

# The INSIDE GAME

The Official Newsletter of SABR's Deadball Era Committee



VOL. XVII, No. 5: "LET'S GET THIS LUMPY LICORICE-STAINED BALL ROLLING!" DECEMBER 2017

## A CONVERSATION WITH DEC CHAIRMAN JOHN McMURRAY

*Longtime Deadball Era Committee chairman is a man of many and varied baseball interests. Recently, he responded to questions posed by newsletter editor Bill Lamb. We think that you will find John's observations and opinions on the game, then and now, to be thoughtful and interesting. Readers will find some good research tips and insight into baseball card collecting, too.*

*Question: Why do you believe the Deadball Era should be of interest to current baseball fans?*

**John:** Baseball in the early-20<sup>th</sup> century closely resembles today's game, making comparisons between the old-time game and today's baseball wonderfully straightforward. These on-field similarities mean that baseball can offer a direct connection with its early history that no other major sport can. And since most of baseball's major rules changes were made in the 1890s, the Deadball Era game and the modern game can be compared statistically to a remarkable degree. Even if today's players are bigger and stronger, both batting and pitching statistics, for the most part, normalize in ways which makes it plausible to compare players from today and nearly 120 years ago, which is remarkable.

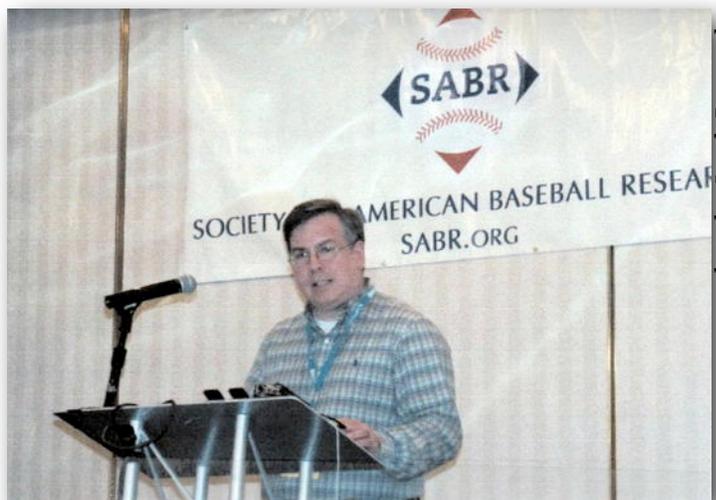


photo by Jacob Pomrenke

**John McMurray**

The players and events of the Deadball Era are also part of today's vocabulary. Even now, an incredible ending is held up against the Merkle game or Game 8 of the 1912 World Series. Fenway Park and Wrigley Field have their auras now partially because the greats of a century prior played there. The Cy Young Award recognizing each year's best pitchers is given in honor of a Deadball Era player. If a hitter is top-notch, he still draws comparisons to Ty Cobb. Players of today continue to chase records of yore, from Owen Wilson's 36 triples in 1912 to Young's 511 career wins, even if those records are not realistically attainable. In some sense, the

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Deadball Era never really leaves the conversation and remains an essential benchmark.

Moreover, the Deadball Era is inviting because fans and historians know enough about it to get a real sense of what baseball was like at that time. The first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century offered the first quality baseball video recordings and coincided with a new devotion to baseball photography. At the same time, every major event from that time which we think we know, we really don't know nearly as well as we wish we did. The Deadball Era game exists in the shadows, as more clarity emerges with each passing year of research. If the Deadball Era is the first relatable decade, at least relative to the modern game, it is also a baseball detective's dream. Researchers can still find new and essential material to explain the game's formation and development.

When I spoke with Glenn Stout about his book *Fenway 1912* for a previous edition of this newsletter, he mentioned that it is the events we

think we know which really need the most examination. In other words, it is easy to think that a subject like Fenway Park would have been exhausted after a century of discussion. Instead, Stout found new material simply by looking at a well-worn topic in a new way. From Honus Wagner to Babe Ruth to the Black Sox, we are still finding out new things about people and events that we thought we understood fully simply by looking at them from new angles and with more rigor. Few periods in baseball history offer more for a history detective to follow, and few offer more substance about why the game is played the way it is today.

*Question: What are some myths about the Deadball Era and how can we dispel them?*

John: One common misconception about the Deadball Era is that the style of play was consistent throughout. The early part of the period is what most think of as the quintessence of Deadball: low scoring games where teams had to outmaneuver each other strategically in order to score runs. That conception may be true especially from 1906 through 1908, but it hardly characterizes the entire Deadball Era. Rather, following the introduction of the cork-centered baseball, baseball in 1911 experienced an offensive explosion right in the middle of the Deadball Era. Such prolific hitting, continuing through 1913, is exactly the opposite of stereotypical Deadball Era baseball. In the second decade of the Deadball Era, it was pitchers' reliance on trick pitches, championed particularly by Russ Ford, which helped to limit offense thereafter rather than the ball itself.

There is a mythic quality about many of the well-known names of the Deadball Era which cuts both ways. On the one hand, many of these players—like Shoeless Joe Jackson or Walter Johnson—are thought of as prototypes for what a pitcher or a hitter should be. On the other hand, it is unrealistic to think that Jackson or Johnson, if either were to walk into today's game, would somehow be superior to today's players, who have the benefit of modern training techniques and are bigger and faster. In no other sport do we look back and think that yesterday's players—



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who also didn't have the advantages of modern coaching—are the best that ever were. Baseball benefits from this mythology, but it needs to be tempered with a dose of realism.

Because of baseball's lack of racial integration, records achieved at that time need to be taken in context. Without question, many of the records which are etched in stone in baseball fans' minds would be very different if the sport had been integrated. It is to the detriment of baseball that it was not.

*Question: As we approach the 100 year anniversary of the close of the Deadball Era, what areas of Deadball still require further exploration?*

*John:* When *The Inside Game* in November 2013 offered comments about prospective research from several notable members of the Committee, one topic came up several times: pushing towards complete play-by-play accounts of games on Retrosheet, including the minor-league games of the period. That is an especially important goal. While a great deal has been done in recent years to compile Deadball Era player biographies, far less has been done with respect to team histories. Some teams, especially the St. Louis Browns and even the forlorn New York Highlanders/Yankees, could use more comprehensive treatments on the team level.

What is also striking is that, in many cases, there has been *less* research done on many events and individuals than one might think. Several Deadball Era Hall of Famers have never been the subject of a biography. Even top-level players, like Honus Wagner and Walter Johnson, have only had a few books written about them, far less than one might think. If someone now were, say, to research the 1905 World Series or Gavy Cravath's home run exploits in the early 1910s, the starting point would still be articles rather than already-written books. That is to say, the number of topics with thorough treatment still far outnumbers the number of topics with thorough treatment.

The backbone of Deadball Era research is vintage newspaper accounts. Those who do the most



***Sam Crawford E90-1***

enduring Deadball Era research go back to these newspapers and also beyond the most commonly-cited newspaper sources, where possible. The Internet can only get vintage baseball researchers so far. New finds are found, most often, in the original material. It is always possible to find bits and pieces about Deadball Era research. But what we don't have is a comprehensive account of developments in the rules; a firm overview of how players were developed and acquired; or a broad statistical analysis of the Deadball Era. In other words, it

would be fruitful—and interesting—to examine topics about how teams were structured and run in the Deadball Era. Often, the areas that are of interest and discussion today can be particularly edifying when considered back then.

*As an accomplished Deadball researcher yourself, can you give us some insight into your research process. What do you do and how do you do it?*

John: My own involvement in delving into Deadball Era research started with writing biographies of individual players, beginning with Amos Strunk. Though never a top-line star, Strunk was a vital cog in some of Connie Mack's most successful teams. I was working on Strunk's biography for *Deadball Stars of the American League*, and I enjoyed seeing how it was possible to put together a portrait of a player from a century ago which went beyond statistics. Details, such as that Strunk was an expert photographer or that his wife was a portrait painter, helped to fill out their profiles.

No matter what the topic, I try and acquire more material than I would ever use. Recently, I was working on a piece about the Addie Joss benefit game, and I collected every article I could about the game itself. But, even in a story about a specific game, it was still important to read about Joss himself and his life before and after. Much of the piece about the Joss benefit game is about why the game was held, which meant that I needed to understand a variety of ancillary topics, including why Joss was so admired among his contemporaries and how the idea for the benefit game originated. The larger point is that even when writing and researching about something specific, any piece becomes more nuanced and well-developed when the author knows the subject and the background well and develops the narrative around it.

Researchers will sometimes say that that they don't believe they will be able to find enough information on a particular topic. Most of the time, there is enough there if a researcher takes the time to look for it. Of course, that won't be true with most cup-of-coffee players, for instance. But it is there in the newspaper and



***Eddie Plank T206***

often in the player's Hall of Fame file if the researcher takes the time to look through it.

*Question: Your baseball interests are hardly confined to Deadball. You are, for example, also active in the memorabilia community, writing about vintage baseball cards and other artifacts of the game in various publications. Tell us a little about that.*

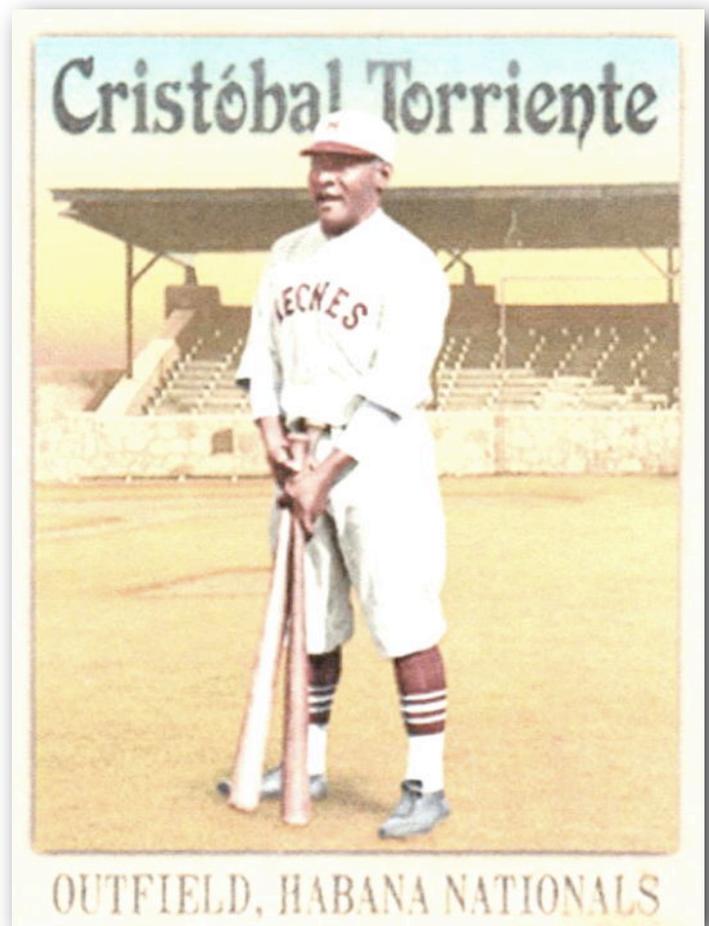
John: Baseball cards, in particular, provide a link to the sport which is distinctive. Many fans will

recall a player's baseball card image quickly. If you mention Willie Mays' 1965 Topps card or Reggie Jackson's 1975 Topps card, any longtime baseball card collector will be able to recall those images without hesitation. When considering Deadball Era baseball cards, fans think first of the T206 Honus Wagner card, of course. But the baseball cards of the period are among the most enduring images of many players. Whether it's Rube Waddell's T206 card pitching or Sam Crawford's E90-1 caramel card or Frank Chance's T205 portrait, I believe many collectors (and non-collectors) feel a certain kinship with the period through the cards. They are kind of a companion to the game and also a way to remember players.

In the Deadball Era, photos can be hard to come by of some players. But those who were portrayed on cards, they are known from their drawings by many collectors. The T206 Eddie Plank portrait is more well-recognized than any photograph ever taken of Plank, for one. That so many of these vintage cards exist in such good condition is extraordinary. No doubt the Deadball Era remains so accessible to so many is, in part, due to these wonderful vintage baseball cards.

*Question: Pick your all-time Deadball All-Star team.*

John: If the core of any Deadball Era All-Star team is beyond the realm of reasonable debate—with Honus Wagner at shortstop, Frank Baker at third base, Ty Cobb and Tris Speaker in the outfield, and Walter Johnson and Christy Mathewson as starting pitchers—there are a few positions, particularly catcher and second base, which are more open, and therefore more interesting. Of course, allowing players subsequently declared ineligible offers Joe Jackson and Hal Chase as possibilities, but for this exercise, ineligible players remain ineligible. Then there is the question of whether to select players whose contributions were primarily during the Deadball Era or also to select players who played during the Deadball Era but whose greatest accomplishments were outside of it. Choosing the former, as I do here, necessarily



removes Cy Young and George Sisler from consideration.

As the third outfielder, Cristobal Torriente would be my choice. With a career batting average of .331 in the Negro Leagues along with two batting titles (once hitting over .400) and good power, he was a more complete hitter than his closest competition in this race, namely Max Carey, Fred Clarke, Gavy Cravath, and Zack Wheat. Jake Daubert is my selection at first base. Daubert was a steady .300 hitter during the second decade of the Deadball Era, and his stellar fielding is often lost to history. Frank Chance would be a solid, if low-key choice here, but Daubert offers a more complete package, especially with Sisler out of the running. At second base, Napoleon Lajoie would be the choice. But that is not without giving consideration to Eddie Collins, who probably gets the shortest stick of any player under consideration. While Lajoie had more hits and a higher batting average during the Deadball Era,

by 11 points, than did Collins, Collins had nearly twice as many stolen bases than did Lajoie during the 1901-1919 period and was routinely among the league leaders in walks, runs, and sacrifice hits—all of great consequence during the Deadball Era. Overall, Lajoie was a more potent overall performer, but Collins is on my bench.

With Cy Young out of the running, my three remaining pitchers are Smokey Joe Williams (who has a claim to being the best pitcher in the history of the Negro Leagues); Grover Cleveland Alexander (whose statistics, if projected, would be similar to those of Christy Mathewson during the Deadball Era), and Eddie Plank. Plank always seems to get lost in the shuffle, but he was the premier left-hander of his time and his statistics have held up as the decades have gone by. Even with Plank's unimpressive World Series win-loss record, his 1.32 ERA in seven World Series starts speaks to his consistently fine work.

Addie Joss, who surely would have won the Cy Young Award in 1907 and 1908 if it had existed, also was a close call, though the brevity of his career makes him fall a bit short. The catcher position always comes down to Roger Bresnahan or Johnny Kling. Kling's defense, it is said, is commensurate with Bresnahan's offense. If so, Bresnahan's durability and his skill on the bases (212 stolen bases, in particular) give him an edge.

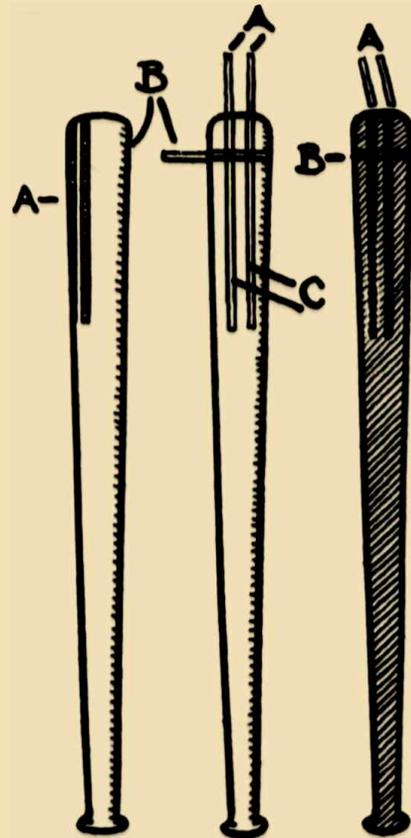
My team, therefore, is: 1B Jake Daubert; 2B Napoleon Lajoie; SS Honus Wagner; 3B Frank Baker; C Roger Bresnahan; OFs Ty Cobb, Tris Speaker, and Cristobal Torriente. SPs are Walter Johnson, Christy Mathewson, Smokey Joe Williams, Grover Cleveland Alexander, and Eddie Plank. If I had three reserves, they would be 2B Eddie Collins, SS John Henry Lloyd, and SP Addie Joss. And, as they say, there is only one manager, and his name is McGraw.

### INVENTS A BAT FOR BUNTING

BY MEANS OF NON-RESILIENT STRIPS  
INSERTED IN THE THICK END  
THE BLOW IS MUCH DEADENED

An improved baseball bat is the recent invention of George J. Blahos, a sailor on board the U.S.S. Mississippi. His device can be applied to any bat by a carpenter, says New York World. It consists of cutting slots in the thick or batting end of the bat, inserting in them strips of non-resilient material, cardboard, for instance, fastening these with a peg driven through at right angles to them.

The bat is especially designed for bunting, as when the ball is struck with the plane of the non-resilient strips presented to it the blow is much deadened. When the edges of the strips are used in striking the ball the reaction is substantially the same as when an ordinary bat is used.



Chicago Eagle, March 25, 1916

**ACCURATE RBI RECORDS FOR  
PLAYERS OF THE DEADBALL ERA:  
PART 13 — THE PLAYERS ON THE  
1911 DETROIT TIGERS**

by **Herm Krabbenhoft**

For the 1911 diamond season, Ty Cobb and Sam Crawford finished one-two among players in the American League for the highest pinch hitting percentage, their numbers being .986 and .938, respectively — according to an article in the 1912 edition of *The Sporting News*.<sup>1</sup> It is important to point out, however, that “pinch hitting” meant something entirely different back then compared to what “pinch hitting” connotes now.<sup>2</sup> During the Deadball Era, hitting in the pinch referred to coming through at a critical time — for example, getting an RBI single to knock in the tying run, especially late in a game; *i.e.*, “hitting in the clutch.” Nowadays, “pinch batter” means “substitute-batter.” So, for the article in *The Sporting News* — “American League Records Show Cobb Best In Pinch” — “pinch hitting percentage” gave the quotient obtained from dividing a player’s runs batted in by his games played. Thus, according to the *unofficial* runs-batted-in statistics compiled by Ernest J. Lanigan, Ty Cobb amassed 144 runs batted in while participating in 146 games, which yielded a .986 pinch hitting average. Of course, it should be appreciated that not all — indeed, most — of Cobb’s ribbies were not truly pinch RBIs.

Table 1 presents a list of the players (among those who accumulated 60 or more RBIs) who achieved a top-20 ranking in pinch hitting percentage — according to Lanigan’s contemporaneous research. Also shown are the RBI numbers according to Neft — *i.e.*, the *unofficial* RBI numbers ascertained from the mid-1960s research effort conducted under the direction of David S. Neft for the first edition of *The Baseball Encyclopedia* (published in 1969 by Macmillan).<sup>3</sup> It is important to point out that Runs-Batted-In statistics were not *officially recorded* by the American (and National) League(s) until the 1920 season. Moreover, the

Run-Batted-In was not even *officially defined* until 1931:

Official Scoring Rule for Runs Batted In (1920-1930) — *The summary shall contain: The number of runs batted in by each batsman. [Rule 86, Section B]*

Official Scoring Rule for Runs Batted In (1931) — *Runs Batted In are runs scored on safe hits (including home runs), sacrifice hits, outfield put-outs, infield put-outs, and when the run is forced over by reason of the batsman becoming a base-runner. With less than two outs, if an error is made on a play on which a runner from third would ordinarily score, credit the batsman with a Run Batted In. [Rule 70, Section 13]*

Inspection of Table 1 reveals that there are differences between Lanigan’s unofficial RBI numbers and Neft’s unofficial RBI numbers for 16 of the 20 players. For ten of the players with RBI deltas, Lanigan’s RBI number is greater than Neft’s RBI number, while Neft’s RBI number is greater than Lanigan’s RBI number for six of the players. Thus, at first blush, there does not appear to be a systemic reason for the differences. For three of the players, the differences in RBI numbers are substantial — Sam Crawford,  $\Delta = 22$  (137 vs. 115); Ty Cobb,  $\Delta = 17$  (144 vs. 127); and Ping Bodie,  $\Delta = 15$  (112 vs. 97). Since Runs-Batted-In is one of the classic metrics that have been employed to evaluate player performance (absolute and relative), the critical question with regard to the unofficial RBI statistics compiled by Lanigan and by Neft for the 1911 American League season is: *whose RBI numbers are correct, Lanigan’s or Neft’s ... OR ... are neither RBI numbers correct?* In this article I address that query for the players on the 1911 Detroit Tigers.

**RESEARCH PROCEDURE**

For the present investigation, I utilized the same rigorous *modus operandi* employed in my previous research efforts.<sup>4-15</sup> Thus, for each of the 831 runs scored by the Tigers in 1911, I sought to obtain three critical components: (a) the identity of the player who scored the run; (b)

the details of the run-scoring event [*e.g.*, a 2-RBI double, a balk, a 1-RBI grounder (batter safe on a fielding error), a 0-RBI grounder (batter safe on a fielding error), a 1-RBI bases-loaded walk, etc.]; and (c) the identity of the player who completed his plate appearance during the run-scoring event (*i.e.*, the player who could be credited with batting in the run). I followed the above-stated 1931 official scoring rules to credit or to not credit for RBIs.<sup>16</sup> I then provided the complete documentation that I assembled to Retrosheet's Tom Ruane and Dave Smith for their independent review, upon which we achieved 100% agreement and Retrosheet incorporated all of the runs-scored and runs-batted-in numbers in its Box Score file (and derived Player Daily files).<sup>17</sup> Appendix A-1 (available on SABR.org) provides a tabulation of the critical "(a)-(b)-(c)" information for each of the 831 runs scored by the 1911 Tigers.<sup>18</sup>

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2 presents the RBI numbers, according to my research, for each of the 29 players who participated in at least one game for the Detroit Tigers in the 1911 campaign. Also shown for comparison are the RBI numbers claimed by Lanigan (if available) and by Neft.<sup>1-3</sup>

Probably the most-striking aspect of Table 2 is that question marks are shown in the "RBIs (This Work)" column for twelve players — Paddy Baumann (10 ??), Joe Casey (3 ??), Jim Delahanty (104 ?), Delos Drake (36 ??), Del Gainer (28 ???), Ed Lafitte (7 ?), Chick Lathers (4 ?), Jack Lively (7 ?), George Moriarty (66 ???), Boss Schmidt (4 ??), Guy Tutwiler (4 ???), and Squanto Wilson (0 ?). The question marks are included because there are three late-season games for which the various newspaper accounts did not provide sufficient detailed information to allow one to assign complete RBI credit for these Detroit players who participated in the games — October 2 at Cleveland (Detroit lost, 7-4); October 6 at St Louis (Detroit lost 11-5); and October 8 at St. Louis (first game, Detroit lost 17-2). For example, Tutwiler may have batted in one run in the October 2 game and/or one run in the October 6 game, which would give him five



**Ty Cobb**

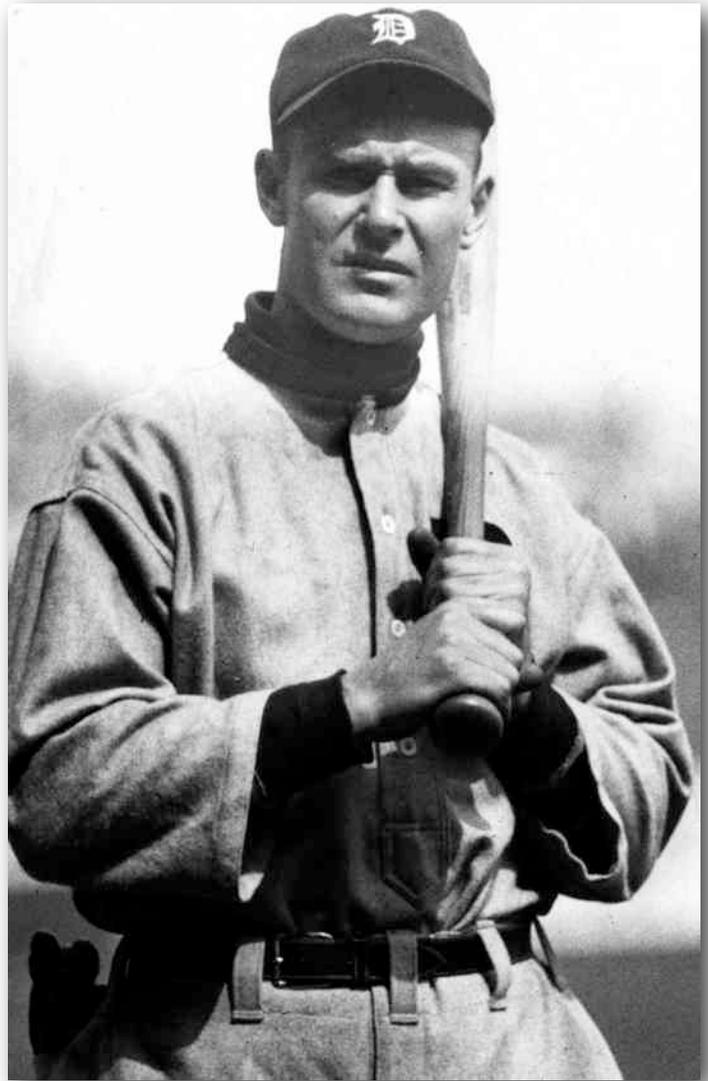
or six (instead of four) RBIs for the season. The Appendix A-2 provides the "complete" information given in the various newspaper accounts for each of these three games.

Thus, the RBI numbers given in the "This Work" column for Baumann, Casey, Delahanty, Drake, Gainer, Lafitte, Lathers, Lively, Moriarty, Schmidt, Tutwiler, and Wilson are minimum RBI numbers. As discussed in previous articles, Pete Palmer and Gary Gillette have decided to utilize the minimum full-season RBI numbers in Palmer's database of baseball statistics, because: "Based on the best currently-available evidence, the player certainly had at least the minimum number of runs batted in. The minimum number of RBIs is not an approximation or a guess of the actual RBIs achieved by the player."<sup>9</sup> With regard to the uncertainty of the RBI numbers for the three games, Retrosheet has chosen to leave the RBI cells blank in its box score file (and

derived player daily files) for those twelve players.<sup>17</sup> Fortunately, the RBI numbers are complete and accurate for Ty Cobb, Sam Crawford, Oscar Stanage, and Donie Bush (and several other players).

Focusing now on Cobb, it is seen that Lanigan's RBI number (144) is nine RBIs greater than my RBI number (135), while Neft's RBI number (127) is eight RBIs less than my number. Similarly, for Crawford, Lanigan's RBI number (137) is 15 RBIs greater than my RBI number (122), which is seven RBIs greater than Neft's number (115). It should be noted that Neft's RBI numbers were adopted by many of the various baseball encyclopedias.<sup>19-21</sup> Lanigan's RBI numbers were utilized in just one baseball encyclopedia.<sup>22</sup> It is appropriate to re-emphasize that I have assembled compelling evidence in support of my RBI numbers — which I provided to Tom Ruane and Dave Smith for their independent review and that we achieved 100% agreement — the RBI numbers being incorporated in the Retrosheet box score file for its website.

Finally, to wrap up this report, let's look at a topic of record-book interest — “Most Games, Consecutive, Runs Batted In.” According to *The Elias Book of Baseball Records* (published by Seymour Siwoff of the Elias Sports Bureau, the official statisticians for Major League Baseball), the ML record is 17 games, by Ray Grimes of the Chicago Cubs (June 27-July 23, 1922). The AL record is 14 games, by Tris Speaker of the Philadelphia Athletics (May 16-30(1g), 1928). However, as emphasized at the beginning of the “Runs Batted In” section, Elias does not take into consideration RBIs before 1920: “Runs Batted In (since 1920 — Prior seasons not compiled on official score[sheet]s.)”<sup>23</sup> In order to help address this pre-1920 RBIs void in the record book, I have undertaken a research program to ascertain “Accurate RBI Records for Players of the Deadball Era.”<sup>4-15</sup> This article extends the effort back to 1911 for the Detroit Tigers. With complete and accurate RBI statistics now available, the longest Consecutive Games RUN Batted In (CGRUNBI) streak can be readily



***Sam Crawford***

ascertained for each Tigers player for the 1911 campaign. According to my research, Delahanty fashioned the longest CGRUNBI streak — a nine-gamer. Next in line with five-gamers were Cobb and Crawford. And two players produced four-gamers — Drake and Moriarty. For comparison, a search of the Retrosheet database reveals that the longest CGRUNBI streak for players on the other 15 1911 major league teams are eight-gamers, achieved by Birdie Cree of the New York Highlanders and Owen Wilson of the Pittsburgh Pirates. However, it is important to point out that there are numerous games for which Retrosheet does not (yet) have RBI information. For example, for the Cleveland Indians, there are 66 games without RBI information. Thus, there could be players with CGRUNBI streaks longer

than the nine-gamer accomplished by Jim Delahanty. Based on the results obtained thus far in my “Deadball Era RBIs” program, the longest CGRUNBI streak found is Delahanty’s nine-gamer. The longest CGRUNBI streak that emerges from the Retrosheet database is a ten-gamer by Stuffy McInnis of the 1912 Philadelphia Athletics.<sup>24</sup>

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I gratefully thank the following people for their tremendous help and cooperation in providing me with scans and photocopies of game accounts from newspapers to which they had access: Jay Buck, Dave Newman, Nancy Oliver, Gary Stone, and Dixie Tourangeau. I also greatly appreciate Tom Ruane’s fantastic cooperation in reviewing the documentation I assembled. Finally, I should also like to thank Gary Gillette, Pete Palmer, Tom Ruane, and Dave Smith for their guidance and inputs.

#### REFERENCES AND NOTES

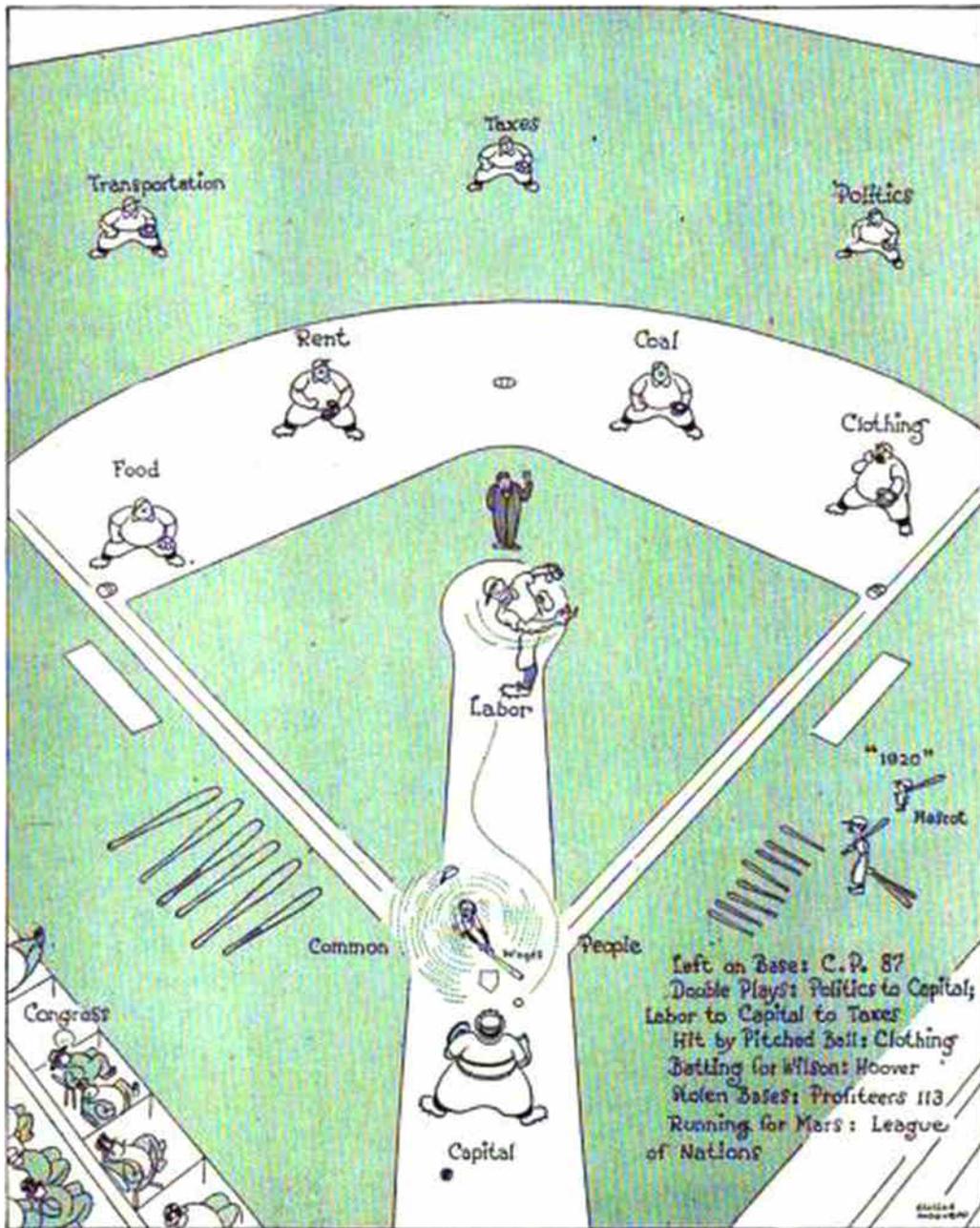
1. “American League Records Show Cobb Best In Pinch,” *The Sporting News*, (February 29, 1912), 2.
2. Paul Dickson, *The Dickson Baseball Dictionary* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011).
3. David S. Neft (Director of Research, Information Concepts Incorporated), Lee Allen (Historian, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum), and Robert Markel (Executive Editor, Macmillan Company), *The Baseball Encyclopedia* (New York: Macmillan, 1969, and subsequent editions published in 1974, 1976, 1979, 1982, 1985, 1988, 1990, 1993, 1996). See also, David S. Neft and Richard M. Cohen, *Sports Encyclopedia: Baseball* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1974 and subsequent editions published annually through 2007).
4. Herm Krabbenhoft, “Accurate RBI Records for the Players of the Deadball Era: Part 1 — The Players on the 1919 Boston Red Sox,” *The Inside Game*, Volume XIV, Number 1 (February 2014), 1.
5. Herm Krabbenhoft, “Accurate RBI Records for the Players of the Deadball Era: Part 2 — The Players on the 1906 Detroit Tigers,” *The Inside Game*, Volume XIV, No. 3 (June 2014), 4.
6. Herm Krabbenhoft, “Accurate RBI Records for the Players of the Deadball Era: Part 3 — The Players on the 1919 Detroit Tigers,” *The Inside Game*, Volume XIV, No. 4 (September 2014) 11.
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8. Herm Krabbenhoft, “Accurate RBI Records for the Players of the Deadball Era: Part 5 — The Players on the 1918 Detroit Tigers,” *The Inside Game*, Volume XV, No. 2 (April 2015), 12.
9. Herm Krabbenhoft, “Accurate RBI Records for the Players of the Deadball Era: Part 6 — The Players on the 1917 Tigers and White Sox,” *The Inside Game*, Volume XV, No. 5 (November 2015), 1.
10. Herm Krabbenhoft, “Accurate RBI Records for the Players of the Deadball Era: Part 7 — The Players on the 1917 New York Giants,” *The Inside Game*, Volume XV, No. 3 (June 2015), 22.
11. Herm Krabbenhoft, “Accurate RBI Records for the Players of the Deadball Era: Part 8 — The Players on the 1916 Tigers,” *The Inside Game*, Volume XVI, No. 1 (February 2016), 17.
12. Herm Krabbenhoft, “Accurate RBI Records for the Players of the Deadball Era: Part 9 — The Players on the 1913 Detroit Tigers,” *The Inside Game*, Volume XVI, No. 3 (June 2016), 3.
13. Herm Krabbenhoft, “Accurate RBI Records for the Players of the Deadball Era: Part 10 — The Players on the 1915 Detroit Tigers,” *The Inside Game*, Volume XVI, No. 5 (November 2016), 17.
14. Herm Krabbenhoft, “Accurate RBI Records for the Players of the Deadball Era: Part 11 — The Players on the 1914 Detroit Tigers,” *The Inside Game*, Volume XVII, No. 1 (February 2017), 19.
15. Herm Krabbenhoft, “Accurate RBI Records for the Players of the Deadball Era: Part 12 — The Players on the 1912 Detroit Tigers,” *The Inside Game*, Volume XVII, No. 2 (April 2017), 24.
16. It is pointed out that the 1931 RBI rule is essentially the same as the current rule, the only significant difference being the “No RBI Credit for Batters Hitting in a Groundout Double Play” rule adopted in 1939.
17. Email correspondence between Herm Krabbenhoft and Tom Ruane and Dave Smith, June-October 2017.
18. See also, Herm Krabbenhoft, “Accurate Runs-Scored Records for the Players of the Deadball Era: Part 12 — The Players on the 1911 Detroit Tigers,” *The Inside Game*, Volume XVII, No. 4 (September 2017), 4.
19. John Thorn, Pete Palmer, and Michael Gershman, *Total Baseball* (Kingston, New York: Total Sports Publishing, 2001, and previous

editions published in 1989, 1991, 1993, 1995, 1997, and 1999).

20. Gary Gillette and Pete Palmer, *The ESPN Baseball Encyclopedia* (New York: Sterling Publishing Co, Inc., 2008, and previous editions published in 2004, 2005, 2006, and 2007).
21. Bill James, John Dewan, Don Zminda, Jim Callis, and Neil Munro, *Bill James presents STATS All-Time Major League Handbook* (STATS: Morton Grove, Illinois, 2000).
22. Hy Turkin and S.C. Thompson, *The Official Encyclopedia of Baseball* (New York, A.S. Barnes and Company, 1951, and subsequent editions

published in 1956, 1959, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1970, 1972, 1974, 1976, 1977, and 1979). It is also pointed out that Lanigan's RBI numbers were used by *The Sporting News* in some its publications; for example, see: J.G. Taylor Spink, *Daguerreotypes of Great Stars of Baseball*, (St. Louis: *The Sporting News*, 1951, and subsequent editions published in 1958, 1961, 1968, 1971, 1981, and 1990).

23. Seymour Siwoff, *The Elias Book of Baseball Records*, (New York: Seymour Siwoff, 2017), 25.
24. Tom Ruane, personal communications (emails) to Herm Krabbenhoft, January 10-14, 2017.



Life Magazine, July 22, 1920

THE GRAND OLD GAME

**TABLE 1. TOP-TWENTY PLAYERS IN PINCH HITTING PERCENTAGE  
(1911 AMERICAN LEAGUE)**

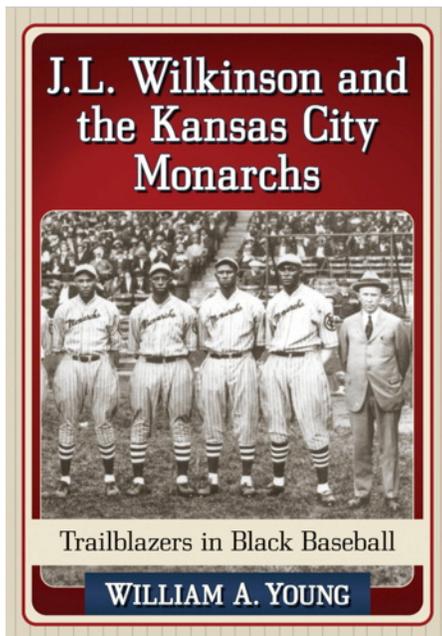
Rank	Player	Team	%	G	RBIs (Lanigan)	RBIs (Neft)	Δ
1	Ty Cobb	DET	0.986	146	144	127	17
2	Sam Crawford	DET	0.938	146	137	115	22
3	Frank Baker	PHI	0.777	148	115	115	—
4	Ping Bodie	CHI	0.772	145	112	97	15
5	Jim Delahanty	DET	0.701	144	101	94	7
6	Nap Lajoie	CLE	0.667	90	60	60	—
7	Birdie Cree	NY	0.642	137	88	88	—
8	Roy Hartzell	NY	0.632	144	91	91	—
9	Stuffy McInnis	PHI	0.627	126	79	77	(2)
10	Duffy Lewis	BOS	0.623	137	81	86	(5)
11	Joe Jackson	CLE	0.599	147	88	83	5
12	George Stovall	CLE	0.579	126	73	79	(6)
13	Doc Gessler	WAS	0.570	128	73	78	(5)
14	Tris Speaker	BOS	0.568	141	80	70	10
15	Frank LaPorte	STL	0.544	136	74	82	(8)
16	Nixey Callahan	CHI	0.542	120	65	60	5
17	Eddie Collins	PHI	0.538	132	71	73	(2)
18	George Moriarty	DET	0.500	130	65	60	5
19	John Knight	NY	0.492	132	65	62	3
20	Dan Murphy	PHI	0.475	141	67	66	1

NOTE: For the Δ column, a value in parentheses indicates that Neft's RBI number is greater than Lanigan's RBI number.

**TABLE 2. RUNS-BATTED-IN NUMBERS  
FOR PLAYERS ON THE 1911 DETROIT TIGERS**

Player (Games)	RBIs (This Work)	RBIs (Lanigan)	RBIs (Neft)	Player (Games)	RBIs (This Work)	RBIs (Lanigan)	RBIs (Neft)
Paddy Baumann (26)	10 ??	10	11	Clarence Mitchell (5)	0	NA	0
Donie Bush (150)	35	31	36	George Moriarty (130)	66 ???	65	60
Joe Casey (15)	3 ??	3	3	George Mullin (40)	4	6	5
Pug Cavet (1)	0	NA	0	Jack Ness (12)	3	NA	2
Ty Cobb (146)	135	144	127	Charley O'Leary (74)	26	NA	25
Tex Covington (17)	3	7	3	Biff Schaller (40)	7	6	7
Sam Crawford (146)	122	137	115	Boss Schmidt (28)	4 ??	NA	2
Jim Delahanty (144)	104 ?	101	94	Oscar Stanage (141)	54	52	51
Bill Donovan (24)	8	10	6	Ed Summers (30)	4	7	3
Delos Drake (95)	36 ??	31	36	Wiley Taylor (3)	0	NA	0
Del Gainer (70)	28 ???	24	25	Guy Tutwiler (13)	4 ???	NA	3
Davy Jones (98)	19	14	19	Ed Willett (39)	10	11	7
Ed Lafitte (31)	7 ?	8	6	Squanto Wilson (5)	0 ?	NA	0
Chick Lathers (29)	4 ?	2	4	Ralph Works (30)	3	3	3
Jack Lively (20)	7 ?	5	4				

NOTES: (1) For some of the players, their "Lanigan" RBI numbers were not given in the article in The Sporting News; the "NA" entry indicates this. (2) See text for meaning of the question marks in the "RBIs (This Work)" column for some of the players.



**J. L. WILKINSON AND THE  
KANSAS CITY MONARCHS:  
TRAILBLAZERS IN  
BLACK BASEBALL**

**BY WILLIAM A. YOUNG**

2016, McFarland  
[ISBN: 978-1476662992. 240  
pp. \$34.98 USD. Paperback]

Reviewed by  
**Charles R. Crawley**  
crcrawley@gmail.com

Much of the overall history of black baseball has been told and told well, so it is left to writers like William A. Young to flesh out the details. He has done so in a both interesting and academically responsible way in *J. L. Wilkinson and the Kansas City Monarchs*. Though white, Wilkinson is most famous for owning the Monarchs in the Negro National League. Before reading this book, I did not know much about Wilkinson or the Monarchs, but I came away with a greater appreciation for

both and a desire to know more.

As an Iowan I was pleased that Wilkinson was from Iowa, played a lot of semipro professional baseball here, and often barnstormed here with the Monarchs. I think that much of Wilkinson's even temperament and impartial treatment of black ballplayers in the Jim Crow era comes from the progressive nature of the state.

Wilkinson played semipro baseball in Iowa and used to joke that he "played for Brooklyn" — Brooklyn, Iowa that is. He continued that career until he broke his wrist. His idea of a black league may have been stimulated by his play against a team called the "Buxton Wonders." Buxton was a "coal-mining town in southeastern Iowa with a majority African American population." (p. 9).

I was continually amazed that Wilkinson seemed so ahead of his time, often experimenting or introducing practices not more formalized for many years. For example, in 1908 he organized a "Bloomer Girls" baseball team that was able to compete with men's teams. This was three decades before the women's baseball leagues that were celebrated in the 1992 film, *A League of Their Own*. And he took care of his players on the road, starting with his women's teams. But as this book reiterates, Wilkinson never fell for gimmicks or promotions without providing

quality baseball. That's what separated him from some of the other teams in the Negro Leagues.

For Deadball fans, the most interesting part of this book is Chapter 2, "Breaking New Ground—The All Nations Team," a team that combined a mixture of nationalities, ethnicities, and genders. Jose Mendez was one of his great pitchers, and he hailed from Cuba. In barnstorming tours he bested Eddie Plank and the great Christy Mathewson, even earning the nickname "The Black Mathewson" and the praise of John McGraw. He entered the Hall of Fame in 2006. Another pitcher from Cuba was Cristobal Torriente, who also made the Hall of Fame. "Jap Mikado" was the first professional Japanese baseball player. There were a couple of Native Americans, Cherokee Sam Crow and Chippewa Joe Graves, the latter from Connie Mack, who had already been well served by another Chippewa pitcher, "Chief" Bender.

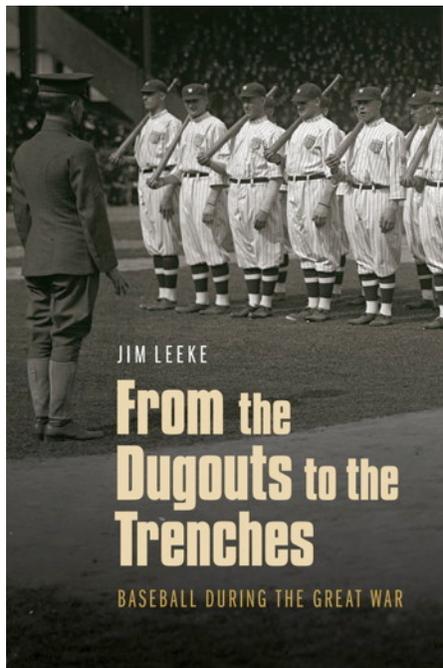
Wilkinson was able to get around Jim Crow laws in the south with the aid of a specially-built Pullman car. In the end, there were blacks, whites, Cubans, Chinese, and even women who played for the All Nations Team. The team played an important role in the history of interracial baseball and formed the nucleus for what would become the Kansas City Monarchs.

Later chapters of the book cover the forming of the Negro Leagues, the rise of the Monarchs as a baseball powerhouse, the innovations of night baseball and barnstorming, and the careers of Satchel Paige and Jackie Robinson, who were both Monarchs at one point in their careers. Regarding Robinson, Wilkinson's poaching of Buck O'Neil would come back to haunt him when Jackie Robinson jumped his contract with the Monarchs and joined the Brooklyn Dodgers with Branch Rickey in 1945.

As for criticisms of the book, I think McFarland editors would do well to provide headings within chapters rather than requiring the reader to decipher the precise subject or the year in question. And as a reader, I would have liked to know why Monarchs trainer Frank Floyd was called "Jew Baby." Certainly an anti-Semitic moniker like that deserves an explanation.

Wilkinson joined the Hall of Fame in 2006, and deservedly so for his role in the Negro Leagues, for his creative barnstorming tours, and for his inventive approach to night baseball, which saved the league during the Great Depression. Most importantly, as Young says, "While Wilkinson may not have seen himself as a racial reformer, his Monarchs were certainly playing an important role in the struggle against discrimination" (p. 39).

*Charles Crawley is a former editor of The Inside Game who quietly roots for the Milwaukee Brewers now that the Cubs have won the World Series, even though the 1906-1910 Cubs will never be equaled.*



**FROM THE DUGOUTS  
TO THE TRENCHES:  
BASEBALL DURING  
THE GREAT WAR**

**BY JIM LEEKE**

*2017, University of Nebraska  
Press*

*[ISBN: 978-0803290723. 272  
pp. \$32.95 USD.Hardcover]*

Reviewed by

**Bob Wirz**

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The most important aspect of Jim Leeke's hardcover book *From the Dugout to the Trenches* is the story it tells of baseball's involvement in World War I. So much has

been written through the decades about many of baseball's big name players from Christy Mathewson to Bob Feller to Ted Williams either as war heroes or what the years serving their country meant in terms of their career or future. This 195-page book from University of Nebraska Press goes 180 degrees in a different direction, detailing how the sport undertook to support the war effort while at the same time attempting to preserve itself as a vital American entity.

Not every personality or team comes away standing as much at attention as the game's most ardent supporters might prefer, although those whose effort was less than 100 per cent are definitely in the minority. Overall, the National Pastime comes out looking pretty good. I believe every reader short of being a historian in his own right will be surprised at how involved the teams became as the war effort was gearing up. Most fans probably have no idea that military men were assigned fulltime to most teams so they could lead extensive drills early on the days of games. Training became so intense -- competitive in its own right -- that teams sometimes were graded for the quality of their drills. The St. Louis Browns, normally one of the weaker teams on the diamond, won one American League competition, "thereby demonstrating to their fans that 'bad baseball does not

equal bad marching," Leeke relates.

The manner in which the author writes throughout the book makes it difficult to find a smooth flow of information, although one must remember that he was piecing the information together from a multitude of sources. A onetime U.S. Navy man who has covered major league baseball and authored other books on the sport's role in World War I, Leeke proved a master of research. His footnotes go on for pages as he painstakingly credits newspapers and other sources from around the country for the tiniest of details. Take, for example, this paragraph attributed to Bozeman Bulger of *The New York World* as he described the drill scene prior to the New York Yankees' home opener at the Polo Grounds in 1917 (yes, they leased it from the New York Giants):

*New Yorkers are skeptical by nature, and all along they had this thing of ball players drilling (as) a joke. But after the first gasp of wonder their mouths hung open in amazement as the Yankee team went through movement after movement with the precision of a machine. At the completion of every formation the gang (a reported 15,000 people attended the game) would rise and cheer.*

The book also details the depth of the discussion over whether

baseball should continue during times of war and emphasizes the peril of both major and minor league teams as rosters were watered down by the loss of personnel. Individual players are mentioned throughout the book, of course, although they are not often singled out for praise. One exception is catcher Hank Gowdy, who spent most of his 17-year playing career with the Boston Braves although he had two stints with the New York Giants. Leeke points out that Gowdy, who eventually rose to the rank of Major, was the first active major leaguer to enlist in the Army. "The simple act of signing his Army enlistment papers instantly transformed Gowdy into Major League Baseball's greatest war hero." As famed sportswriter Grantland Rice is credited as saying in a poem: "But don't forget, as the cheers emerge, That Old Lank Hank was the first to go." Gowdy, already popular for hitting .545 for the Miracle Braves in the 1914 World Series, had a Georgia ballpark dedicated in his honor

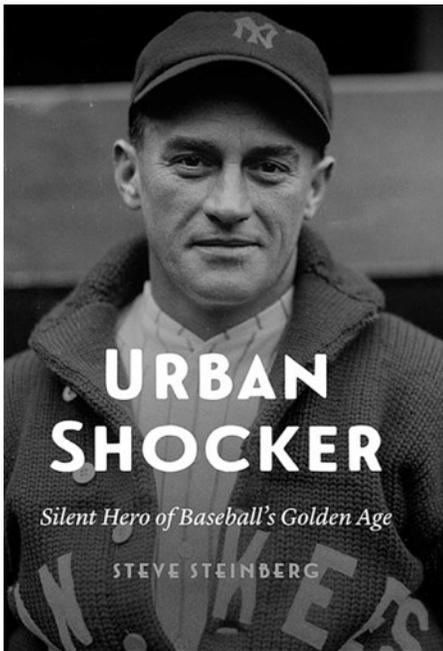
in 1925. "I frankly tried to get the authorities to name the field ... after Captain (Eddie) Grant" (whose remains were interred in German-occupied France), said Gowdy but was informed the field must be named after an enlisted man. The author attributes this information to a story written by J. G. Taylor Spink, the longtime publisher of *The Sporting News*.

While *From the Dugout to the Trenches* is not the easiest of reads, it is recommended for its historical depth during this time of great uncertainty. Devoted baseball fans will take considerable pride in understanding the depth of involvement since the sport played such a pivotal role in American society.

*Bob Wirz served as chief spokesman for Baseball Commissioners Bowie Kuhn and Peter Ueberroth from 1974 to 1985, and published a book entitled The Passion of Baseball last October. The book is available at traditional book buying sites or via [www.WirzandAssociates.com](http://www.WirzandAssociates.com).*

#### **PUBLISHERS ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

The books reviewed in this issue were generously supplied to us by their publishers. *From the Dugouts to the Trenches*, *Urban Shocker*, and *Before Jackie Robinson* are published by the University of Nebraska Press and can be ordered by email ([orders@longleafservices.org](mailto:orders@longleafservices.org)) or telephone (800-848-6224). To order *J.L. Wilkinson and the Kansas City Monarchs*, contact McFarland via [info@mcfarlandpub.com](mailto:info@mcfarlandpub.com) or 800-253-2187, while *Baseball in Buffalo*, published by Arcadia, can be obtained from Amazon and other on-line retail booksellers. Your patronage of these publishers is respectfully recommended.



**URBAN SHOCKER:  
SILENT HERO OF  
BASEBALL'S GOLDEN  
AGE**

**BY STEVE STEINBERG**

*2017, University of Nebraska  
Press*

*[ISBN: 978-0803295995. 352  
pp. \$32.95 USD.Hardcover]*

Reviewed by

**Allan Wood**

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Urban Shocker pitched parts of 13 seasons for the Yankees and Browns before dying at age 38 of heart failure in 1928. In his introduction, Steve Steinberg writes that having been diagnosed with heart irregularities himself in 2009 provided him “with a stronger understanding of and connection to Shocker’s story.” Steinberg has delivered an informative and empathetic portrait, breathing life into the largely forgotten story of a man

who threw his last major league pitch almost 90 years ago. As many newsletter readers know, Steinberg has co-written two books (with Lyle Spatz) that cover much of the same time period as this biography: *1921: The Yankees, the Giants, and the Battle for Baseball Supremacy in New York* (University of Nebraska Press, 2010/2011 Seymour Medal Award winner) and *The Colonel and Hug: The Partnership That Transformed the New York Yankees* (University of Nebraska Press, 2015/2016 SABR Baseball Research Award recipient).

Shocker was supremely confident in his abilities, often to the point of cockiness. After being signed by the Yankees, he reported for spring training in 1916 and made the club, but after two relief appearances, he was sent down to Toronto (International League). The demotion rankled him, but he performed extremely well, setting a new IL record of 54 consecutive scoreless innings. When he rejoined the Yankees in August, a sportswriter asked if he expected more challenges from major league hitters. “One league is just the same as another,” Shocker said. “They fall for my stuff in one just as they do in the other . . . I got a ball none of them will do much with.”

Shocker’s reputation as a cerebral pitcher (“with the nerve of a burglar”) was established early in his career. He read several newspapers each day, studying the box

scores to discern which hitters were hot. He was also a keen observer while on the mound, intuiting a batter’s intentions by the way he waggled the bat or by the placement of his feet in the box. “I doubt there is another pitcher in the game,” wrote St. Louis sports editor Sid Keener, “who studies his batters as carefully as Shocker and gives them just what they don’t want.”

Steinberg quotes one description of Shocker’s legendary slow ball (or change-up) as coming upon the batter “as mist drifts past a street lamp on a foggy night.” To another writer, his slow pitches “looked as big as trucks and were as elusive as greased fleas.” Many observers believed his change-up was actually a spitball, and while Shocker did throw a spitter, he threw it infrequently, and less often as he matured.

Shocker had been with the Yankees for two seasons when Miller Huggins was hired as manager in 1918, and one of Huggins’s first decisions was to trade the right-hander to the Browns. Huggins later regretted his “foolish” decision, saying he had taken advice from too many people and “my informant had done Shocker a very grave injustice.” Steinberg’s narrative balances the events of Shocker’s life with the larger trends in baseball during the 1920s, such as Babe Ruth’s emergence as a hitter and the subsequent increase in offense, the banning of certain pitches, and the evolution of

the rosters of both the Yankees and Browns (with spotlights on George Sisler and Bob Meusel, among others).

For much of his career, Shocker's confidence was coupled with a pugnacious attitude on the field. He often argued loudly with umpires about balls and strikes, both on the mound and at the plate. He was also friends with fellow pitchers Ray Caldwell and Dave Davenport, both heavy drinkers. Shocker sometimes disappeared on road trips, likely off on a bender and staying with his sister, who lived in Detroit. One newspaper quoted a heckler yelling "Urban Schicker!" (Yiddish for a drunk).

After the Yankees reacquired Shocker for the 1925 season, he began experiencing health problems, suffering from shortness of breath and dizziness. He knew he needed to pace himself (keeping his condition a secret was essential) and was more reserved now, more subdued. In 1928, Shocker confided to sportswriter Bill Corum: "I've slept sitting up for three years." Lying down created congestion

in his lungs and made him feel like he was choking. (Corum kept Shocker's comments a secret for decades.)

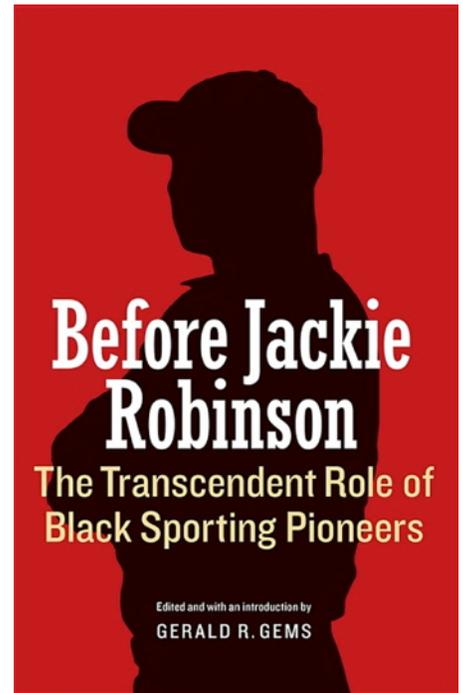
During the winter of 1927-1928, Shocker's weight dropped to 115 pounds (his playing weight was usually listed as 170). He talked about retiring, hoping that would buy him some time to get his weight back up. Shocker eventually joined the Yankees and, on May 30, pitched two scoreless innings of relief against the Senators. No one knew it, but that would be the final game of his career. Less than two weeks later, Shocker collapsed while pitching batting practice in Chicago. He passed away in September 1928 in a Denver hospital. An autopsy revealed an overworked and enlarged heart. As Steinberg states: "He simply could not pump enough blood through his body."

*Allan Wood is the author of Babe Ruth and the 1918 Red Sox (Writers Club Press, 2001) and co-author of Don't Let Us Win Tonight: An Oral History of the 2004 Boston Red Sox's Impossible Playoff Run (Triumph Books, 2014).*

#### INSURES COSTLY PLAYER

PITTSBURG, PA.—President Dreyfuss of the Pittsburg baseball club announced today that he had placed an insurance policy of \$25,000 on the life of Marty O'Toole, the pitcher recently acquired from the St. Paul club, and that he would take out an accident policy for a large sum of money as soon as O'Toole had reported to Pittsburg.

*The Salt Lake Tribune, July 26, 1911*



### **BEFORE JACKIE ROBINSON: THE TRANSCENDENT ROLE OF BLACK SPORTING PIONEERS**

**GERALD R. GEMS,  
EDITOR**

*2017, University of Nebraska  
Press*

*[ISBN: 978-0-8032-6679-7.  
324 pp. \$35.00 USD.  
Paperback]*

Reviewed by

**Rich Puerzer**

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Jackie Robinson, Jack Johnson, and Jesse Owens are arguably the most important African American athletes of the first half of the twentieth century, and their stories are well known. However, there were a great many other African American athletes who shone brightly, but who are nearly forgotten today. This

collection of essays assembled and edited by Gerald Gems brings the stories of many talented and important athletes, both men and women, to the fore. Each essay was written by a different author who brings his or her own style and depth of research. Some of the essays focus on the athletic accomplishments of their subject. Other essays only minimally discuss the athletes' accomplishments, but instead focus upon the larger story of racial inequality in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. All of the essays help elucidate the lives of otherwise little known figures in American sports history. Given the venue of this review, it must be stated that despite the book's title and the apparent direct connection to Jackie Robinson, the vast majority of the athletes featured were not baseball players or figures. That does not diminish the book in any way if one is seeking to learn more about these black athletes and their pioneering work across a variety of sporting endeavors.

The primary baseball-related essay is on Andrew "Rube" Foster, authored by Michael Lomax. Lomax has published two important books on Negro League history, *Black Baseball Entrepreneurs 1860-1901: Operating by Any Means Necessary* and *Black Baseball Entrepreneurs: The Negro National and Eastern Colored Leagues 1902-1931*. In this essay, Lomax provides a brief biography of Rube Foster but

focuses principally on the period from 1910 to 1920 when Foster worked to create a stable and sustainable African American baseball league. Lomax documents the challenges that Foster faced as an African American entrepreneur working with the white power structure in order to expand the playing of black baseball to a business venture. Foster first gained success in partnering in Chicago with a white entrepreneur, John Schorling, and later working with the black newspaper, the *Chicago Defender*, to promote his team. Foster was able to bring success to his team, the Chicago American Giants, and likewise successfully created the Negro National League. While Lomax's essay fits well in the context of the book, anyone wishing to learn more details about Rube Foster and his life's work in the Negro Leagues would do well to seek out Lomax's two books.

A few other black baseball players are mentioned in the

book, although not always in the context of baseball. Two are discussed in the context of basketball: Clarence "Fats" Jenkins and Bill Yancey. Jenkins was a great baseball player, starring for the Harrisburg Giants of the 1920s among other teams, but is best known as a basketball player and a member of the Harlem Renaissance, better known as the Rens. Bill Yancey likewise played both in the Negro Leagues and for the Rens. Basketball is the focus of three of the essays. Bob Douglas, owner and manager of the Rens, and whose business philosophy and approach is similar in some respects to Rube Foster, is profiled by Susan Rayl. Tommy Brookins, a pioneer in early Chicago basketball and founder of the team that would later become the Harlem Globetrotters, is authored by Murry Nelson. James Coates contributed an essay on the somewhat obscure figure, Harold "Killer" Johnson, who played for

Failing to prove his charges that games had been "thrown" by the Memphis Baseball Club, resulting in a loss of the pennant of 1907 to Atlanta, Otis H. Stockdale (sic) was suspended indefinitely by the Southern League board of directors, who sat to probe the scandal. Stockdale (sic) appeared in person and denied that he had made the charges as published in an Atlanta newspaper, but affidavits supporting Sporting Editor Taylor of the Journal were introduced from Percy Whiting, a newspaper man, and R. G. Wilby, a traveling salesman.

*Editors note: Otis Stockdale had been a member of the 1907 Memphis Southern Association team, but by the time of this decision he was with the Mobile team. His later career included umpiring a dozen major league games in 1915.*

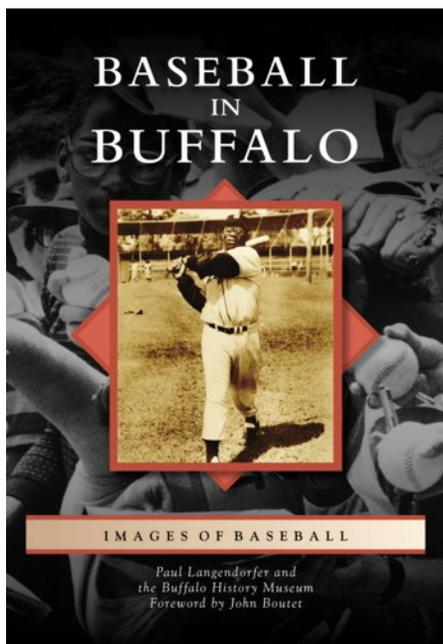
*The (Clarksburg, WV) Daily Telegram, June 20, 1908*

several professional basketball teams that barnstormed around the country. While the book does not purposefully draw connections between early black basketball and baseball, a number of similarities between the plights of the players and black team owners are evident.

The book features several other well-presented essays on black sports pioneers in a wide breadth of sports. Golfers John M. Shippen Jr. and Teddy Rhodes, jockey Isaac Burns Murphy, tennis player Isadore Channels, track and field athletes Tidye Pickett and Sol Butler, football player Sam Ransom, and aviatrix Bessie Coleman all receive treatments. The variety of sports and athletes covered in the selection of essays proves to be a strength of the book.

While the baseball content in this collection is quite sparse, and the content that is included does not tread much new ground for anyone familiar with the life of Rube Foster, the other essays do provide anyone interested in learning more about the broader sporting environment for African Americans in the first several decades of the twentieth century in the United States.

*Rich Puerzer is Chairperson of the Engineering Department of Hofstra University. His most recent research interest is the Harrisburg Giants of the Eastern Colored League and their owner Colonel Strothers.*



**BASEBALL IN BUFFALO  
BY PAUL LANGENDORFER  
AND THE BUFFALO  
HISTORY MUSEUM**

*2017, Arcadia Publishing  
[ISBN: 978-1467125154. 128  
pp. \$21.99 USD. Paperback]*

Reviewed by  
**Irv Goldfarb**  
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Full disclosure: Like most SABR members, and most history buffs in general I presume, I've been a huge fan of the Arcadia Publishing's "Hometown History" series since it began in 1993. Having spent my career in radio and television, I go out of my way to buy every Arcadia entry I can find covering the media in regions where I've worked, and the bookshelf near my bed is stocked with an array of their publications, much to my wife's chagrin. Second disclosure: One of the markets

I worked in was Buffalo, New York, and I consider the six years I spent there some of the most personally rewarding of my life. With these facts in mind, I enthusiastically agreed to review one of the latest Arcadia volumes, *Baseball in Buffalo* by Paul Langendorfer, with research help from the Buffalo History Museum and from John Boutet, archivist and curator for the AAA Buffalo Bisons. And for the most part, I was not disappointed.

When I lived in Western New York, the Bisons were the AAA entry of the Pittsburgh Pirates and played at Buffalo War Memorial, which, as one of the captions informs us, was built in 1937 as a WPA project and was also the home of the Buffalo Bills. And though it was the site of innumerable sporting events, War Memorial is probably most famous as the backdrop for the 1984 film *The Natural* with Robert Redford and Glenn Close, an event captured with some choice photos. But Buffalo, as we learn, was the home for a lot more than the Buccos Triple-A team, as the city at one point or another was the AAA franchise for numerous major league organizations, from the Philadelphia A's to the Toronto Blue Jays. And before War Memorial there was venerable Offerman Stadium, home of Buffalo baseball from 1924-1960 and named for Frank J. Offerman, the owner of the team whose promotional foresight popularized the club in the early 1930s.

Buffalo is as rich in baseball history as any city in America, its roots dating back to the formation of the Niagaras in 1857. Chapter Two abounds with fascinating photographs across the eras, including snapshots of early scorebooks and promotional items, along with team photos from every different Buffalo incarnation: the National League team that featured the legendary Big Four; the 1890 Brotherhood team of the Players League (a dapper-looking Connie Mack is pictured); and the 1915 Blues (or "Buffeds"), the local entry in the short-lived but much-discussed Federal League.

Two players who became Buffalo legends might surprise even the more astute baseball fans. Ollie Carnegie was a name I was not familiar with. Appearing with the Bisons from 1931-41, Carnegie batted a career .308 and belted 258 home runs, leading the International League in long balls twice. He won league MVP honors in 1938 and is still the all-time league leader in RBI. The truly amazing part is, he didn't appear in a game for Buffalo until he was 32 years old! Buffalo baseball's other hero was Luke Easter. Following his years in the Negro Leagues and in the American League with Cleveland, the powerful Easter played three full seasons with the Bisons, driving in 343 runs and launching multiple moon shots out of International League stadiums, both with Buffalo and later, Rochester. According to *Baseball in*

*Buffalo*, he is considered possibly the most iconic player in the city's long history. If there's a problem with this book at all, believe it or not, it's with the captions, where I found a handful of errors.

A photo of a smiling Robert Redford is accompanied by a caption explaining that *The Natural* was set "in Chicago in the early 1920's." I'm not a big fan of the movie and even I know it took place in New York in 1939. A page later however, another photo, showing one of the film's exterior shots, is paired with a caption saying that only "part of the film" was set in the Windy City. The fact that the second caption was correct underscores an editing gaffe that could have easily been corrected by simply turning the page! In another example, a caption accompanying a team photo of the Bisons when they were a Cincinnati affiliate notes that Johnny Bench is "fifth from the right," when he's obviously sixth. Nitpicky? Maybe, but geez, stuff like this just looks sloppy and is easy enough to fix.

There are also numerous photos marked as "undated," a term that should rarely end up in a pictorial history, except in the most obscure circumstances. As a matter of fact, one image really got me riled up: on Page 108, there's a reprint of an ad promoting "A Gala Day for the Kids," a game where every child under 17 actually received a bat, ball, and glove upon entering the

stadium (and doesn't that beat the lousy refrigerator magnets we get today!) The caption tells us that the promotion took place on Sunday June 7th, "...sometime between 1924 and 1935 ...," since the venue was still called Bison Stadium during this period. So, just for chuckles, I googled a perpetual calendar and in about thirty seconds ascertained that the promotion had to be in either 1925 or 1931; since the drawing of the child pictured on the ad is dressed in attire that looks a lot closer to the 1920s than to the Depression-racked early '30s, I'd bet my bottom dollar that the ad was from the former year.

These instances of lax editing are a shame, considering there are so many meaty shots of scorecards, promotional treasures and long-forgotten 19<sup>th</sup>-century local clubs gracing this volume. Overall, however, it's a very fine book. Personal ties notwithstanding, I feel there are certain "non-major league" cities across the USA that get short shrift when discussing baseball history. New York state in general is home to many of these towns (ones with a much greater backstory than Cooperstown for instance). Among those, Buffalo has to be included. And *Baseball in Buffalo* is a worthy pictorial example of some of those tales.

*Irv Goldfarb has been a SABR member since 1999 and has written numerous articles and book reviews for Society publications including The Inside Game.*

## **THE RECORD-SETTING 49-GAME HITTING STREAK OF JACK NESS**

by **Bill Lamb**

Those who established major league baseball's longest consecutive-game hitting streaks come from the game's elite – all-time greats such as Ty Cobb, Willie Keeler, and, of course, Joe DiMaggio. But if the survey field is expanded to include the entirety of professional baseball, an unfamiliar name joins the ranks: Jack Ness. During the 1915 season, the now-forgotten Ness, then a member of the Oakland Oaks, set a new standard for Organized Baseball when he hit safely in 49 consecutive Pacific Coast League contests. This hitting skein came amidst a standout season that earned Ness a second and final shot at a major leagues career. Unfortunately for Jack, his encore in the bigs was short-lived. So was his consecutive-game hitting record. Only four seasons later, a new standard (69 consecutive games) was set by the Western League's Joe Wilhoit. Nevertheless, for one brief stretch during the late-Deadball Era, Jack Ness was a baseball record holder. This story recalls how Ness attained his fleeting place in the game's annals.

Past performance gave little hint that the righty batting and throwing Ness would be a record-setter. Prior to 1915, he had been a journeyman minor leaguer, his seven seasons of Class D to AA baseball punctuated only by a 13-game audition for the 1911 Detroit Tigers. An anemic .154 (6-for-39) plate performance quickly landed him back in bushes. But the tall, lanky (6-foot-2/165 pound) first baseman was a competent, if largely powerless, batsman against minor league pitching. He was also fleet afoot, an excellent defender, and popular with teammates, the sporting press, and West Coast fans. And over time, his hitting improved. In 1914, Ness batted a solid .292, with 48 extra-base hits (but only one homer) for the Oakland Oaks of the Class AA Pacific Coast League. That off-season, Ness was appointed captain of the Oaks, a sad-sack outfit coming off two consecutive last-place finishes in the six-team PCL.<sup>1</sup>

The 1915 season started better for Oakland, and by late-May, the club had climbed to fourth place (26-32, .448) in league standings. Ness, too, was exceeding his performance of the previous year. Early in the campaign, he hit safely in 18-straight games before being stopped on May 30. With a .347 batting average, he then ranked fifth among PCL hitters with more than 150 at-bats.<sup>2</sup> Jack began the Decoration (Memorial) Day doubleheader against the Venice Tigers by going 1-for-3 against right-hander Bill Piercy, and then registered four hits off lefty Frank Decanniere in the nightcap. Ness continued to record at least one base-hit in his next 20 contests, but little heed was paid to Ness's consecutive-game hitting streak until he approached the PCL standard of 28-straight games, set by Chet Chadbourne of the Portland Beavers in 1913. On June 28, Ness tied the Chadbourne mark, recording one of the four singles managed by the Oaks off Salt Lake Bees lefty Howie Gregory in a 16-1 drubbing. The following day, he surpassed it, going 3-for-5 (all singles) off a quartet of Salt Lake pitchers in an 8-6 Oakland victory.

During his record-breaking 29-game hitting streak, Ness had gone 53-for-108, a torrid .490 clip.<sup>3</sup> He had also risen to the top of the PCL batters' list, his season-long average now standing at .391.<sup>4</sup> The sporting press on the West Coast applauded Ness's achievement, and now focused attention on his pursuit of the "world record" for consecutive-game hitting. But oddly, the target set was the 40-game hitting streak achieved by Ty Cobb in 1911.<sup>5</sup> When it took up watch on the progress of the Ness batting streak, the national sports press did the same.<sup>6</sup> For reasons unknown, no notice was taken of the longer-than-Cobb's 42-game hitting streak achieved by Bill Dahlen of the 1894 Chicago Colts or Willie Keeler's 45-game skein with the 1897-1898 Baltimore Orioles.<sup>7</sup> The 40-game hit streak of Ty Cobb was designated as the mark that Ness had to better.

On July 11, Ness matched the Cobb record by hitting safely in both games of a doubleheader sweep of the first-place San Francisco Seals. A first-inning single off right-hander Jack Killilay

in the closing game proved the equalizer, and prompted an immediate ovation from appreciative Seals fans.<sup>8</sup> Afterwards in the clubhouse, Ness denied any nervousness about pursuing Cobb's mark. "I get my toe hold and try to swing as usual and trust somewhat in luck and I am pleased that Dame Fortune has been with me during the forty games," he told reporters.<sup>9</sup> Two days later, Ness set a putative new world record with a fourth-inning bloop single off Salt Lake ace Lefty Williams.<sup>10</sup> "A mighty drive over the right field fence"<sup>11</sup> by Ness in the 10<sup>th</sup> inning thereafter gave the Oaks a thrilling 2-1 victory.

Ignoring the longer 19<sup>th</sup> century hitting streaks of Bill Dahlen and Willie Keeler, Ness was proclaimed the new world record holder by the sports press nationwide.<sup>12</sup> Among those not impressed by Ness's heroics was erstwhile record-setter Cobb, who ungenerously carped about the quality of the hurling that Ness had faced. Would Ness have accomplished his batting feat had he been obliged to face "such pitchers as Johnson, Wood, Bender, Plank, Walsh, etc.?" wondered Cobb, aloud.<sup>13</sup> A rejoinder was promptly supplied by *Sporting Life* columnist Chandler B. Richter who argued that PCL pitching was "just as hard for Ness to hit as major league pitching is for Cobb." And Ness, a line-drive right-handed hitter had not been the beneficiary of anywhere near as many bunts and infield leg hits as Cobb, a swift-footed lefty batter, had been during his consecutive-game hitting streak.<sup>14</sup>

Home town fans paid tribute to the Oaks captain on July 15, proclaimed "Jack Ness Day" at Recreation Park. When Ness stepped to the plate in the bottom of the first inning, the proceedings against Salt Lake were suspended so that recently-installed Oaks manager Rowdy Elliott could present Jack with a diamond ring, a token of the club's appreciation of his performance. Oakland mayor J.B. Davies thereupon presented a silver loving cup to Ness on behalf of Oaks fans.<sup>15</sup> Regrettably, Ness then flied out to centerfield. But later, a fourth-inning double laced to left stretched the Ness hitting streak to 43 games.



**Jack Ness**

A first-inning RBI-triple to right field against Salt Lake in the opener of a July 18 doubleheader put the Ness hitting streak at 46 games, and made him the bona fide holder of Organized Baseball's consecutive-game hitting record.<sup>16</sup> A double and triple in the second game then extended the Ness streak to 47 games. Remarkably, the hitting streak was maintained without any noticeable help from official scorers. Every one of Ness's base-hits were clean ones, and most were hard-hit.<sup>17</sup> Meanwhile, newspapers ranging from the *New York Times* to the *Adrian (Michigan) Telegram* had begun printing daily bulletins on the status of Ness's batting streak. Then on July 21, a fifth inning RBI-single against Vernon<sup>18</sup> gave Jack a base-hit in 49 consecutive games.

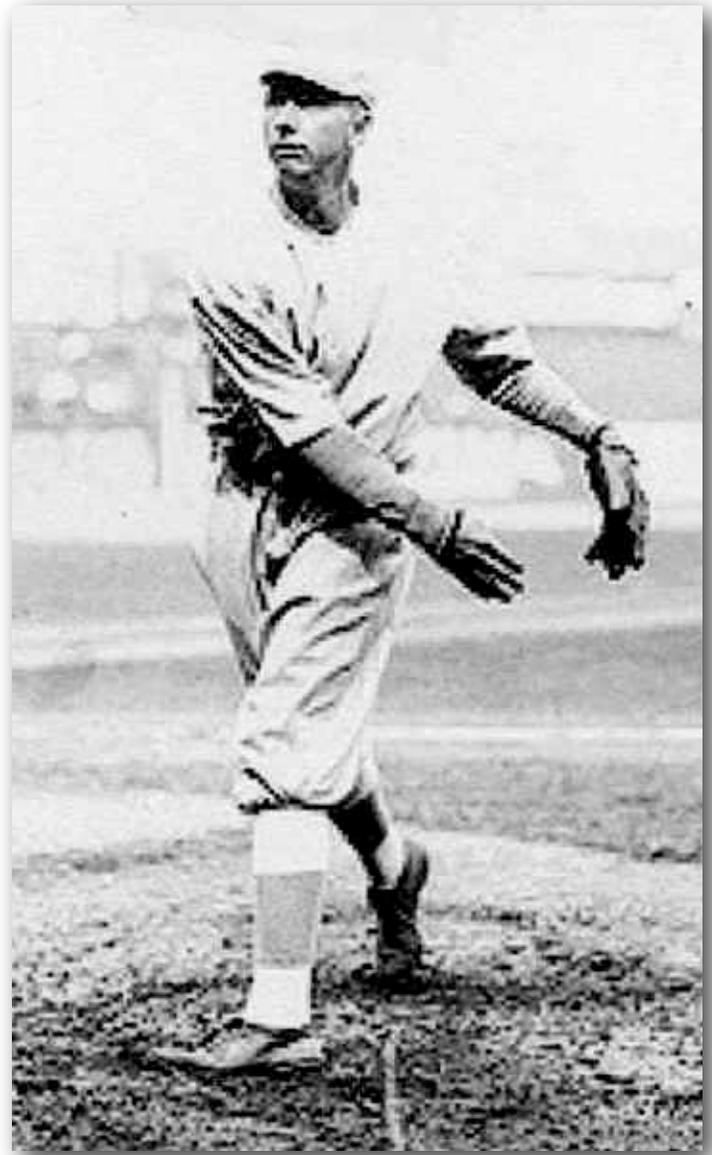
The second game of the Oakland-Vernon series was played the following afternoon. Standing between Ness and the extension of his hitting streak to 50 games was a formidable obstacle: Vernon pitcher Art Fromme, a crafty right-hander only recently released by the New York Giants following a respectable 10-season major league career.<sup>19</sup> Fate afforded Jack four chances to hit safely, but he finally proved unequal to the task. In the top of the first, Ness hit into a force

out. Three innings later, he popped to short. A Ness fly ball to deep left field produced the first score of the game in the top half of the sixth, but was quickly matched by a solo Joe Wilhoit home run in the bottom of the frame. With the game tied and his hitting streak in jeopardy, Ness came to bat in the top of the eighth, and was retired on a comebacker to pitcher Fromme. A Vernon tally in the bottom of the ninth then decided the 2-1 contest, and brought the Jack Ness consecutive-game hitting streak to an end at 49 games.<sup>20</sup>

The *San Francisco Chronicle* account of the game maintained that the stoppage was probably in Ness's best interest as "his long hitting record had begun to wear on him, and he was noticed in the last few days to be more nervous than usual."<sup>21</sup> Otherwise, the hitting skein had been a boon to Ness. Manager Joe Tinker of the Chicago Whales openly professed his intention to sign Ness to a Federal League contract,<sup>22</sup> while at least four major league clubs were reportedly eyeing Ness for the upcoming minor league player draft.<sup>23</sup> Then, with Ness leading PCL hitters with a .386 batting average, his luck turned.

Several days after his streak was stopped, Ness was knocked out of the lineup by a leg injury. Upon his return ten games later, he was not the same hitter. Each week, his name receded further from the top of the PCL batting list. By season's end, Ness's batting average had lost more than 50 percentage points off its mid-streak high. Overall, however, Jack had still had an impressive year, establishing career-bests in batting average (.339), slugging average (.487), home runs (16), and extra-base hits (65). This production led to Ness, a Chicago native, being drafted by the White Sox.

In his second major league stint, Ness platooned at first base with lefty slugger Jack Fournier, batting .267 with 34 RBIs in 75 games for the second-place (89-65) Sox, and was expected to be back with the club for the 1917 campaign. But Ness balked at a \$500 pay cut proposed by Sox boss Charles Comiskey and refused to sign his contract. Nor would he accept demotion to the



*Art Fromme*

Columbus Senators of the American Association. Instead, Ness left Organized Baseball to join the workaday world, confining his baseball playing to weekend games in the semipro Chicago city league. In the summer of 1919, Joe Wilhoit, now of the Wichita Jobbers, established a new (and still-standing) consecutive-game hitting streak by batting safely in 69-straight Western League contests. By this time, his predecessor as record-holder was far-removed from the game, working as a sales representative for a Chicago industrial manufacturer, the livelihood that would sustain Jack Ness for the remainder of his life.

*Bill Lamb is the editor of The Inside Game.*

## ENDNOTES

- 1 As reported in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 1, 1914, *Sporting Life*, November 14, 1914, and elsewhere. Third baseman Tyler Christian remained the Oaks playing manager.
- 2 As per statistics published in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 1, 1915.
- 3 According to the *Denver Post* and *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 29, 1915.
- 4 Per statistics published in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 29, 1915.
- 5 See e.g., the (Boise) *Idaho Statesman*, *The (Portland) Oregonian*, and *Salt Lake Telegram*, June 28, 1915.
- 6 See e.g., the *Kansas City Star*, June 12, 1915, and the *Springfield (Massachusetts) Union* and *Wilkes-Barre (Pennsylvania) Times-Leader*, June 14, 1915.
- 7 Both the Dahlen and Keeler marks were amply documented. Indeed, the 45-consecutive game Keeler hitting streak remains the National League record to this day. No reason why the Dahlen and Keeler records were ignored by the press during Jack Ness's pursuit of a new consecutive-game batting streak was discovered.
- 8 As reported by the *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 12, 1915.
- 9 Ibid. Weeks later, however, *Sporting Life* columnist Chandler B. Richter maintained that the strain of the hitting streak had stripped ten pounds off Ness's already spare frame. See *Sporting Life*, July 31, 1915.
- 10 Per the Associated Press dispatch published in the *Los Angeles Times*, July 15, 1915, and elsewhere.
- 11 The description of the Ness home run by sportswriter Harry B. Smith in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 14, 1915.
- 12 See e.g., the *Washington Post*, July 14, 1915, and the *Columbus (Georgia) Enquirer*, *Duluth (Minnesota) News-Tribune*, *Fort Worth Telegram*, and *San Diego Union*, July 15, 1915.
- 13 See *Sporting Life*, July 31, 1915.
- 14 See "New Side Lights on Base Ball," *Sporting Life*, July 31, 1915.
- 15 As detailed in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 16, 1915.
- 16 Ness had now eclipsed the unacknowledged 45-game hitting streak posted by Willie Keeler in 1897-1898.
- 17 As per Roscoe Fawcett, "Ness Getting No Undeserved Hits," *The Oregonian*, July 21, 1915.
- 18 The Venice Tigers had been relocated to the Los Angeles suburb of Vernon on July 11.
- 19 Fromme had been a 19-game winner for the 1909 Cincinnati Reds, and had compiled an 80-90 major league record overall.
- 20 In a sense, the homer by the man (Joe Wilhoit) who would later shatter Ness's consecutive-game hitting record, prevented the game from going into extra-innings and giving Ness another chance to extend his streak.
- 21 *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 23, 1915.
- 22 As reported in the *Idaho Statesman*, *San Diego Union*, and *San Jose Mercury News*, July 24, 1915, and elsewhere.
- 23 As reported in the *Cincinnati Post*, July 22, 1915.

### COLLEGE ATHLETE AWARDED SALARY

#### DECISION AGAINST DICKINSON IN CARLISLE COURT

CARLISLE, PA.—Justice W. C. Hughes, of this place, has rendered a decision in favor of the plaintiff for the full amount asked, in the case of Ralph O. Hall, a Dickinson College junior, and for the last season one of the varsity baseball pitchers.

Hall brought suit against Prof. Forest E. Craver, a teacher in the preparatory school, who has also been athletic director for a number of years, to recover the sum of \$217, said to be due him for pitching.

#### WORTH WHILE

He averred that Craver promised him that if he would come to Dickinson, in preference to going to Cornell or any other college, that he would profit by it.

The magistrate gave Hall the full amount of his claim. The case will, however, be appealed to court by the athletic authorities.

#### CAUSED COMMOTION

The affair has caused a commotion in athletic circles. It is now alleged that athletes have been brought to Dickinson and their tuition and expenses paid by the athletic department for services rendered various teams.

Craver has resigned his position with the college and will not return next year.

*The Washington (D.C.) Times, June 8, 1905*

## THE INSIDE GAME: THE YEAR 2017 IN REVIEW

As has been our practice for the past several years, we close this year's run of *The Inside Game* with a brief recap of what has been delivered in 2017. For the fourth consecutive year, our commitment to the annual publication of quarterly newsletter issues was met, indeed exceeded – thanks mainly to the efforts of our rather small cadre of reliable newsletter contributors. Clearly, we need to expand that roster if this pace is to be sustained in future. More on that below. For now suffice it to say that in this year's five issues, *The Inside Game* provided Deadball Era Committee members and other readers approximately 150 pages of news items, research articles, book reviews, columns, and interviews, with vintage Deadball Era cartoons, odd news clips, and other ephemera interspersed therein. At the risk of sounding immodest, this output far surpasses that of any other SABR committee newsletter.

On the research front, our thanks go to article contributors Dennis Pajot, Tom Ruane, Dixie Tourangeau, Phil Williams, and John Zinn, all of whose interesting and revelatory work has appeared on newsletter pages in years past. And as in virtually every issue published since February 2015, this year's newsletters presented the Deadball record-revising statistical research and analysis of Herm Krabbenhoft. It has been our privilege and pleasure to convey Herm's important work to newsletter readers, and we hope to continue to do so in 2018. But including the newsletter editor, this brings the total number of 2017 article contributors to a mere seven (out of a committee with some 375 members). To

hopefully rectify that situation, the newsletter extends a warm invitation to anyone – but particularly to would-be first-time contributors – doing a Deadball-related project who would like to see their work in print to get in touch with and/or submit a manuscript to the newsletter editor via [wflamb12@yahoo.com](mailto:wflamb12@yahoo.com). We would be happy to have your article appear in a 2018 issue of *The Inside Game*.

The favorite of many newsletter readers is the book review section. Our 2017 newsletters assessed the merit of no fewer than 22 baseball books having at least some connection to the Deadball Era. As was the case with research articles, many of these reviews were contributed by newsletter veterans. But we can always use more help, and invite anyone interested in doing a book review for the newsletter to contact section editor Dan Levitt at [danrl@att.global.net](mailto:danrl@att.global.net). Finally, Deadball-related news (including Doug Skipper's commentary on the 2017 Larry Ritter Award) and the insightful columns of DEC chairman John McMurray were recurring features in 2017 newsletter issues.

As always, the editor is indebted to John and newsletter colleagues Bob Harris, Dan Levitt, and Mark Dugo for their efforts in putting out this past year's newsletters. It was a pleasure working with them, and I look forward to our collaboration again in 2018. In the meantime, best wishes to readers for a joyous holiday season, and hope to see you all back in February.

Bill Lamb, Editor

## SUBMISSIONS SOUGHT FOR BASE BALL

Published each fall by McFarland, *Base Ball, A Journal of the Early Game*, is a scholarly, peer-reviewed compendium of articles on the game from its origins through the 1920 season, edited by DEC member Don Jensen. The 2017 issue of *Base Ball* is now available and can be ordered via telephone (800-252-2187) or email (info@mcfarlandpub.com). If you have not read *Base Ball* previously, we recommend that you give the current issue a look.

With the 2017 issue behind him, Don is in the market for submissions for next year's journal. Newsletter readers with a completed manuscript, a work in progress, or just a story idea are invited to contact the editor via donald.jensen8@gmail.com. Any and all matters related to baseball through 1920 are suitable subjects for a journal article, and Don looks forward to hearing from those interested in contributing to next year's issue

## GAMES AND BIOPROJECT

Since the last issue of the newsletter appeared, Games Project entries have been published for the famous 1908 Merkle's Boner game between the Cubs and Giants, and for four different Detroit Tigers Deadball Era games. Meanwhile, profiles of Monte Cross, Ed Moyer, Farmer Burns, Harry Hinchman, Bill Hinchman, Billy Shettsline, Jack Dalton, Alex Remneas, and Jack McAllister have recently been posted by the BioProject. As always, we urge you to give these a look if you have not already done so.

## NEW DEADBALL ERA COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*The Inside Game* is pleased to welcome to the committee the following SABR members who have expressed interest in the Deadball Era:

**Richard Craswell**  
**Joseph Palumbo**  
**Benjamin Sabin**

We look forward to their active participation in committee endeavors. These new committee members, as well as our newsletter contributors, can be contacted via the SABR directory.

## Four Seasons in the Life of a Young Baseball Player



*The Toledo News-Bee, January 21, 1910*