingston (NY) Colonials, a defunct NY-NJ League club that did not seek Atlantic League membership.¹² The Atlantic League of 1914 would consist of clubs located in Newark, Paterson, Perth Amboy, and Bloomfield (New Jersey); Poughkeepsie, Newburgh, and Middletown (New York); and Danbury (Connecticut), venues with a combined population of 613,135 according to the 1910 US Census – although more than half of that number were Newark residents.¹³ The meeting attendees then

But the hometown *Independent Press* was curiously silent about the background of club president Jaeger, and the only local resident with that surname in US Census reports, (Samuel Ford Jaeger, born in Bloomfield on March 3, 1893) was then a 21-year-old clerk at his father's grocery store on Orange Street.¹⁶ Whoever he was, Jaeger began quick pursuit of players to supplement the Bloomfield roster, focusing on local favorites like Joe Lennon, Otto Hambacher, and Billy Burdette of the semi-pro Bloomfield Baseball Club.¹⁷ Finding a suitable ballpark for the Bloomfield club presented a far more daunting challenge, as the Williamson Oval grounds long used by Bloomfield teams was not enclosed or otherwise suitable for professional baseball. At the league meeting, Bloomfield had proposed to play its home games on grounds located at North Park and Dodd Streets in nearby East Orange.¹⁸ But the diamond there was likewise unenclosed, and substantial time and money would have to be expended to upgrade the premises. But finding a service-

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able local ballpark for Bloomfield would ultimately prove an insurmountable task.¹⁹

THE MID-SEASON TRANSFER OF THE BLOOMFIELD AND NEWARK CLUBS



With no progress having been reported on either the ballpark or playing roster fronts and with a May 20 Opening Day looming on the horizon, the backers of the Bloomfield club dismissed club president/team manager Sam Jaeger. His replacement was a figure well-known to baseball fans: Andy Coakley, one-time Philadelphia A's pitching standout.²⁰ Although his major league days were behind him, the 35-year-old right-hander still had enough stuff to handle Class D minor league batsmen. More important, Coakley had a proven entrepreneurial track record, having already operated successful semi-pro baseball clubs in Paterson and Hoboken. But Bloomfield's playing grounds problem remained unsolved. Showing confidence in the newly-installed Coakley's ability to fix things, Atlantic League officials decided to accommodate Bloomfield temporarily. They rearranged the schedule to place the Bloomfield club on the road for the first 10 days of the season, affording Coakley time to put to good use the \$5,000 reportedly pledged by Bloomfield backers for the construction of a new ballpark.²¹ In the meantime, Bloomfield would play pre-season exhibitions in Asbury Park.

On May 20, 1914, the Bloomfield-Asbury Park team began regular season play with a game against the Newark Cubans at Wiedenmayer Park. Cubans' owner Carlos Henriquez pulled out the stops for his club's Newark debut. The contest was preceded by a parade, students from Henriquez's alma mater Seton Hall were admitted free, and Newark Mayor Jacob Haussling was on hand to throw out the ceremonial first pitch.²² The visitors then put a damper on the festivities, winning 3-2. The two clubs, however, were soon headed in opposite directions in Atlantic League standings, with the Newark Cubans zooming to the top while the Bloomfield-Asbury Park club descended to also-ran status. All the while, no progress was being made toward securing the club suitable

playing accommodations in the Bloomfield area. Finally, the Atlantic League pulled the plug on Bloomfield, and officially transferred the franchise to Asbury Park in early July.²³ For the remainder of the season, *Sporting Life* would confuse readers (and future minor league baseball historians) by using two names for the franchise; the *SL* schedule of upcoming Atlantic League games would indicate were Bloomfield would be playing, while Atlantic League standings published by *SL* would denote the record of the Asbury Park team.

Accompanying the franchise transfer was a change in the Asbury Park front office. New York City billiards parlor impresario Jack Doyle became club president, while Coakley continued managing team fortunes on the field.²⁴ On July 2, Doyle and Coakley hosted a gala official "opening" for the Asbury Park club at on its home grounds, Athletic Field. But the Newark Cubans, perhaps desiring to return the favor of six weeks earlier, spoiled the event, sending the newly-christened Sea Urchins to a 6-2 defeat. That game also marked the professional debut of Joe and Tom O'Brien, 18-year-old twins valued as a novelty gate attraction. In actuality, the two newcomers were future major leaguers Joe and Red Shannon, playing under pseudonyms to protect their collegiate eligibility at Seton Hall. Unhappily for Coakley, the twins were about the only prospects on his squad, and by season's end, Asbury Park's 30-57 (.337) record placed the club dead last in Atlantic League standings.

Meanwhile back in Newark, things were also unwell. Although the early-season cream of Atlantic League nines on the diamond, the Newark Cubans were a disappointment at the turnstiles, vindicating the *Jersey Journal's* pre-season prediction that Newarkers accustomed to Class AA International League play would ignore the games of a Class D club.²⁵ By mid-July, Cubans' owner Henriquez had come to the same conclusion and acted upon it. On July 22, the club was returned to its former home and finished the season as the Long Branch Cubans.²⁶ Following the relocation, the Cubans continued their winning ways, but a late-season surge by the Poughkeepsie Honey Bugs rendered the fine 59-32 (.648) overall Newark-Long Branch log good for only second place in the Atlantic League pennant chase.

THE DISSOLUTION OF THE ATLANTIC LEAGUE AND ITS AFTERMATH

As elsewhere in baseball in 1914, Atlantic League attendance figures did not meet expectations. The New Jersey clubs in Perth Amboy and Asbury Park were the worst performers at the gate, while upstate New York's Poughkeepsie and Middletown were the best.²⁷ But all the league clubs lost money, with one estimate placing the league-wide deficit at \$33,000.²⁸ Late in the campaign as well as thereafter, several club owners attempted to revive earlier Federal League interest in acquiring the Atlantic League as a farm system,²⁹ but the initiative was stifled by National and American League magnates who had purchased interests in Atlantic League clubs precisely to prevent that from happening. Half-hearted attempts to keep the circuit going came to naught, and the Atlantic League officially expired in early March 1915.³⁰

Bloomfield and Asbury Park had seen the last of hometown minor league baseball. The Atlantic League's most memorable club, however, did not die with it. Carlos Henriquez's Long Branch Cubans played on, in catch-can leagues and as an independent outfit, taking on all comers – major league teams, semi-pro clubs, all-black pre-Negro Leagues nines, college varsities, industrial league clubs – into the early 1920s.³¹ But even the Cubans were but a dim memory when the authoritative *The Encyclopedia of Minor League Baseball* was first published in 1993. Given the split venues employed by the club, the *Encyclopedia's* designation of the Henriquez entry in the 1914 Atlantic League as the *Newark-Long Branch Cubans* is warranted. But how the editors got Long Branch entangled in the name of the Bloomfield-Asbury Park team is a mystery. Simply put, no club called the *Bloomfield-Long Branch Cubans/Asbury Park Sea Urchins* ever existed.

Bloomfield High School alumnus Bill Lamb is the editor of *The Inside Game*, the newsletter of SABR's Deadball Era Committee.

NOTES

1. In order of their appearance in the bigs, major leaguers either born in Bloomfield or longtime Bloomfield residents are Larry Hesterfer, Jim Kelly (born Robert John Taggart), Alex Ferguson, Hank Borowy, Don Savage, and Charlie Puleo.

2. Baseball played in Bloomfield from the post-Civil War era to the late-1930s is chronicled in *Thumbing the Pages of Baseball History in Bloomfield*, an authoritative 84-page pamphlet authored by Sam Pierson, veteran sports-writer for *The Independent Press*, the weekly Bloomfield newspaper. No mention of a Bloomfield minor league team is made by Pierson.

3. Background on the Henriquez brothers is drawn primarily from "The Henriquez Long Branch Cubans" by Brian McKenna, viewable at BaseballHistoryBlog.com, and "The Henriquez Brothers" by Gary Ashwill, posted online at: http://agatetype.typepad.com/agate_type/2009/05/the-henriquez-brothers.html.

4. As per a box score published in the *New York Times*, August 8, 1907, and a game account in *Sporting Life*, August 17, 1907.

5. Although pitcher-outfielder Luis Padron, perhaps the best player among the Long Branch Cubans, was white-enough for the Henriquez brothers, suspicions about his racial identity thwarted Padron's chances for a major league career.

6. As per McKenna and Ashwill, above. Blue laws prohibiting Sunday baseball in New York City made Long Branch a frequent site of New York Giants and Brooklyn Dodgers Sunday exhibition games.

7. Pierson, 34-36.

8. See *The (Bloomfield) Independent Press*, February 6, 1914.

9. NY-NJ League club owners had originally hoped to adopt a long-established but currently unused appellation, the Eastern League, but baseball's overlords did not approve, as per the *New York Press*, March 14, 1914.

10. As reported in the *New York Press*, March 14, 1914, *The (New London, Connecticut) Day*, March 16, 1914, *Sporting Life*, March 21, 1914, and *The Sporting News*, March 26, 1914.

11. According to the *Jersey (Jersey City) Journal*, March 16, 1914.

12. See the *Jersey Journal*, March 16, 1914, *The Sporting News*, March 26, 1914, and *Sporting Life*, November 14, 1914.

13. As per *Sporting Life*, March 21, 1914.

14. See the *New York Press*, April 6, 1914. See also, "The Rise and Fall of the 1914 Atlantic League" by George G. Pawlush, published in the 2001 Bridgeport Bluefish souvenir program. Pawlush puts the league player salary cap at \$1,200/season.

15. See e.g., the *New York Press*, March 14, 1914, and *Sporting Life*, March 21, 1914.

16. Samuel Ford Jaeger would take an active part in the civic and political life of Bloomfield in the 1920s and 1930s, and remain a town resident for decades. He then retired to Volusia, Florida where he died in February 1986, aged 93.

17. As per *The Independent Press*, March 20, 1914.

18. As per *The Independent Press*, March 20, 1914, and *Sporting Life*, March 21, 1914.

19. Bloomfield's Sprague Park, the site of occasional Negro Leagues games during the 1930s, was not erected until 1919.

20. As reported *Sporting Life*, May 14, 1914, the *Albany Times-Union*, May 20, 1914, and elsewhere. Coakley had

posted a 58-59 record during a nine-season (1902-1909, 1911) major league career.

21. As reported in *Sporting Life*, May 14, 1914.

22. *New York Press*, May 20, 1914.

23. As reported in the *Paterson Press*, July 2, 1914, *Jersey Journal*, July 8, 1914, and elsewhere. At the time, the club record stood at 15-22.

24. See the *New York Sun*, June 29, 1914. Later, Doyle also assumed the vacant position of Atlantic League secretary.

25. *Jersey Journal*, March 16, 1914.

26. See the *Paterson Press*, July 2, 1914, *Jersey Journal*, July 8, 1914, and *Sporting Life*, August 1, 1914.

27. According to Tom Sheehan, "Base Ball Notes," *Brooklyn Daily Star*, September 6, 1914.

28. "Minor Mention," *Sporting Life*, April 10, 1915.

29. See *Sporting Life*, December 5, 1914 and January 23, 1915.

30. As reported in *Sporting Life*, March 13, 1915.

BASEBALL—TODAY
AT FANS FIELD
BLOOMINGTON vs. PEORIA
A Double Header on the Fourth
FIREWORKS BETWEEN GAMES
First Game Today at 2:15.
200 New Box Seats Available.
Tickets on Sale at Deschler's, Read's Annex,
Metropole and Gibson's.
Admission 45 cents. War tax 5 cents.

Bloomington Pantagraph, Jul 4, 1921

Rise and Fall of the Colonial League (1947-50)

By George Pawlush

The dreams of many returning World War II veterans, optimistic baseball promoters, and recent high school graduates were set into motion 70 years ago with the formation of the Colonial League, a Class B minor league circuit that operated from 1947-50 in Connecticut, New York and New Jersey cities.

For the many war vets, who lost valuable playing years serving in the military, the Colonial offered a long-shot chance to make the major leagues. The Colonial also attracted players, who had brief call-ups to the MLB during the war, but now were expendable as veterans returned to reclaim their roster spots.

These groups were joined by young Latinos, making their debuts in Organized Baseball, and seasoned and inexperienced black players who began filtering into minor leagues and the MLB after being denied that right for so many years. In 1947, there were only 17 black players in the entire minor league system but six of them were in the Colonial League.

Rubin Gomez was the most prominent Colonial League alumnus to advance to the MLB. Gomez was a rookie for Bristol Owls in 1949, and quickly climbed the ladder, reaching the New York Giants to stay in 1953. His premier season performance came in 1954 when he won 17 games to help the Giants make the World Series, winning one game in their four-game sweep over the Cleveland Indians.

The Colonial also included other individuals who eventually took their talents to non-playing roles in the MLB, and even to other major sports leagues and the entertainment industry.

- Sid Borgia umpired in the Colonial during the 1947 and 1948 seasons. He served as a National Basketball League official from 1946 to 1964 and was the league's supervisor of officials from 1964 to 1966.
- Preston Gomez was a utility infielder for the New London Raiders in 1947. He was the first field manager of the expansion San Diego Padres in 1969, serving there

until 1972 and later the skipper for the Houston Astros, 1974-75, and the Chicago Cubs in 1980.

- J. Walter Kennedy covered the Stamford Pioneers in 1947 as a sports writer for the local Advocate. He is remembered as the commissioner of the National Basketball Association from 1963 to 1975, who led a struggling nine-team league to prosperity. When he retired, the league had grown to 18 teams and had landed a lucrative television contract.
- Les Osterman, a New York stock broker owned the Port Chester Clippers in 1948 and moved the team to Bristol for the 1949 and 1950 seasons. He considered buying the Brooklyn Dodgers in the mid- 1950s. Ultimately he was to find fame in Broadway as theater producer and theater owner. He won three Tony awards for his productions of "Da," "The Shadow Box." And a Moon for the Misbegotten."
- Ken Strong was the founding president of the Colonial League. However, his game was football. Strong was one of the nation's top all-around players and an All-American in New York University. Later he was an outstanding halfback and kicker for the New York NFL Giants. Strong was inducted to the College Football Hall of Fame in 1957 and the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 1967.
- Ed Sudol played first base for the Stamford Pioneers and the Poughkeepsie Chiefs in 1947. His real calling came later as a MLB umpire. Sudol spent 21 seasons (1957-77) as a National League arbiter and worked the 1969, 1973, and 1977 World Series

Over the past 25 years I have enjoyed researching the Colonial League.

Early in the project I was able to interview several players, front office staff and media representatives who were involved with the Colonial. All the individuals I talked to were passionate in their love for the game.

Colonial League players rarely made more than \$300 a month, or \$1200 for the four-month season This translates to \$12,000 in 2017 dollars. The Colonial's 17-man team rosters were constantly in flux. In most cases the teams were led by a player-manager, who generally had many years of minor league experience and was paid \$350 to \$400 a month.

Without exception, these player-managers were continually at odds with team owners over game management. In only two instances did a manager last more than one year on the job. Injured players were quickly released and star performers were constantly being shopped to MLB and higher minor league organizations. The financial health of these independent teams depended greatly on manager's ability to sell player contracts to exist.

Very few of the more than 430 teams and 59 leagues that existed during minor league baseball's high water mark year of 1949 had working agreements with MLB organizations. This meant that independent teams couldn't look to the MLB for player and monetary support. During its existence, only two Colonial teams had MLB working relationships and both were just for one year, Bridgeport in 1947 with the Washington Senators and Port Chester in 1948 with the St. Louis Browns.

Minor league teams were constantly stressed by mediocre playing fields, decrepit stadiums, poor attendance, and constant battles with Park Boards and City leaders over high rentals, substandard field maintenance, and control of concessions, which could have been an important revenue stream for the teams.

None of the team owners in the Colonial ever made money. Most owned successful outside businesses that enabled them to fuel their passions and absorb the average \$15,000 to \$20,000 they lost each year (\$150,000 to \$200,000 in 2017 dollars). A few of the organizations

were owned by fidgety groups of stock holders or syndicates which pooled their resources, and expected quick returns on their investments. Many of these marginal owners bolted as soon as they were asked to make additional contributions to keep the teams financially afloat.

Unfortunately, the demise of the Colonial League and with the many other circuits that emerged during the late 1940 minor league boom years, disappeared quickly by the early 1950s as new entertainment alternatives for the public began to emerge.

Television has been cited as a major competitor. And, it was not from competing MLB games that were mainly played during the day, but from mid-week entertainment shows that aired at night when the Colonial and other leagues were playing their games under the lights.

In 2017, Colonial players, if still alive, would be in their late 80s or early 90s. They have become harder to find. Fortunately, the internet has become an important tool to reach out to their families who have been eager to share stories and pictures of their father, grandfather, or uncle.

I plan to have my book published by the end of 2017. Until it is set into print I will be grateful for any last-minute informational contributions. Feel free to e-mail me at George.pawlush@wilkes.edu or call 860-490-1074.



Des Moines Register, May 15, 1910

BOB McCHESNEY

By Gary Wright

Born: 10/27/1926 Los Angeles, CA

Died: 12/19/2002 Granada Hills, CA

Add another to the long list of pro football players that also had a "cup of coffee" in minor league baseball. Bob McChesney, an end with the New York Giants from 1950 through 1952, also spent parts of two seasons with the Abilene Blue Sox.

A standout athlete at Van Nuys High School, McChesney served in the Marines during World War II where he met Al Milch. Milch had been a football player at Hardin-Simmons before joining the service and was going back to school after the war. A natural recruiter who later coached football, Milch brought McChesney, his brother Howard, and three other former Van Nuys High athletes with him to Abilene and Hardin-Simmons University -- 1,200 miles from their hometown.

Upon enrolling in January 1946, he became a regular on the basketball team and finished the season averaging 4.3 point per game. Next it was spring football and then college baseball. During the summer of 1946, McChesney played in the West Texas Sandlot Tournament. Pitching for a team called Banner, he struck out 19 batters in a quarterfinal loss to Sweetwater, 5-4, with all five runs unearned as his team recorded five errors.

On July 14, 1946, Howard Green of the Abilene Reporter-News wrote:

In our opinion the outstanding player of the tournament was Lefty Bob McChesney, the rangy Hardin-Simmons freshman, who pitched for Banner.

McChesney was in rare form against Sweetwater Friday night and with just fair support could have pitched a shutout.

The tall southpaw comes from Van Nuys, Calif. Only 19, he has everything required to make a name for himself in the national pastime.

But it was football where he made his mark. McChesney became a starter at right end as a freshman in the fall of 1946 but a broken left-arm mid against New Mexico on October 19 in a 49-0 win shelved him for the rest of the year.

The arm injury kept out of basketball in 1947 but he was able to return to baseball but his first start was a tough one against Texas, when he allowed 8 runs in the second inning during a 28-9 route. He responded in his next

start with a three-hitter in a 9-2 win over Texas A&M and then threw a one-hitter with 13 strikeouts against New Mexico on May 2 -- but it was a 5-4 loss as he walked seven and his teammates committed six errors.

He gave up varsity basketball the next year, playing intramural and being named the MVP in the college's intramural league. The 1948 baseball season was highlighted by two outings against Abilene Christian one week apart. On April 21 he threw a 7-inning 1-hitter with 17 strikeouts in a 3-0 win and then followed that up on April 27 with a 7-inning no-hit victory (4-0) that included 16 strikeouts.

The highlight of his 1949 college baseball season was an April 22 win over New Mexico, 12-3. He got the win going all nine innings with nine strikeouts and helped pace the offense with a home run, two doubles and 3 RBI.

Following the 1949 college football season, McChesney signed in the spring of 1950 with the local Abilene Blue Sox of the West Texas-New Mexico (Class C) League as a pitcher, but he also played 1b and in the outfield before leaving the Blue Sox to join the College All-Stars in preparation for their game with the defending NFL champion Philadelphia Eagles in Chicago.

His final home game of that season was July 7 and was celebrated by the Blue Sox organization as "Bob McChesney Night." He hit a two-run home in that game.

He concluded his 1950 season on the road, July 17, by pitching a shutout over the Amarillo Gold Sox, 5-0. The next day he was off to the College All-Stars camp.

During his time with Abilene that year he posted a 7-8 pitching mark with a 4.97 ERA starting 13 games and appearing in 27 as a pitcher. He also played 22 games in the field and had a .233 batting average in 90 at-bats that included three doubles and two home runs.

A member of the Hardin-Simmons Hall of Fame, he earned All-Border Conference first team honors in football three straight years -- 1947, 1948, and 1949 -- in a time when the conference included Arizona, Arizona State, Northern Arizona (then Arizona State Flagstaff), New Mexico, New Mexico State, Texas Tech, UTEP (then Texas Western) and West Texas State, along with Hardin-Simmons.

(Continued from page 14)

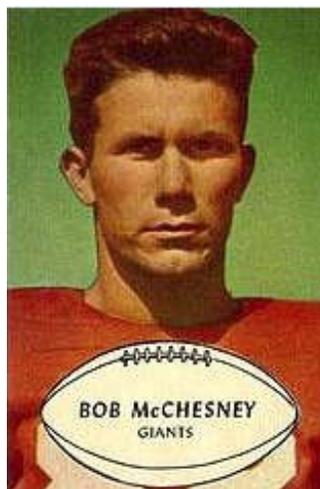
A fourth-round selection (53rd player) by the Philadelphia Eagles in the 1950 NFL draft, he played in the College All-Star Game that year and then spent the remainder of the preseason with the Eagles. But he did not make the Eagles final roster and moved to the New York Giants. McChesney played three years in the NFL from 1950 through 1952, playing all 36 regular season games. He caught 54 passes during his career for 1,040 yards and 14 touchdowns.

He returned to the Abilene Blue Sox mound in June of 1951 and made at least three appearances without a win before leaving in July to report the Giants training camp.

Noted from Abilene Reports-News, July 11, 1951:

Departure of Bob McChesney cut the Blue Sox staff down to five hurlers, not including Hack Miller who is not on the active list. McChesney headed home for California and goes thence to New York to join the pro football Giants. He reported too late to get in pitching shape, and was of little help to the club except for hitting practice and bullpen.

After football, McChesney worked with the Los Angeles Fire Department serving with Co. 27 in Hollywood.



Izzy Hoffman and the 1916 Ridgway No Names

100 years ago Ridgway won a championship in its only season of professional baseball

By Jack Smiles

Izzy Hoffman was such a ringer in a class D league, it almost wasn't fair. After all, Hoffman had been Connie Mack's spring training right hand man and mentor to future hall of famer Eddie "The King of Second Basemen" Collins.

When Collins learned Ridgway hired Hoffman as player-manager of their 1916 Interstate League team, a new entry in the three year old league, Collins gushed in an interview in the Olean Times Herald. "Mack thought enough of Izzy to take him south for four years running. He used him as a player, coach, scout and trainer. He understands young players and is one of the best judges of ball players I have ever known. He will not allow grass to grow under his feet in searching for ballplayers. Izzy knows where to find them."

Collins had a message for the Ridgway fans."Hoffman will make Ridgway the best manager you will ever have."

Collins was right about everything. He couldn't help but be right about the later. Hoffman was the best manager Ridgway ever had and the only one. The 1916 Interstate League team was the city's first, and, as it would turnout, last fully professional team.

The season opened on May 20 with eight teams, the Erie Sailors, Warren Warriors, Olean White Sox, St. Mary's Saints, Wellsville Rainmakers, Johnsonburg Johnnies, Bradford Drillers, and Ridgway, which had no official nickname. The sportswriters called Ridgway the Hoffmans or the Izzys.

Hoffman's major league career was brief and unmemorable. A 5-9, 160 pound left handed outfielder from New Jersey, he played in just 29 games in two seasons with Washington in 1904 and National League Boston Braves in 1907.

(Continued from page 15)

But in 16 minor league seasons playing from New England to California to Canada he batted .278. He came to class D Ridgway after two seasons in class B at Reading, Pennsylvania where he hit .337 in 1914 and Peoria in the Illinois-Indiana-Iowa League where he led the Distillers to second place, hitting .292 as a full time outfielder and manager in 1915.

He was 41 when he led Ridgway to the 1916 Interstate League pennant, batting .294 with 87 hits in 77 games. But more important than his stats were his connections — in addition to his job as Mack's spring training right hand man, he was also a scout for Mack's A's and for the Yankees.

He stocked the Ridgway roster with experienced veterans like himself, who, while fringe major leaguers, were stars at class D Ridgway.

First baseman John Wesley "Snake" Deal, 37 in 1916, was from Lancaster. He played in 65 games for Cincinnati in 1906 and had last played for Wilkes-Barre in the New York State League in 1914.

William "Scotty" Ingerton, 30 was a third baseman/short stop from Ohio. He played a full season for Boston Braves in 1911 hitting .250 in 136 games and rooming with Cy Young in Young's last season.

James "Swat" McCabe, 34, from Towanda got in 16 games with the Reds in 1909 and '10. He had been out two seasons and last played for Jersey City in 1913. Hit .305 for Ridgway

In May Hoffman signed Bill Stellbauer, 22, who was released by the Athletics after 25 games. He hit .276 for Ridgway.

Art "Watty" Watson Indiana, 31, who had spent two years in Federal League with the Brooklyn Tip-Tops and Buffalo hit .337 for Ridgway.

Pitcher Eddie Matteson won three games for the Phillies in 1914. He was living in Buffalo and working in a factory when Hoffman lured him to Ridgway, even after he refused to report to Scranton and Syracuse. He was 6-2 for Ridgway with a 1.99 ERA.

The other pitchers were obscure minor leaguers lifers who had career years for Ridgway except for Dr. Ed LaFitte, a dentist with a degree from Georgia Tech, who

played seven seasons of major league baseball for Detroit in the American and The Brooklyn Tip Tops and Buffalo in the Federal League. He was pitching A ball for Atlanta in the Southern Association in 1916, but was released after compiling an 11-12 record for the Crackers. Somehow Hoffman lured him to Ridgway. In his first game on August 1, he beat Erie 5-1, striking out nine Sailors. He went 6-1 for the Izzys down the stretch.

In 1917 Dr. Edward Lafitte enlisted in the Army. He was sent to the Army's School of Plastic and Oral Surgery in St. Louis. He served in England and France during WWI. The Brooklyn Eagle reported that he specialized in "the remaking of faces maimed in the war"

The 1916 team led the league in a team batting average and runs and were second in sacrifices and stolen bases. Hoffman was among the league leaders in sacrifices and stole 10 bases. The pitching staff was second in league ERA.

The schedule was divided into halves. The hope was that different teams would win each half, setting up a best of five playoff to grow league revenue. Ridgway didn't cooperate. The Izzys won both halves easily. They were 30-13 in the first half five games ahead of St. Mary's and Bradford. The second half started on July 13 with the league down to six teams after Olean and Erie dropped out. Bradford dropped out on August 4, \$800 in debt and two weeks behind salaries. The Izzys were 26-11 in the second half, besting St. Mary's by three games. Combined the Izzys won exactly 70 percent of their games.

They clinched the pennant on September 4. After the game there was a huge parade and fireworks. A bonfire was lit on the field. Judge Harry Alvan Hall gave a short address. That evening the players and Hoffman were guests of the citizens at banquet. The players got money bonuses. Hoffman was outfitted for a road trip. He was given an automobile by the club, an automobile blanket by players and an automobile chest by the fans.

On September 10, with Hoffman getting three hits, Ridgway beat the Philadelphia Athletics 4-3 in an exhibition game at Berwin Park in St. Mary's. The next day they played again in Ridgway, with the A's winning 3-1, before the largest baseball crowd ever in Ridgway. Lafitte pitched five innings striking out nine A's. Before the game Connie Mack and Judge Hall marched to the centerfield

(Continued from page 16)

flag pole and raised the Interstate League championship pennant.

Early in 1917 several meetings were held to reorganize the Interstate. Team owners agreed that some players in the league were too “fast” for “D” baseball and voted to play strictly “D” ball. They also reduced the salary limit from \$1200 to \$1000. Both rules were shots at Ridgway for signing players like Lafitte and for secretly exceeding the salary limit. A Canadian newspaper, the Vancouver Daily World reported that Ridgway lost \$10,000 due to salaries

As late as March six teams were reportedly interested, but when Bradford and the three New York towns — Olean, Jamestown and Wellsville — dropped out only Ridgway and St. Mary’s were left and the league disbanded.

Recreation Park San Francisco 1907-30

By Ron Selter

Recreation Park was the home park of the SF Seals in the PCL from 1907 to 1930; before Seals Stadium opened for the 1931 season. The park was located in an area south of downtown SF at Valencia St and 14th St. The park was built after the 1906 SF earthquake destroyed the Seal’s prior home field-old Recreation Park. The park was also known as Recreation Grounds and opened to a capacity crowd on Opening Day 1907.

A Sanborn map of Recreation Park was found amongst the 1913-15 collection of Sanborn maps (San Francisco CA, Volume 7, Sheet 666). The park was located within the city block bounded by 14th St on the north, 15th St on the south, Valencia St on the east and Guerrero St on the west. The park site reached nearly to Valencia St as its eastern boundary. Other properties within the city block were adjacent to the ballpark on all four sides. The northern, southern, and eastern boundaries of the park site were parallel with the surrounding streets. Not so on the west, where the park’s perimeter (the fence at the back of the third base bleachers) angled towards the east from the LF corner towards the CF corner. The dimensions of the park’s land plot were not large: a little more than 400 feet east-to-west (413 on the northern boundary

and 428 at the southern boundary) and only 336 ft north to south. As home plate was located in the southeast corner, this made the RF dimension very limited. The total area of the park site amounted to only 3.2 acres-the smallest park site in terms of overall area I have ever encountered.

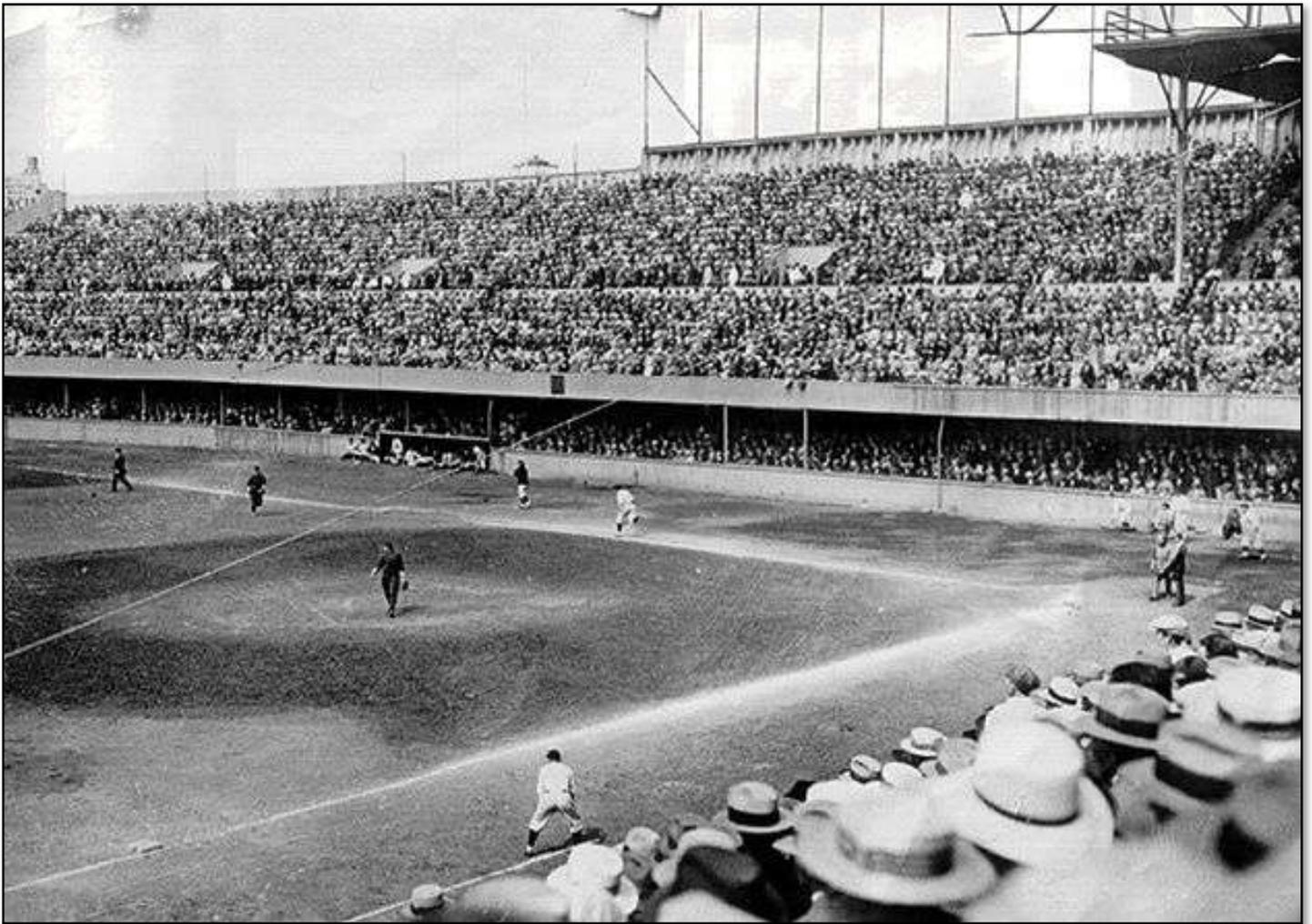
Based on park descriptions and a photo of the infield and grandstand found in: *Runs Hits and an Era: The Pacific Coast League, 1903-58*, home plate was placed 40 feet from the backstop. The backstop was a short diagonal section of the sort-of double-deck grandstand. The ground level lower portion of the wooden grandstand consisted of eight rows of benches where the hard-drinking rowdy fans congregated. The main level of the grandstand was roofed and extended from beyond first base to beyond third base. The first base and third base portions of the grandstand were parallel with the foul lines and no more than 30 feet from the infield. Both of the foul line bleachers converged with the foul lines as they neared the LF and RF corners. The LF fence was at less than 90 degrees to the LF foul line, while the RF fence was at 90 degrees to the RF foul line. There was no seating in the RF portion of the outfield. In LF there were shallow bleachers that extended from the junction of the third base bleachers to the clubhouse in CF. Based on the square footage of the grandstand and bleachers, the seating capacity in 1914 was estimated to be about 10,000. In the first years of the ballpark the dressing rooms were located beneath the third base portion of the grandstand. By 1914, there was a two story clubhouse in the CF corner, next to the flag pole, that was located behind the LF fence. Another photo from *Runs Hits and an Era*, is of the 1918 Opening Day ceremonies held at the CF flag pole in front of this two story clubhouse. This photo does show the height of the wooden CF fence to the right of the two story building to be about 20-24 ft.

With the home plate location at 40 ft from the backstop, the other dimensions of the park were derived from the Sanborn. They were:

LF 316

LC 343

CF Corner 360 (Deepest point in the park-out of play in the 1920’s)



(Continued from page 17)

CF 326 (Dead CF)

RC 275

RF 235

Backstop 40

In the 1920's, a short CF diagonal fence was added in front of the clubhouse. This fence put the CF corner out of play. In addition, the grandstand was extended down the RF line. In the 1920's to keep from running out of baseballs due to home runs over the very close RF fence, a high screen was mounted on top of the fence. The total height of the fence and screen was 60 feet. The screen apparently ran from the RF foul line to nearly the CF cor-

ner. The fence is denoted only as "High Fence" on the 1914 Sanborn. The LF-CF fence was about 10 feet in height. In earlier years of the ballpark's use (estimated to be before 1920), photos show the RF fence consisted of a single row of billboards and a screen atop the billboards for a total height of about 20 feet.

Average Outfield Distances

LF 323

CF 326 (With CF diagonal: 318)

RF 254

Not surprisingly, the park had a reputation as a real hitter's park in the 1920s.

HOW IS IT, MISTER UMPIRE?



Binghamton Press and Sun-Bulletin May 3, 1911

Talkin' Baseball... Final One With New York Mets' Scout - Claude Pelletier

By Bill Young

One thing I have learned about the Grand Old Game is that even in the middle of winter, as snow banks rise above the eaves and wind chill factors drop below TOO COLD, there is never a wrong time to talk about baseball. Why just its lengthy history and enigmatic complexity - what New York University president John Sexton calls its ineffability - are enough to keep us energized all year long.

And so it was that on one wintery afternoon in late December I got to talking baseball with Claude Pelletier of the New York Mets Scouting Department and area supervisor for the club's baseball operations across Canada. He also happens to be a resident of St. Lazare, Quebec, a community on the outskirts of Montreal and next door to my home town of Hudson, Quebec.

We met at the Café Brulée coffee shop in Hudson, and spent much of a Saturday afternoon talking - about the life of a major league baseball scout, about the challenges and rewards that keep him coming back year after. And the why.

Claude Pelletier is originally from the Rouyn-Noranda region of northern Quebec, prime hockey country, although he says that growing up he was as much fascinated by baseball as with hockey, perhaps even more so. He was intrigued by the intricacies and fathomless conundrums that in many ways define the game and determine how it must be played. But most of all he was fascinated by the players' athleticism, skills sets and, especially, their determination to succeed. Baseball is perhaps the only professional sport where years of preparation are required just to become an "overnight sensation."

Today considered one of the senior members among Canadian scouts, Pelletier's entry into the unique world of the professional baseball scout had somewhat of an unorthodox beginning. Never in his plans, it was just something that he grew into, sans any particular defining moment.

Pelletier was still relatively young when he opted for early retirement from his day job and stepped aside to pursue other interests. First on his list was to make an escape from the persistent, cold, northern winters of his youth, opting instead to snuggle down somewhere in Florida's Vero Beach region.

It didn't take him long to gravitate toward the Los Angeles Dodgers' Vero Beach spring training facility and join other railbirds hanging over field-side fences and endlessly talking baseball.

It was there he came to know Ron Perranoski, former ace reliever with LA who, once his playing career ended, had become the organization's minor league pitching coordinator. Perranoski held that position for seven years, before making it back to the big leagues in 1981 when he was appointed Dodgers' pitching coach.

During those Vero Beach days Perranoski often joined Pelletier along the field-side fences, watching activity on the diamonds with him and comparing notes.

"Perranoski seemed to be impressed with me and my comments," says Pelletier today. "I think he felt I had an eye for the hidden elements that separate the exceptional young player from the ordinary."

In other words, adds Pelletier, "Perranoski felt I had many of the skills that baseball looks for in a scout, and he suggested I give it a try."

In due course Perranoski introduced his emerging protégé to Dodgers' scouting director Ben Wade. And that meeting led to Wade indicating to Pelletier that he had the mettle to become a scout, should he want to take it on. And then he offered him a part-time contract. Pelletier gladly accepted.

"Get started in Quebec," advised Wade. "Get to know the different teams and leagues there; make new acquaintances; and always keep an eye out for that special player, the one who just might have the ability to go further."

That's how it began. It wasn't long before Pelletier identified his first real prospect, a young Marc Griffin from Quebec City. Positive reports from the freshly minted scout were sufficiently encouraging to warrant the calling

(Continued from page 20)

in of a more senior scout for a second look, what in baseball parlance is called 'cross-checking the prospect'.

Griffin enjoyed moderate success in the Dodgers system. He cut his professional baseball teeth in 1989 with the A-level Vero Beach Dodgers, making it as far as the Florida State League before being traded to the Montreal Expos following the 1991 season. By 1994, after a couple of disappointing turns with the Double-A Harrisburg Senators of the Eastern League, the Expos premier farm team, and slowed down by injuries, he was out of baseball. From the playing side of the game, that is.

For suddenly a different set of doors opened up to him, doors to a fresh baseball career. In fairly short order he became a major presence on the Quebec baseball scene, in both languages – and on both sides of the microphone.

And fortune shone on Pelletier as well. His credibility factor skyrocketed as Dodgers' brass began asking him to expand his scouting horizons, a move that led to his most significant discovery, the Dodgers' overpowering reliever and Cy Young Award winner, Eric Gagné.

"There was something about Eric," says Pelletier, "that caught my eye early, and I kind of followed him from those first days in Quebec through to his days at Seminole State College in Oklahoma. I saw him pitch a number of times – too many to count. And I was always impressed."

Not so the other scouts who had looked in on Gagné – and when draft day came and went he was still unsigned, as disappointed as a lone wall-flower at the high school dance.

That was all the motivation Pelletier needed. He stepped up, strongly and repeatedly recommending to the Dodgers' higher-ups that they sign the young Quebecer, until the club, by now worn down, sent cross-checker Eddie Bane to take a look. He was impressed.

On the other hand, scouting director Terry Reynolds remained skeptical, asking Pelletier, "Why should we sign this free agent when ...none of our guys liked him."

"Because I like him," was the reply.

The rest in history. Gagné signed with Los Angeles for \$75,000 and by 1999 was in the Dodgers National League line-up. He continued to pitch in the big leagues through the 2008 season, making the Cy Young Award's top-10 list on three different occasions, and winning it all in 2003.

And in 2000, in recognition of his identifying the unsung talent that was Eric Gagné, Pelletier received Toronto Sun's annual award for amateur scouts.

But by then Pelletier had caught the eye of the New York Mets, and when they came running with the offer of a permanent scouting position, he gladly accepted. He became, and still is the club's Area Supervisor for Canada. In other words he now serves as the 'cross-checker' assessing the Mets current prospects.

A partial list of signees is appended to the end of this article.

Today Pelletier works out of his St. Lazare home, although he continues to travel a great deal. Much of his activity involves responding to reports from part-time scouts across Canada, indentifying a player's strengths and weaknesses. Those he considers promising he will follow up, "flushing out the player" as he calls it, determining if the young man has the heart to compete in the pro ranks.

Pelletier also works closely with Baseball Canada (as do most other scouts), attending tournaments and the like, acknowledging that most of Canada's top prospects can be found within these ranks.

Scouting in the world of baseball has gone through a veritable sea-change in the past decade. Today, scouts increasingly rely on baseball analytics, what writer Alex Woodie calls, "an explosion of data [along with]...the advent of new analytic software running on supercomputers." It is an emerging phenomenon that is about to change the way the game is managed. And played.

All of these new tools notwithstanding, Pelletier still believes in keeping boots on the ground, taking the time to meet with a prospect's parents and becoming aware of the circumstances that helped form the young man's environment. Pelletier regards these mostly intangible elements as key in determining whether the prospect possesses

both the skills and the heart (what Pelletier calls “the sixth tool”), to embark on a professional baseball career.

“Assessing just how ready and willing the youngster is to sign - for instance, is he a self-starter? - is perhaps the scout’s most important role,” he believes.

He also subscribes to the fundamental Baseball Canada dictum that: “Before you can be a ball player you have to be a good citizen,” a principle which not only defines the character of recent Canadian teams competing at the international level but also contributes to their high degree of success.

Pelletier is no longer a rookie in the scouting game. He knows his way around. He is, however, getting along in years, what the French might call, *un homme d’un certain âge*. When asked what keeps him going he maintains it’s a combination of things.

“I like being a scout,” he admits. “I like working from home. And I like the way scouts function as a group, always coming together for events like the winter meetings. Even though we hold our professional work close to the vest, we still have lots to talk about.

“Our busiest time is in April, just before the draft, when we’re all out there, doing what we all do best – scouting.” Then he adds:

“But most of all I like the fact that the very nature of our job is to give kids a chance to develop as baseball players and, you hope, as citizens along the way. If they have needs, concerns or other difficulties we pitch in, we have people in place to help them out. But we can never be their fathers. When push comes to shove it’s ultimately all up to them. There’s no one else can do their heavy lifting.”

Then he smiles and says, almost wistfully, and mostly to himself: “Perhaps the real reason people like me keep doing this is because, who knows, the next Eric Gagné might just be hiding just around the corner, waiting for me to find him.”

It happened once; it can happen again.

Partial list of Claude Pelletier Signees...

Dodgers

Marc Charbonneau	LHP	Ottawa	Ind
David Destienne	3B	Dartmouth NS	AAA
Eric Gagné	RHP	Montreal	MLB
Marc Griffin	OF	Quebec City	AA
Nial Hughes	LHP	PEI	A
Martin Lavigne	LHP	Quebec City	Ind
Martin Ouellette	LHP	Quebec City	Ind

Mets

Jean-Luc Blaquièrre	C	Montreal	AAA
Shawn Bowman	3B	New Westminster, BC	AAA
Pat Deschesnes	3B	Quebec City	AA
Emmanuel Garcia	2B	Montreal	AAA
Kurtis Horne	LHP	Victoria BC	Rk
Guillaume Leduc	RHP	Montreal	A
Jon Malo	SS	Joliette Qc	AAA
Matthew McCarney	LF	Ottawa	Rk
Yvan Naccarrata	2B	Montreal	A+
Tanner Osberg	LHP	Red Deer AB	A
Justin Wendt	1B	Kitchener-Waterloo	Drafted

Other

Greg Mullens (Brewers)	RHP	Regina, Sask.	MLB
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Beating the Bushes



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The discussion site is at: groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/SABRminorleagues/

RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

Are you interested in minor league research but not sure what to do?

The **SABR Baseball Biography Project** is a collection of biographies written by SABR members. While concentrating on major league players, studies of career minor leaguers are encouraged as well. If there is a player you'd like to work on, consult the biographies posted on the BioProject Committee's website (bioproj.sabr.org) and see if one has already been written. If not, contact Rory Costello (rcostello@nyc.rr.com) to join the committee.

But the BioProject isn't just limited to writing stories about players. You could also write an article about a ballpark, minor league umpire, manager, or owner, or other participant.

Or, you could write a game story about an interesting or unusual minor league game. Game stories are less involved than biographies, and are a good way of "getting your feet wet".

There's no shortage of topics that could be explored.

Member Projects

SABR members **Tim Hagerty** and **Al Arrighi** are compiling a book about the most unique minor league moments. Bizarre stories like a wild bull delaying a Texas League game, a manager being ejected during a triple play, a team playing seven games in one day and hundreds of others will be featured.

If SABR members know of any strange minor league happenings from any time period, please email a note to hagertytd@gmail.com. Any assistance is greatly appreciated.

Update on the TSN Contract Cards: The LA84 organization is scanning the last batch of cards, and the researchers website is being worked on. It's hoped that the work will be completed by this year's convention.

Base Ball!
BENEFIT DAY
Wednesday
Lancaster vs. Mansfield.
Splendid Game Assured. Pass the Word Along.
Meet Your Friends There.
Help Swell the Crowd.
A Worthy Cause.
Root for a Crowd that Root for Mansfield.
TAKE A HALF HOLIDAY.
Forget the Worries of Business.
EVERYBODY'S GOING.
Games Called at 2 and 4 P. M.

Mansfield Daily Shield August 13, 1907