

Jimmy Outlaw
Interviewed by Dave Heller
November 8, 1995

Q: Was there a big difference between the war years and non-war year playing?

A: Of course. Now during the war years, they didn't have the players that they had after the war was over. A lot of them came back from the service. In fact, we (the Detroit Tigers) were very fortunate in getting (Hank) Greenberg and (Virgil) Trucks back for the World Series in '45. So there was quite a bit of difference. I came up in '43. I didn't play much that year because I was down in Buffalo and came up and finished the season for about a month. Then I played '44 all the way through '49.

Q: Was the quality in '44 much less than in '49?

A: Well...I guess so because we didn't have as good a team. We got beat out (by the St. Louis Browns on) the last day of the season. The next year we won in the last game of the season.

Q: Do you recall the last weekend of the '44 season? Was there a pennant fever?

A: We drew pretty good. They came out to see us play. It was nip-and-tuck all the way down.

Q: How good was Dick Wakefield?

A: He never did live up to his potential. He looked great when he first came out, he looked good hitting and everything. Then, I don't know, he just came to a standstill for one reason or another.

Q: Do you recall any players from the Browns?

A: They had some pretty good pitching.

Q: The Browns didn't have a good reputation.

A: A lot of the players were scattered out in the service, in the minors too, so there weren't too many (players) to pick up and play.

Q: Was there a tainted feeling going to the World Series in the war years?

A: If it hadn't been for (President Franklin Roosevelt's "green light" letter), they probably would have closed it down. He seemed to think it helped morale at home, I don't know if it did or not. What it accomplished I don't know. We drew pretty good and people had time to go, so I don't know.

Q: How good was (Tigers ace) Hal Newhouser?

A: I think Hal could win now. He had good stuff. He had a fastball and a good curveball and a slider. He used his slider more for an off-speed pitch.

Q: How about Dizzy Trout?

A: Dizzy Trout was more of a fastball pitcher. His curve wasn't all that good. When he was going to get somebody out he'd throw his fastball. And he had, I guess you'd call it, a rising fastball.

Q: Dutch Leonard offered money last game.

A: I don't know. I read that. I couldn't say because I don't know.

Q: Were there rumors of gambling going around during the war?

A: Not that I knew of, I didn't see any of it.

Q: How was (Browns outfielder) Pete Gray?

A: For a one-armed guy, he was good. The trouble he had in the outfield — he was pretty quick — was on a low ball, he had to stoop over and he couldn't keep his balance if it was (at) his knees. Like a low line drive, he had trouble with that one.

Q: Do you recall what kind of player (Browns first baseman George) McQuinn was?

A: McQuinn was one of the best fielding first baseman I've ever seen, and he could hit the long ball. He wasn't a high average hitter but he was pretty tough with men on bases. He'd hit a home run once in a while, but he was more a line drive hitter. But he could field with any of them. He would have been with the Yankees if they didn't have that other guy (Lou Gehrig) ahead of him. I played against him in the minor leagues and I wondered why he wasn't up there. One reason was because he belonged to the Yankees and they weren't going to lose Gehrig from first base.

Q: Mark Christman?

A: He was pretty good, a steady ballplayer. He wasn't outstanding but he would give you a good job every day.

Q: Vern Stephens?

A: He was on and off. He'd have a streak, then slump, then come on.

Q: Sportsman's Park?

A: Well, both of them played in Sportsman's Park. The field wasn't in too good a shape because it'd have someone playing on it all the time. They wouldn't really have time to really get in shape for the next team playing in there. For me, it was a tough ballpark to play in because I was playing right field some, and the sun was the toughest sun field in the major leagues. It came right over the top of the stands when it was late in the ballgame, and it was just hard to see the ball coming off the bat. It was tough.

Q: What do you remember about the last weekend in 1944 (when the Browns swept the Yankees to clinch the pennant and the Tigers lost on the final day to the Washington Senators)?

A: Well, we just didn't hit Leonard at all with all the knuckleballs. (Rudy) York hit them pretty good. He liked knuckleballs. He had a hitch in his swing, and I guess it made it just right for him.

Q: How were the Browns pitchers?

A: Nelson Potter threw a slider and might have had a split-finger deals. (Denny) Galehouse had good control. Now he was a good pitcher, Galehouse was. He knew what he was doing. (Jack) Kramer was a control ball pitcher. He was a pretty tough man to hit. He kept you off-balance like these Atlanta (Braves) pitchers. Not throwing it hard, but you don't get hold of the ball too much either. (Sig) Jakucki, I don't know how you classify people like him. He was kind of a tough guy, I guess. He always had trouble in the Texas League, they told me. He was ready to fight at any time.

Q: (Browns manager) Luke Sewell?

A: A lot of people didn't get along with him, but I thought he was all right.

Q: Was he a hard-nosed kind of guy?

A: Yeah, that's right. It was just one of his ways, I guess.