



# Outside the Lines

Editor Michael Hauptert

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Candlestick Park

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## San Francisco Giants Team Ownership History

By Rob Garratt

The San Francisco Giants ownership history here is part of a joint project between the Business of Baseball Committee and the BioProject site. As they are completed, the histories will appear in this newsletter and be posted permanently at <https://sabr.org/bioproj/topic/team-ownership-histories>. If you are interested in doing a team's history, or part of a team's history, such as the St. Louis Browns years of the current Baltimore franchise, please contact Andy McCue, at [agmcue48@gmail.com](mailto:agmcue48@gmail.com) or [amccue@sabr.org](mailto:amccue@sabr.org), who will be coordinating the project. Several team ownership histories are already completed or under preparation, but many still need authors.

The histories should be as comprehensive as possible, covering the changes in ownership, the

price paid, the makeup of partnerships, the division of responsibilities among the partners, the reasoning of both the buyers and the sellers, and economically significant events within the era of each ownership group. There is no need to talk about events on the field unless they have a direct impact on the bottom line or a change in ownership. It is likely that arguments with cities over stadiums and threatened (or actual) re-locations will play a role in the essays. The histories should be long enough to tell the story but should be as tight as possible. There is no set word limit. The essays should include endnotes on sources. Heavy detail, such as the holdings of minor partners, might well be left to those endnotes.

Research guidance will be available if needed. Over the long run, it will be necessary to keep updating these essays and the original researchers will be given first opportunity to do those updates.

### Stoneham the Younger

The narrative of Giants ownership had changed abruptly and dramatically on January 6, 1936, when [Charles A. Stoneham](#) died of symptoms associated with Bright's disease. The franchise immediately passed into the hands of Stoneham's son, [Horace Charles Stoneham](#), who at the age of 32 became the

youngest owner in National League history.<sup>1</sup> The elder Stoneham had prepared his son well for the responsibility. Young Horace joined the Giants organization in 1924, serving for a number of years as the ticketing manager, facilities director, and travel coordinator. In 1932, with an eye to the future, his father promoted him to the front office to learn the operations of the club, working under [John McGraw](#) and [Bill Terry](#). When the elder Stoneham passed, Horace not only inherited the ballclub, but was positioned to handle administrative duties. In his first two full years as owner, the Giants won the NL pennant, but lost to the crosstown Yankees in the World Series.



*Horace Stoneham (l) with Jacob Ruppert at the 1937 World Series*

With this early success, Stoneham saw little reason to intervene in the day-to-day operations of the club, trusting in his manager, Terry, to make the personnel decisions. Terry did the evaluation, the trading and signing of players and the proof, as they say, was in the pudding. Stoneham's main task during this period was adjusting to the culture of baseball as an owner and learning the intricacies of payroll and player development.

Horace was not completely inactive, however. In the first few months after his father's death, he began a shakeup of the front office, replacing club secretary Jim Tierney, his father's close associate but a man whom the younger Stoneham never trusted, with longtime Giant loyalist [Eddie Brannick](#). Brannick had joined the Giants in 1906 as

a clubhouse boy, served as traveling secretary for McGraw, and remained in that capacity under Charles Stoneham. His loyalty to the organization was not lost on the younger Stoneham. Indeed, loyalty would prove to be an essential quality for Horace Stoneham. Throughout his 40 years as owner of the Giants, he would reward and retain players, executives, and club officials because of their dedication and commitment to the organization.

As the new decade of the 1940s began, Stoneham grew more confident of his role as owner and more secure in his baseball judgment. He also began to plan for the future of his ballclub. Sensing the

decline of the Giants performance when measured against the two other New York teams—the Yankees were enjoying a phenomenal run that would take them into the next decade as the most prominent team in the game, and the Dodgers were

dramatically improving; after they won the 1941 NL pennant, the Giants would be in most fans' minds the third team in the city.<sup>2</sup>

By the summer of 1955, Stoneham sensed something far more ominous in the Giants' third-place finish and dwindling gate receipts. He began to realize that his ballpark, the aging Polo Grounds, was a great liability, dimming opportunities for his beloved club in New York City. Giants attendance for the 1955 season would total 824,000, down considerably from the 1,115,000 of the previous year's championship season. Although Stoneham

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<sup>2</sup> Robert E. Murphy, *After Many a Summer* (New York: Union Square Press, 2009), 38-42; Frank Graham, *The New York Giants: An Informal History* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1952), 248; Andrew Goldblatt, *The Giants and the Dodgers: Four Cities, Two Teams, One Rivalry* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Co., 2003), 82-84.

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<sup>1</sup> Stoneham was born in April 1903.

could seek some solace in baseball's overall numbers—the mid-1950s attendance throughout baseball was down almost 40 percent from an all-time postwar high in 1948—he could not deny the blunt fact that his New York Giants suffered the greatest slide among National League clubs despite playing in its largest market. In 1955 only the small-market teams of Pittsburgh and Cincinnati drew fewer fans.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, Stoneham could no longer ignore the fact that his attendance problems went beyond his team's wins and losses. He understood that where the Giants played had as much to do with the club's present circumstances as how they played. Despite its tradition and history, the Polo Grounds, both as a facility and a location, was past its prime.<sup>4</sup> A dilapidated stadium situated in what many considered a deteriorating neighborhood, the Polo Grounds would require major renovations to bring it up to the standards of the day. One of the oldest parks in baseball, it predated even Ebbets Field and was showing its age in seating, fan facilities, façade, and pedestrian traffic, especially the egress. After a game the crowd had to pour onto the playing field to exit through the center-field gates.<sup>5</sup> Repairs and remodeling would be costly if Stoneham wanted to improve fan comfort, and these expenses would cut into his already dwindling bottom line.

Repairs and renovation of the ballpark, however necessary, were only part of Stoneham's stadium woes. Even more troubling was the changing nature of the neighborhood surrounding the park. In the late 1940s, a number of housing projects were planned for Harlem, the first of which was Colonial Park, which opened in 1950 opposite the Polo Grounds. By the mid-1950s, middle-class white fans came to perceive that the area around the park

was becoming dangerous and a trip to the ballpark seemed like a risky affair.<sup>6</sup> Stoneham believed fans might feel safer if they could drive to the ballpark. Though he had spent the majority of his life in Manhattan with its extensive and reliable transportation system, Stoneham sensed that future American life would be shaped and determined by the automobile. He watched the boom in postwar automobile production and sales, due in large part to meet the needs of young families leaving the cities for the suburbs.

At the end of the 1955 season, with all of these concerns troubling his daily operation of the team, Stoneham began to weigh the future of Giants baseball in New York. He entertained a number of options. Recalling that the Giants were landlords to the Yankees in the early years of his father's ownership, he pondered becoming a tenant of the Yankees.

Stoneham also had another card up his sleeve in the form of an idea for a new ballpark to be shared by both the Giants and the Yankees. The idea was more of a pipedream, doomed from the start since it required public financing that the city would not provide and cooperation from the Yankees, who were happy in their present location. During the late spring and summer of 1956, he also entertained what was surely the most far-fetched and elaborate scheme for a ballpark, even one intended for the Giants.<sup>7</sup> The notion, put forth by Manhattan city politician Huan Jack, was to build a 100,000-capacity stadium to rise above the New York Central Railroad's West Side Yard that would also provide parking for about 20,000 cars. Jack argued that he had planners and investors to advance the project and thereby keep the Giants in Manhattan. Stoneham is on record as showing interest, meeting with Jack and his committee, but expressing his characteristic caution.<sup>8</sup> As the cost estimates for the project continued to rise, the city's enthusiasm fell, and the railway company remained distant; plans for the so-called "stadium on stilts" faded away.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The Giants drew 824,112 in 1955. Cincinnati drew 693,662 and Pittsburgh 469,397. By contrast, Brooklyn drew 1,033,589 and the New York Yankees 1,490,138.

<sup>4</sup> Stew Thornley, *Land of the Giants* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000), 102, 112; Goldblatt, *The Giants and the Dodgers*, 138.

<sup>5</sup> Up until the late 1940s, fans could walk along with the players and umpires, who were heading toward the clubhouses in center field, to reach the gates in left-center and right-center. After an altercation between Leo Durocher and a Brooklyn fan, Commissioner Happy Chandler ruled that fans would have to wait until the players and umpires cleared the field before they would be allowed to use the center-field exits. Thornley, *Land of the Giants*, 102.

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<sup>6</sup> Goldblatt, *The Giants and the Dodgers*, 138-139.

<sup>7</sup> Arthur Daley, reflecting on the project, which would be huge, remarked that there was a limit to "giantism," even for the Giants. *New York Times*, May 15, 1956.

<sup>8</sup> *New York Herald Tribune*, April 12, 1956.

<sup>9</sup> For a good summary of Jack's idea see Murphy, *After Many a Summer*, 178-181.

These suggestions about Stoneham's solutions to the Giants' ballpark woes were always devoid of particulars and served as diversionary tactics, allowing him to play a waiting game and consider his alternatives. Stoneham gave no public indication of real concern, and certainly none of panic; it was business as usual for the New York Giants. He simply behaved publicly as he always had done, generous to a fault, providing hospitality for sportswriters, and standing rounds at Toots Shor's famous Manhattan saloon that catered to New York sports celebrities, bantering hopefully about his ballclub. With rumors flying about the Giants moving out of the Polo Grounds, and even out of the city, Stoneham would calmly dismiss everything



*The Polo Grounds*

as speculation, saying he had a lease with the Coogan family, and he planned to be in New York for "years to come."<sup>10</sup>

At the same time Stoneham insisted that the Giants would stay put in New York, and were committed long-term to the Polo Grounds, he began entertaining a radical idea, something that just two years before would have been unthinkable. He gave serious consideration to the idea of moving the team out of New York. His first thoughts were to plan simply, minimize complications, keep costs manageable, and hold his cards close to his vest. By early 1956, he knew he could not remain much longer in his present location. Minneapolis, home to his Triple-A farm team, the Millers, and a major Midwest city, seemed a very attractive option.<sup>11</sup> As a Giants franchise, the Minneapolis Millers gave Stoneham rights to the city's territory.

<sup>10</sup> *The Sporting News*, May 15, 1956. See also *The Sporting News*, February 8, 1956.

<sup>11</sup> *The Sporting News*, May 30, 1956.

But as he contemplated his move to the Midwest, Stoneham did so in his customary wary and discreet manner. Making up his mind to move and selecting a date to do so were two very different undertakings for Stoneham. With his lease with the Coogan family for the Polo Grounds securely in hand, he could afford to sit back and let the action come to him. Whenever he was asked about the Giants' future, he responded as the loyal son he was, suggesting that things might work out somehow and the Giants could be in New York for a long time to come. Even with his awareness of the problems with the Polo Grounds, Stoneham was not quite ready to establish a deadline, or to go public with any decision. Admitting to Dodgers owner [Walter O'Malley](#) in a confidential, informal conversation in March 1957 that he had made up his mind to move to Minneapolis, he did not feel an overwhelming urge for any public pronouncement just yet.<sup>12</sup> His waiting game would prove momentous. In the late spring of that year, he would be lobbied by three different parties, each of them urging him to expand his horizons westward another 2,000 miles to consider San Francisco and the lucrative California market.

As Stoneham considered his options, the City of San Francisco began its plans for major-league baseball. In 1954 its voters passed a bond measure



*Walter O'Malley moved west with the Giants*

to build a new stadium and in 1956 newly elected Mayor George Christopher formed an official city task force to attract a major league team. By

mid-1957, in conjunction with the mayor's office in Los Angeles, Christopher and his cohorts began a push to bring big-league baseball to California.

<sup>12</sup> [walteromalley.com](#), "Historical Documents," March 23, 1957.

Knowing that Los Angeles was courting the Brooklyn Dodgers and their owner Walter O'Malley, Christopher began to consider attracting the other New York National League team, the Giants. In mid-May of 1957, after some encouragement from LA Mayor Norris Poulson and O'Malley, Christopher approached Stoneham with an offer of a new stadium with ample parking and the promise of an enthusiastic fan base waiting for big-league baseball. Weighing his options over the summer, Stoneham decided to forsake Minneapolis in favor of what he thought was a better market with more economic advantages. In August, once he had received an official letter of invitation from the City of San Francisco, Stoneham agreed to move to California for the 1958 season.<sup>13</sup>

The Giants arrived in San Francisco to great fanfare in April 1958 and for the next 10 years<sup>14</sup> played great baseball to enthusiastic crowds. Stoneham profited from the move and was happy in his new location, especially when he moved into his new facilities at Candlestick Park, which seated over 40,000 fans and had parking for over 10,000 vehicles. A unit of stock in the National Exhibition Company (the Giants' holding company) sold for \$125 in 1957, prior to the move out west; in 1964, that same unit sold for \$725.

Stoneham's new home turned out to be a far cry from what Vice President Richard Nixon claimed was "the finest ballpark in America" when it opened in 1960.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, the ballpark would become something of an albatross for the Giants organization for years to come, with its bad weather, its remote location, and its soulless character. It was trouble from the very beginning, even during its planning and construction, when the city rushed to complete the project. It made questionable land deals with the landowner, Charles Harney, who would also become the builder of the ballpark. Harney lost considerable enthusiasm for

the project after the city decided to call the ballpark Candlestick Park, after its location on San Francisco Bay's Candlestick Point, rather than the Harney Stadium he expected. The completion of the project, in time for the 1960 season, was fraught with rancor and disagreement between builder, architect, and the city, causing various amenities to be cut back or eliminated entirely. Nonetheless, the Giants opened to good crowds and played competitive baseball for the first 10 years there, despite the adverse conditions.<sup>16</sup>

In 1968 things began to change, however, marking the beginning of the end for the Stoneham years in San Francisco. Ominous circumstances were converging, any one of which, taken on its own, might have been manageable; together they were overwhelming, especially for an old-fashioned owner like Stoneham, whose business proclivities and personal bearing were not best matched with crises. Pressure that began with one event in the winter of 1967 would continue to build with others over the next few years and lead to Stoneham's undoing, forcing an unthinkable decision: to sever a lifelong connection with his beloved baseball club.

The most significant of these events, one that would have disastrous results for Stoneham's Giants, came in the guise of baseball's progress: the relocation of the Kansas City Athletics to Oakland for the 1968 season.<sup>17</sup> Maverick owner [Charles O. Finley](#) had been itching to get out of the Midwest since he bought the team. He had mediocre attendance and a terrible television contract.<sup>18</sup> He coveted Northern California and the Bay Area as a prime location after watching the Giants' success there. The American League felt the same way, having been caught off-guard by the National League's appropriation of the California market in 1958 when the Giants and the Dodgers moved west. The junior circuit moved into Southern California in 1961 with the expansion Los Angeles Angels and saw Northern California as a good location for another team. Finley was granted permission to move to Oakland at the American League fall owners' meeting on October 18, 1967, when they also authorized expansion to Seattle and Kansas City no

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<sup>13</sup> The full details of the move have been treated in a number of studies. Stoneham was also in conversations with Walter O'Malley at the time and the encouragement by the Dodger boss had some effect on Stoneham's decision. See Andy McCue, *Mover and Shaker: Walter O'Malley, the Dodgers and Baseball's Westward Expansion* (Lincoln, Ne: University of Nebraska Press, 2014), 357; Robert F. Garratt, *Home Team: The Turbulent History of the San Francisco Giants* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017), 16-28.

<sup>14</sup> *Duns Review*, May 1964: 44.

<sup>15</sup> *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 12, 1960. (Hereafter *SFC*).

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<sup>16</sup> For a more complete discussion of the travails of Candlestick's origins see Garratt, *Home Team*, 43-59.

<sup>17</sup> *The Sporting News*, November 4, 1967.

<sup>18</sup> Art Rosenbaum, *SFC*, October 12, 1967.

later than 1971. The latter approval by the owners was in part to mollify angry Kansas City folks who were threatening litigation in response to Finley's exodus.<sup>19</sup>

The A's arrived in California with great fanfare in the winter of 1967. Finley greeted a welcoming group of 400 reporters and dignitaries at the airport, promising a long and successful stay in the Bay Area. Sportswriters in San Francisco appeared impervious to any downside for their home team in Finley's move and, adopting a "the more, the merrier" attitude, extended a warm welcome to the A's.<sup>20</sup> Not so Horace Stoneham, who felt immediately threatened. His remarks stood in sharp



*Charlie Finley moved in on the Giants*

contrast to all those excited about a new baseball team in the Bay Area and would prove remarkably prescient for decades to come. "Certainly, the move will hurt us. It is simply a question of how much and if both of us can survive. I don't think the area at the present time will take care of us both as much

as (the Athletics) think it will."<sup>21</sup> Taking a more politic and diplomatic stand, Chub Feeney, Giants' vice president and Stoneham's nephew, said he welcomed the A's move and hoped it would work out for everyone, including the Giants.<sup>22</sup> Like many in the city, Feeney thought it was too early to pass judgment.

It didn't take long for the Giants to feel the pinch of the A's presence across the bay. In 1968, the A's first year in Oakland, the Giants drew 837,220, down over 405,000 from the previous year. This pattern would persist over the next seven years, Stoneham's remaining time with the club. Only once after the A's moved to Oakland—in the playoff year 1971, when the Giants won the National League West title—would Stoneham's team draw over 1 million fans to Candlestick. In 1974, attendance fell to an abysmal 519,987.<sup>23</sup> Only twice before—in 1932 and in the war year 1943, both at the Polo Grounds—did the Giants draw fewer home fans.<sup>24</sup> Faced with this new reality, Stoneham was uncharacteristically blunt in his response. "Finley, the A's and the whole American League are partners in villainy."<sup>25</sup> Sharing the Bay Area market with another major-league ballclub was proving disastrous to the Giants' ability to maintain financial health.

In addition to the A's, Stoneham sensed yet another looming problem that would cause him further anxiety: His team was aging, especially his best players. Moreover, the Giants' finances no longer resembled those of the profitable early years in San Francisco. Simply put, Stoneham was running out of money. The major leagues' days of television contracts, merchandising, and playoff revenue-sharing lay in the future. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the gate was still the primary source of income for ballclubs, and since 1968 the Giants had been drawing poorly. As he looked to a new decade of shrinking revenue, Stoneham had to cut his costs,

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<sup>21</sup> *SFC*, October 19, 1967.

<sup>22</sup> *SFC*, October 12, 1967.

<sup>23</sup> The overall total attendance for Giants and A's baseball in the Bay Area between 1969 and 1975 remained about what the Giants were drawing from 1960 to 1968, the year Oakland arrived. This is surprising, especially when one considers the great baseball Oakland was playing in the early 1970s when they won three consecutive World Series.

<sup>24</sup> John Thorn et. al., eds, *Total Baseball, Sixth Edition*, 107.

<sup>25</sup> Shirley Povich, *Washington Post*, February 20, 1973.

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<sup>19</sup> *SFC*, October 19, 1967.

<sup>20</sup> *San Francisco Examiner*, October 12, 1967; October 14, 1967; October 19, 1967 (hereafter SFE); *SFC*, October 12, 1967; October 15, 1967; October 20, 1967.

which made stripping the team of big-name and high-salaried players a practical, however painful, necessity. [Orlando Cepeda](#) left in 1966 before the club's fiscal woes were apparent, easing payroll pressure. Cy Young Award winner [Mike McCormick](#) was traded in 1970.<sup>26</sup> [Gaylord Perry](#) was dealt to Cleveland after the 1971 season (where he was a Cy Young Award winner the next year), and shortstop [Hal Lanier](#) was sold to the Yankees for cash.<sup>27</sup> All-Star catcher Dick Dietz was traded to the Dodgers in 1971.<sup>28</sup> [Willie McCovey](#) was sent to San Diego in the fall of 1973 and [Juan Marichal](#) was sold to the Boston Red Sox that December. Dave Kingman, who arrived in September of 1971 to be a new Giants power hitter, was sold to the Mets after the 1974 season.<sup>29</sup>

Shedding the high-price players posed difficult decisions for Stoneham, but no one trade or player sale brought with it the agony Stoneham felt when he realized he would have to part with [Willie Mays](#). The blunt reality came off the bottom line: The Giants could not afford to keep Mays, at least in the manner that Stoneham intended. Once the two-year salary for Mays was cobbled together – \$165,000 for the 1972 and 1973 seasons—Stoneham knew he would have to find Willie a new home, a place where he would be happy, where he could be guaranteed this two-year salary obligation, and where his future would be secure. With the Giants revenue fading fast, Stoneham put all of his effort into getting Willie settled, and quickly.

During the spring of 1972, Stoneham entered into secret negotiations with [Joan Whitney Payson](#), the New York Mets club owner, and [M. Donald Grant](#), the club's chairman, to trade Mays to the Mets. The Mets were the only club Stoneham contacted because he felt that Willie should be back in New York, where he began his great career, had so many wonderful years, and was a legend. A crucial part of the trade for Stoneham involved assurances from Payson and Grant that Willie would be given some kind of extended contract with the ballclub once his playing days were over. As befitting a sentimental and old-fashioned owner, Stoneham felt the need for secrecy in the event that the deal with the Mets

might fail and Willie's pride would be hurt, the result of feeling discarded by a cash-poor owner.<sup>30</sup> The attempts at secrecy failed, however, and newspapers on both coasts caught wind of the story.<sup>31</sup>

On May 11, 1972, the finalized negotiations became official news. Mays was traded to the Mets for a minor-league pitcher named Charlie Williams; there was also mention of an additional unspecified amount of cash from the Mets, rumored to be between \$50,000 and \$200,000.<sup>32</sup> In a gesture that conveyed the highest form of respect, Stoneham brought Mays in on the final hours of deliberation with Payson and Grant, and then ushered him to the press conference at the Mayfair House announcing the trade.<sup>33</sup> In his remarks, the Giants owner tried to put on a brave face but could hardly hide his disappointment. "I never thought I would trade Willie, but with two teams in the Bay Area, our financial situation is such that we cannot afford to keep Willie and his big salary as well as the Mets can."<sup>34</sup> Grant followed by saying that the Mets planned to keep Mays around for a long time, securing his future in baseball. The player himself spoke briefly, that he was happy to be back in New York and looking forward to playing for the Mets, and that he was grateful to the Giants and to Stoneham for all they had given him.<sup>35</sup> The press conference ended and with it one of the most fabled chapters in Giants history was over.

After the Mays trade, things hardly improved for Stoneham. In 1973 he spent most of his time denying rumors that the team was for sale.<sup>36</sup> He was losing the public-relations battle with the A's, who were enjoying unparalleled success—three straight World Series championships—while the Giants finished well off the pace in the National League West during the same years. He lost at the gate as well; in 1974 and 1975 the Giants' home attendance was the lowest of any season since the team moved

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<sup>30</sup> Charles Einstein, *Willie's Time: Baseball's Golden Age* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004), 329.

<sup>31</sup> *New York Herald Tribune*, May 6, 1972; SFE, May 6, 1972, *New York Times*, May 10, 1972.

<sup>32</sup> SFC, May 12, 1972; SFE, May 12, 1972.

<sup>33</sup> *Los Angeles Times*, May 11, 1972; *Boston Globe*, May 11, 1972.

<sup>34</sup> *The Sporting News*, May 20, 1972.

<sup>35</sup> James S. Hirsch, *Willie Mays: The Life, the Legend* (New York: Scribner's, 2010), 508.

<sup>36</sup> *Los Angeles Times*, July 4, 1972.

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<sup>26</sup> [baseball-reference.com/players/m/mccormi03.shtml](http://baseball-reference.com/players/m/mccormi03.shtml).

<sup>27</sup> [baseball-reference.com/players/p/perryga01.shtml](http://baseball-reference.com/players/p/perryga01.shtml); [baseball-reference.com/players/l/lanieha01.shtml](http://baseball-reference.com/players/l/lanieha01.shtml).

<sup>28</sup> [baseball-reference.com/players/d/dietzdi01.shtml](http://baseball-reference.com/players/d/dietzdi01.shtml).

<sup>29</sup> [davekingmanfan.com/](http://davekingmanfan.com/).

west, barely clearing the 500,000 mark each year.<sup>37</sup> To add to all of the other distractions, his real-estate venture in Casa Grande, Arizona—a project he hoped to turn from a spring-training site into a golf resort with adjacent homes—was stalled, diverting precious capital from the running of the ballclub, “soaking up money as quickly as the desert soaks up the rain,” as one Giants’ front office employee put it.<sup>38</sup> After the 1974 season, Stoneham announced a \$1.7 million loss to the stockholders of the National Exhibition Company.<sup>39</sup>

There was no longer any way to gloss over the obvious: The Giants were in trouble and Stoneham simply did not have the resources – nor perhaps the resolve – to solve the club’s problems. In the spring of 1975, he approached the other owners in the National League with grim news. He had enough money to meet only two months of payroll and needed a loan from the league to finish the season. At the same time, he announced his intention to sell the team, hoping to find a local buyer to keep the Giants in San Francisco.<sup>40</sup> With this announcement, Stoneham gave notice that a 57-year family connection to Giants baseball had ended. A new era was about to begin, but the future looked anything but secure for the San Francisco Giants.

### **Enter Bob Lurie**

Throughout the summer and fall of 1975, Stoneham waited in vain for an offer to keep the team in San Francisco. Bob Lurie, a local businessman, was interested but needed a partner. Meanwhile, Stoneham grew anxious. Finally in the winter of 1975-76, a legitimate offer came from out of town, in fact from another country. A group of Canadian businessmen, some of whom were connected to Labatt Brewing Company, offered on January 9, 1976, to buy the Giants and move them to Toronto for the 1976 season. Newly elected Mayor George Moscone couldn’t imagine losing the team and put all his efforts into finding local ownership. He approached Lurie and contacted Bob Short, a Minneapolis businessman and former owner of the Texas Rangers, to help form a partnership. By late January they had agreed in principle to counter the Canadians’ offer in the hope that the major leagues

would want to keep the team in San Francisco. All that remained was the approval of the NL owners who, under Los Angeles owner Walter O’Malley’s influence, were predisposed to keep the Giants in San Francisco. Everything appeared settled.

A special meeting of the NL convened on February 24, whose sole purpose was to approve the sale of the Giants. With Short in a Minneapolis hospital recovering from a bad fall, Lurie and Moscone attended the meeting and Moscone made a presentation before the owners. After the brief presentation, the mayor and Lurie waited outside the meeting room for what they assumed would be a pro-forma approval. It was with some surprise that the owners’ deliberations took longer than expected. When the owners finally came back to Moscone and Lurie, their approval had a big string attached. It was in fact a conditional approval of the sale, and the condition would prove unbearable for the partnership. The owners, troubled by Short’s history as an American League owner, preferred to deal only with Lurie as a fellow owner.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, they demanded as a condition of the sale that Bob Lurie would act and function as the primary owner, the one who would vote at NL meetings, effectively putting Short in a secondary role in the partnership.<sup>42</sup>

It did not take Short long to respond. He immediately and emphatically rejected the league’s condition. Conversations over the next few days to reach some understanding and agreement between him and Lurie left both of them at an impasse.<sup>43</sup> On March 2 Short sent a telegram to Lurie with a brief message dissolving the partnership. Short also sent telegrams to Moscone and Chub Feeney repeating his thinking that, given his long experience as a major-league executive and Lurie’s limited exposure to the business of baseball, he should be the primary owner. If he couldn’t, then he was out of the partnership.<sup>44</sup>

On the afternoon of March 2, Chub Feeney placed a call to a Lurie, asking for an update on the progress of the sale. A stunned Lurie explained the difficulty

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<sup>37</sup> *1976 San Francisco Giants Media Guide*, 495.

<sup>38</sup> John Taddeucci, interview with the author, June 12, 2014.

<sup>39</sup> *Los Angeles Times*, April 30, 1975; *SFE*, April 29, 1975.

<sup>40</sup> *The Sporting News*, May 24, 1975.

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<sup>41</sup> For a truncated, albeit opinionated view of Short’s ownership activities. see Glenn Dickey, “Don’t Prolong the Agony,” *SFC*, January 26, 1976

<sup>42</sup> *SFC*, February 26, 1976.

<sup>43</sup> *SFC*, March 2, 1976; *SFE*, March 3, 1976.

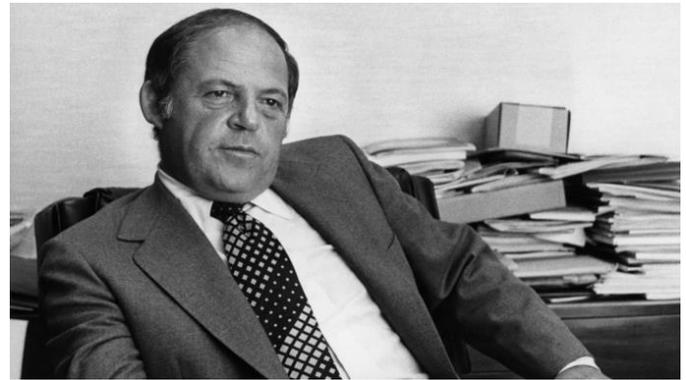
<sup>44</sup> *SFC*, March 3, 1976; *Los Angeles Times*, March 3, 1976.

and asked for a 48-hour extension to find a new partner among the city's business community. After contacting the owners, Feeney told Lurie that the league would grant him five hours. Feeney explained that the owners were too anxious about the proximity of spring training and league play to wait any longer for ownership issues. As Lurie was scrambling to find another local partner, Corey Busch, the mayor's secretary, received a phone call from Phoenix. Someone named Bud Herseth, a cattle dealer unknown to anyone in the mayor's office, or to baseball for that matter, was on the line asking about the sale of the Giants and if he might get involved as a partner. He had read about Bob Lurie, the difficulties of the sale, and would be interested in becoming an owner. Busch was astounded, put Herseth on hold and broke in on the mayor's meeting. The mayor got on the line and after a few minutes decided that Herseth was serious and worthy of a follow-up. He told Herseth that someone would contact him within the hour.<sup>45</sup>

Immediately Moscone called Lurie, who then placed a call to Herseth. After a 45-minute conversation, they agreed in principle to form a partnership with Herseth providing half of the \$8 million selling price. There would be no disagreement about who would be voting at the NL meetings; Herseth was fine with Lurie as the chief owner who would represent the business side of ownership. All that remained was for Herseth's finances to be vetted. When the NL owners were satisfied with Herseth's reliability and financial legitimacy, they approved the new partnership. The headlines the next day in the *Chronicle's* sports section proclaimed the news: "Beef King Saves Lurie, Giants."<sup>46</sup> One writer called it "the greatest save in Giants' history."<sup>47</sup> A breathless Lurie gave his account to the newspaper:

"Yesterday I was \$4 million shy of the agreed sale price. Then I heard about Bud ... I called him and he said he had \$4 million. I informed Feeney of this beautiful development. Chub called the owners and we got unanimous approval. ... It's all set, we own the Giants."<sup>48</sup>

Lurie's head was swimming, but he prevailed. He was a new owner of the Giants and the team would remain in the city.



*Bob Lurie, local hero*

Bob Lurie was a good fit for the Giants and San Francisco. A native son, a successful businessman who knew the social scene, an avid golfer, and a former member of Stoneham's board of directors who knew the Giants culture reasonably well, he seemed poised to have a good run with the team. But the Lurie years would turn out to be quite uneven. After struggling his first two years with organizational issues, he eventually parted ways with Bud Herseth, buying him out in early spring of 1979. His next few years dealt primarily with managerial changes and finding the right mix in the clubhouse. The Lurie teams were occasionally good and surprising—1978, 1981, and 1982 were good years with favorable won-lost records and first-division finishes for the ballclub. Attendance in those years was reasonable, although the Giants still hovered near the bottom of the league. After 1985, the worst season in Giants history, either in New York or San Francisco—when the club lost 100 games—Lurie made a change in management that would define his remaining years with the Giants as successful and competitive, on and off the field. In September 1985 Lurie hired [Al Rosen](#) as the new GM/president, and the pair hired [Roger Craig](#) to become the team manager. With those moves, Lurie ushered in the Humm Baby era, when winning baseball came back to the city and the Giants would go to the postseason twice and eventually to the World Series.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Corey Busch, interview with the author, June 17, 2014.

<sup>46</sup> *SFC*, March 3, 1976.

<sup>47</sup> *San Francisco Giants Magazine*, 1978.

<sup>48</sup> *San Francisco Giants Magazine*, 1978.

<sup>49</sup> "Humm Baby" was a phrase manager Roger Craig used throughout 1986 spring training whenever he saw a great play, a good at-bat, or good hustle from his team. The phrase stuck as a description of the Rosen/Craig era in Giants baseball history.

But even with this success, Lurie could not shake his biggest problem as owner, Candlestick Park, with its cold and windy weather, its remote location 10 miles from the city center, and its spartan and bleak appearance and atmosphere. Throughout his first 10 years of ownership, he tried everything to improve the place, only to finally realize the Giants would have to have a new ballpark at a different location. Starting in the fall of 1987, Lurie would go before the voters of San Francisco twice (1987 and 1989), Santa Clara County once (1990), and San Jose once (1992), to seek public funding to build a new ballpark. In every case the Giants lost at the polls. Knowing he couldn't continue to run a successful franchise while playing at Candlestick and seeing no real possibilities for a new facility in the Bay Area, Lurie decided it was time for him to get out of baseball. Discouraged, he announced in early June 1992, that the team was up for sale. He arranged to take members of his front office to New York to meet with Commissioner Fay Vincent to find some remedy for his predicament. Back in San Francisco in mid-June of 1992, Lurie felt as if he had a clear direction.

In dealing with the Giants' dilemma, Commissioner Vincent applied the four-point standard developed by baseball in 1990 to govern franchise movement: The organization has been losing money over a substantial period; there has been declining attendance over a period of three years; the stadium is inadequate or unsuitable for baseball; and the team resides in a community that has demonstrated a lack of interest in baseball by vote or otherwise.<sup>50</sup> Vincent reiterated these criteria to the press and added that the Giants met all of them "squarely."<sup>51</sup> He said: "I think the history of transfers leads one to the conclusion that baseball ought to be careful, but I think there are circumstances under which I am prepared to acknowledge that a transfer should be looked at. ... San Francisco has my permission to look at these options."<sup>52</sup>

While he would subsequently refashion his meaning of "options," Vincent initially gave all indications to Lurie that the Giants could pursue moving out of Candlestick to remedy their present situation. At the

press conference after his meeting with Lurie, the commissioner confounded the issue somewhat when he added that this permission did not mean that the Giants had "automatic approval to move."<sup>53</sup> In stressing this last point, Vincent undoubtedly had baseball protocol in mind; all franchise sales and transfers are subject to approval by owners in both leagues. The ambiguity of Vincent's position would, however, be a bone of contention later in the year when offers came in to buy the Giants. Nonetheless, Lurie, Rosen, and Corey Busch left the June meeting with Vincent feeling they had been given a clear go-ahead to shop the team and consider relocation. As Busch explained it, the commissioner had, in effect, granted them "a hunting license."<sup>54</sup>

Lurie waited in vain for someone from the local community to come forward with an offer to buy the Giants and keep them in the Bay Area. But by late July, hearing nothing from locals, he began negotiating with a group from the Tampa/St. Petersburg area who wished to buy the team and move the Giants to Florida. Plans developed quickly. On August 6 a group from St. Petersburg flew to San Francisco to meet with Lurie and Rosen. By evening the parties had reached agreement: The Giants would be sold to the Florida group and begin the 1993 season in the Tampa/St. Petersburg area.



*Tropicana Field nearly became home to the Giants*

While the Florida newspapers and business community exploded with delight, the San Francisco Bay Area reacted with shock, disappointment and bitterness. Mayor Frank Jordan, claiming that the deal was far from settled, began

<sup>50</sup> *New York Times*, June 12, 1992; *The Sporting News*, June 22, 1992.

<sup>51</sup> *New York Times*, June 12, 1992.

<sup>52</sup> *SFC*, June 11, 1992; *St. Petersburg (Florida) Times*, June 19, 1992.

<sup>53</sup> *Los Angeles Times*, June 12, 1992.

<sup>54</sup> Michael Tuckman, "Sliding Home," *California Lawyer*, April 1993; Corey Busch, interview with the author, June 17, 2014.

mobilizing support for a counteroffer from the San Francisco business community. Back in New York, National League President [Bill White](#), acting on behalf of baseball in the wake of Commissioner Vincent's resignation, told Mayor Jordan that the National League was prepared to receive a counteroffer from a San Francisco group, but in a timely fashion. White told the mayor he had three weeks, which meant somewhere around the second week of October 1992.

With White's deadline fast approaching, the investment partners, led by real-estate magnate Walter Shorenstein, which included the likes of Charles Schwab, Don and John Fisher, the owners of Gap clothing stores, and Peter Magowan, the CEO of Safeway, met in Shorenstein's office on Saturday, October 10, to confront two major crises. One had to do with the calendar. White's deadline for a competing offer was October 12. That gave the San Franciscans two days to meet the deadline. Shorenstein made one or two calls and raised a bit more capital. Larry Baer, a CBS official and a friend of Magowan's who was working behind the scenes to help the partners, called Kevin O'Brien of KTVU, the longtime broadcaster of the Giants, and got another contribution. Shorenstein also urged the general partners to up their individual antes. In a matter of hours, the group had a substantial base of capital to go forward.<sup>55</sup>

The other crisis came in the form of a difficulty that tugged at the very identity of the group, leading to an overwhelming question: Who among the city's movers and shakers assembled that day in Shorenstein's office would take on the role of chief managing partner and run the franchise? There are many accounts of how this question was answered. Most describe the practicalities, that most of the partners—Shorenstein, Schwab, Don and John Fisher, for example—did not have the time or the inclination to run a baseball club, and asked Magowan if he would do it.<sup>56</sup> Another account has it a bit more dramatically. "All at once, as if by divine providence, the heads of everyone at the meeting turned in the direction of Peter Magowan, the 51-year-old chairman of Safeway, Inc."<sup>57</sup>

Magowan's own, more secular version suggests that he was drafted, chiefly by Shorenstein and Baer, to secure the progress that had been made, and that if he did not accept the position, all of the group's effort would be wasted.<sup>58</sup> By any account, however, the move turned out to be a momentous one, solidifying the group and providing strength in leadership. Magowan was an experienced executive, but he also brought to the group a deep love and understanding of baseball, and a lifelong



*Peter Magowan saved the Giants for San Francisco* connection to the Giants. This affection for both the Giants and the game of baseball would energize him in the short term for the negotiations ahead, and it would prove in the long run to be a powerful guide in his role as head of the Giants' franchise for years to come.

Armed with an agreement cobbled together over the weekend, Magowan, as newly designated chief managing partner, flew to New York on Sunday night, October 11, accompanied by Larry Baer. The offer that landed on President White's desk the next day totaled \$95 million and represented San Francisco's official counter to the St. Petersburg bid. Magowan explained to the press after he met with White. "It is a strong, credible offer from a strong group of investors, made up almost entirely of local people."<sup>59</sup> In an ironic twist, one of the locals was none other than Bob Lurie himself, whose \$10 million short-term loan to the partnership, the same provision he had extended to the Florida group, made him in effect the largest

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<sup>55</sup> Richard Rapaport, "Fast Balls and High Finance": California Business, September 1993, 55.

<sup>56</sup> *SFE*, October 13, 1992.

<sup>57</sup> Tuckman, "Sliding Home": 66.

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<sup>58</sup> Peter Magowan, interview with the author, June 25, 2013.

<sup>59</sup> *SFC*, October 13, 1992.

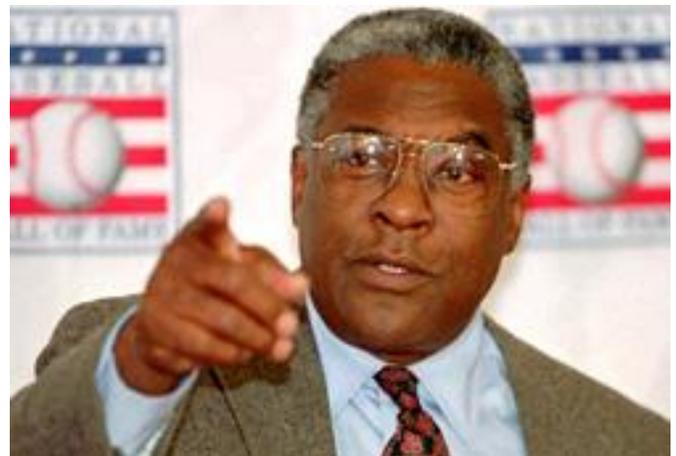
single contributor.<sup>60</sup> Magowan added that he expected a decision from the baseball owners within a month.

The delivery of the competing bid did little to quiet the drama connected with the Giants sale. First there were cries of foul play coming from the Floridians, saying that White, an ex-Giant after all, was hardly a disinterested party. Next came waves of lawsuits, beginning with one from the City of San Francisco against Bob Lurie for breaking the lease on Candlestick; this was followed by one from St. Petersburg investors against San Francisco, claiming that theirs was the only legitimate bid, since Bob Lurie, the Giants owner, agreed in writing to deal only with them. Not to be outdone, the City and County of San Francisco sued St. Petersburg for interference with the contract Bob Lurie held with Candlestick Park. Tampa Bay responded, this time by naming Mayor Jordan. San Francisco then filed a counterclaim, seeking legal fees from the Tampa Bay investors and the City of St. Petersburg because they both had signed indemnification agreements with the major leagues against any damages or claims that might occur in the process of buying or selling a franchise. Law Professor Jeffrey Brand explained that the indemnification agreements would stop all the litigation in its tracks, since all of the parties, the Floridians, Bob Lurie, and the San Franciscans, had signed agreements.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, any future development of franchise location in either city would effectively end the legal wrangling.<sup>62</sup>

Nor was Bob Lurie quiet in the days approaching the owners' vote. He and Corey Busch began a marathon schedule in an attempt to meet with each of the owners to explain the details and benefits of the Florida offer. Much has been made about Lurie's professional commitment to his St. Petersburg buyers, that he had given his word not to consider another offer until theirs had been given its full development. Undoubtedly, this eleventh-hour visit around the league testified to that promise. But there was also the matter of business. The Floridian offer was considerably higher than the

Magowan/Shorenstein offer, and owners would appreciate that. Moreover, Lurie pointed out, the San Francisco offer contained some contingencies, such as getting a loan at a financial interest rate acceptable to the buyers, which would put him further at risk.

Two days before the meeting, the San Franciscans strengthened their hand by dropping the three most restricting contingencies, one of them being the condition of a favorable interest rate and raising their total offer to \$100 million. They also received substantial help from the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. In a letter to Bill White in late October, Mayor Jordan outlined certain concessions the city would give to the Giants regarding Candlestick, including a waiver on stadium rent and the payment by the city of all utility and field-management costs.<sup>63</sup> These would considerably ease the costs of playing games at Candlestick and help the Giants' overall bottom line, something that would lessen the concerns of other owners.



*NL President Bill White was instrumental in keeping the Giants in San Francisco*

At the November 10 meeting of the National League, the owners rejected the St. Petersburg/Tampa bid by a decisive 9-4 vote. The leading voice in opposition to the sale was Dodgers owner Peter O'Malley who, like his father in 1976 when Toronto interests sought the team, did not want to lose the Dodgers/Giants California rivalry.<sup>64</sup> The owners' decision freed Bob Lurie from his obligation with the St. Petersburg groups; he was

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<sup>60</sup> Bob Lurie's contribution was in the form of a four-year loan. *SFE*, October 16, 1992.

<sup>61</sup> Jeffrey Brand, "Off the Field: A Legal Donnybrook", *California Lawyer*, April 1993.

<sup>62</sup> St. Petersburg/Tampa was awarded an expansion franchise in 1995.

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<sup>63</sup> Mayor Frank Jordan to President William White, National League, October 20, 1992. Frank Jordan Papers. San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library

<sup>64</sup> *Los Angeles Times*, November 9, 1992; Peter O'Malley, interview with the author, September 22, 2011.

now able to consider other offers for his club. A joint statement issued by Magowan and Shorenstein hinted of optimistic relief. “If Bob Lurie should decide to sell the Giants today, our group is ready to acquire the franchise.”<sup>65</sup> Lurie, for his part, was quick to respond, indicating that he would review the \$100 million offer made by the San Franciscans. For someone who had been through an emotional wringer over the past two months, Lurie sounded remarkably composed:

“I congratulate Peter Magowan, the entire San Francisco group and everyone in the Bay Area who worked so hard to keep the Giants in San Francisco. I know the feeling you have today. I had the same wonderful feeling in 1976.

... I will not be restrained from expressing my happiness that the anxiety created by the events of the past several months is finally over for Giants fans, whom I have always considered to be the greatest fans in baseball.”<sup>66</sup>

Lurie remarked that while he did not expect his review of the Magowan offer to take more than a few days, he wanted to give it his due diligence since he was its largest single investor. Bud Selig, acting on behalf of the owners, said that as soon as Lurie accepted the offer, baseball would vote on the sale, probably at the December meeting.

Reactions around San Francisco ranged from ecstatic to guarded euphoria, in keeping with a city that loves a party but cultivates a sense of cool. At Pat O’Shea’s Mad Hatter, the crowd was giddy, with an enthusiastic Mayor Jordan working the crowd and leading the “Let’s Go Giants” cheers, hoping to cash in politically on the recent turn in the team’s fortunes. In fact, unlike some of his mayoral predecessors, including Christopher and Moscone, Jordan played a minor role in the latest chapter of Giants history in San Francisco, leaving the heavy lifting to the men of finance and commerce like Magowan, Shorenstein, and the Fisher brothers. In the “Save Our Giants” movement, Jordan was more facilitator than innovator. At Perry’s on Union Street, the champagne was on the house, and orange and black balloons floated along the top of the ceiling; the mood was one of civilized revelry. At a corner of the bar sat Chub Feeney, Horace

Stoneham’s nephew, former Giants vice president and former NL president, a prime witness if there ever was one to the bumpy, twisty path of Giants history, going back even to its New York days. A beaming Feeney raised his champagne glass and announced to those around him, “I am delighted.” The celebration spread throughout the city. Bars around the downtown center were jammed. Sports radio talk shows were overwhelmed with happy and relieved fans.<sup>67</sup>

Feelings were reversed in St. Petersburg and Tampa. The frustration of coming so close and then being jilted again grated on fans, bringing back the sour taste of losing the White Sox in 1988. Some said it was more of the same, a lack of respect for central Florida as a big-league venue. Others complained that the rejection was a slight on American values, that Bob Lurie should have been able to sell to the buyer of his choice; they chided Florida Senators Connie Mack III and Bob Graham for not responding sooner in a challenge of baseball’s antitrust exemption.<sup>68</sup>

Mack and Graham were instrumental in scheduling a Senate hearing in early December in Washington, but little came of it. Bud Selig, chairman of the owners’ Executive Committee—in effect the acting baseball commissioner—testified in front of the subcommittee on antitrust, monopolies and business rights, chaired by Ohio Senator Howard Metzenbaum. Selig defended baseball’s decision to keep the Giants in San Francisco, pointing out that in matters of franchise transfers Major League Baseball prefers to ban relocation except in dire circumstances. Selig also suggested that baseball’s unique antitrust exemption creates great stability in the sport.

“I am very proud of baseball’s record on franchise stability. Because of baseball’s exemption, it has by far the best record of professional sports in this area. No baseball club has been permitted to relocate since the Washington Senators moved to Texas in 1972.

... [B]aseball has not abused its antitrust exemption. ... We do not allow a club to relocate simply so that the owner can earn greater profits. Indeed, the National League rejected the move to Tampa-St.

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<sup>65</sup> *SFC*, November 11, 1992.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *SFE*, November 11, 1992.

Pete despite the fact that it would have netted Bob Lurie an additional \$15 million.”<sup>69</sup>

California Senators Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer expressed the relief and happiness of San Franciscans and Bay Area residents that the Giants would not be moving. The two Florida senators went on record to register their disappointment about St. Petersburg’s loss, but little headway was gained by the hearings. The subcommittee had no intention of challenging baseball’s long-standing exemption to antitrust laws, nor to reversing any action by baseball regarding franchise relocation.

Despite the jubilation in San Francisco, official business lay ahead. “It is still Bob Lurie’s franchise,” Larry Baer said.<sup>70</sup> But things were indeed falling into place. After a period of review and consideration, Lurie accepted the San Francisco offer. Then it was a simple matter of bringing the agreement to the owners for their approval. Having given so much time and consideration to the Giants’ case, the owners found little to trouble them. The discussion at baseball’s winter meeting was largely pro forma. The combined NL-AL assembly voted 27 to 0 to approve the sale and the transfer of the Giants from Bob Lurie to the Magowan partnership. Once again, at the eleventh hour with a local purchase, the Giants would remain in San Francisco. And once again, under yet another ownership, the franchise faced an uncertain future in the same ballpark that had troubled them for over 30 years.

### **The Magowan Years**

With Magowan as chief managing partner, Giants ownership entered a new phase of organizational structure, away from the single-owner model to an administration that is more corporate, with a board of directors and the head officer of the franchise emerging from the board and reporting back to them. For the next 15 years, from 1992 through 2007, Peter Magowan would head and run the organization, with Larry Baer as his chief assistant. The new ownership hit the ground running. They hired Dusty Baker to manage the club and signed

[Barry Bonds](#) to what was then (in the winter of 1992) baseball’s most lucrative contract, six years at \$43.75 million; they refurbished Candlestick as best they could with new paint, improved concessions stands with an upgraded menu, a new grass playing field, padded fences to replace the chain-link, and 2,500 new seats in left field so fans could catch home-run balls; they made the place more fan-friendly by hiring more ushers and conducting periodic sweeps throughout the games to clean up wind-blown litter. More important, perhaps, they embarked on a bold new plan to find a new ballpark downtown.

Magowan and Baer began their planning slowly at first, in conversations in the fall of 1995, musing about their favorite baseball venues and sharing impressions of the parks they had visited. They then moved to more practical considerations to develop a strategy to go forward. Given the recent history of the Giants’ failed ballots on public financing, Magowan understood that a new stadium could not be built with public money. As both he and Baer explained the problem, “[W]e needed a new approach; we had to get the community to see the ballpark in a new light. And that meant one thing: private financing.”<sup>71</sup> But the new approach would require more than creative thinking; it would require the hard work of diplomacy, working the corridors of City Hall and downtown businesses, and diligence in winning over the skeptics in the community. Privately constructed ballparks were a rarity in recent baseball history. The last one to be built was Dodger Stadium, finished in 1962.

The daunting practical side of campaigning for the ballpark was eased somewhat by an accompanying exercise of conjuring up the perfect stadium and of dreaming about what it would look like. Both Magowan and Baer had a penchant for the old, traditional locales like Fenway Park in Boston or Wrigley Field in Chicago. Combining an aesthetic sense with an historical one, they conceived of the ballpark as a special place, reflecting both the uniqueness of the sport itself and the environs where it would be built. Their planning grew out of the traditional side of baseball. “We wanted our

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<sup>69</sup> U.S. Senate. Hearings before the Subcommittee on Antitrust, Monopolies and Business Rights of the Committee on the Judiciary. One Hundred Second Congress, second session, on the Validity of Major League Baseball’s Exemption from the Antitrust Laws, December 10, 1992.

<sup>70</sup> *SFE*, November 16, 1992.

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<sup>71</sup> Peter Magowan and Larry Baer, “The Miracle at China Basin,” in Joan Walsh and C.W. Nevius. *Splash Hit!: Pacific Bell Ballpark and the San Francisco Giants*, (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2001), 19.

park to evoke the feeling of the best of the old parks, with Wrigley and Fenway as our models. ... Both were intimate, grass-field parks. Both had distinct features that let you know where you were.”<sup>72</sup>

The Giants had their location; the Port of San Francisco had agreed to lease them a 12.7-acre bayfront parcel in China Basin, south of Market Street but close to the Embarcadero. A sense of this location became a powerful concept for both Magowan and Baer as seen in their instruction to the stadium’s architectural team, Hellmuth, Obata, and Kassabaum, Sport, Venue and Event (HOK-SVE). The firm had built Oriole Park at Camden Yards in Baltimore, Jacobs Field in Cleveland, and the new Busch Stadium in St. Louis.<sup>73</sup> “We contacted the only architect we wanted to work with: Joe Spear of HOK Sport. ... We urged him to dream and to draw, to create something fitting for the site. What we envisioned was a ballpark more compelling, more distinctive than any other of recent memory.”<sup>74</sup>

Magowan and Baer wanted that location to permeate the design not only of the ballpark’s façade, but also the playing field. China Basin is tied to San Francisco’s maritime history as a place where nineteenth-century clipper ships sailed to and from China, giving the location its name. By the late twentieth century, the area had evolved from an industrial waterfront to warehouses and offices. The 12.7-acre parcel set aside for the ballpark was bordered on one side by King Street, a major traffic artery, and on the other by the edge of the bay, in the proximity of warehouses and some offices. It was seen by many in the city as an area primed for development. As Magowan and Baer explained, “The best ballparks ... are created not by an architect; they’re created by a site imposing itself on the architect.”<sup>75</sup>

With his deep interest in Giants’ history, Magowan also wanted the design of the park to honor the team’s heritage, from its days in New York as well as its time in San Francisco. Spear obliged that

interest with countless examples of the ballclub’s rich and storied past. The recent past is represented in various locations outside the park by a number of nine-foot bronze statues of former San Francisco Giants, all of them Hall of Famers: Willie Mays, Willie McCovey, Juan Marichal, and Orlando Cepeda. On the exterior wall of the right-field façade, world championship titles from New York and San Francisco are painted, along with NL pennant years, and plaques of various players. The waterway edge of San Francisco Bay behind the right-field wall, named McCovey Cove in honor of the Giants’ left-handed home-run slugger, would prove to be a unique and popular feature of the ballpark, where kayakers and boaters would gather to wait for “splash hits,” home-run balls that land in the water.<sup>76</sup> In a large stone adjacent to McCovey Cove, plaques commemorate highlight moments in each of the seasons the Giants played in San Francisco. Inside the ballpark on the second level of the grandstand, running chronologically from the right-field corner, around the home-plate area and out to left field are numerous photos of managers, players, and great moments in crucial games, which taken together constitute a kind of photographic history of the franchise, from John McGraw, [Christy Mathewson](#), and the early New York Giants down to the present. The sense of baseball history extends even to the San Francisco Seals, the old Pacific Coast League team; their beloved manager, [Lefty O’Doul](#), has a plaza named for him outside the right-field entrance to the ballpark.

Magowan also worked with Spear on the interior playing field, especially on how it would be influenced by its location and the dimensions of the site. Features of the playing field would evolve from its own small dimensions and the proximity of the water. Magowan thought that the restriction of space could dictate an interesting irregular outfield that would have an impact on how the game would be played. Unlike football or basketball, where the playing dimensions are fixed, baseball, aside from the infield measurements, always had irregularities in the old parks like Fenway, the Polo Grounds, Ebbets Field, and Shibe Park in Philadelphia. At the China Basin site, the right-field dimensions would be restricted by the close proximity of the water, only 309 feet from home plate in the corner, but

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Maureen Smith, “From ‘The Finest Ballpark in America’ to ‘The Jewel of the Waterfront:’ The Construction of San Francisco’s Major League Stadiums,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, Vol. 25, No. 11, 118.

<sup>74</sup> Magowan and Baer, *Miracle at China Basin*, 19.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>76</sup> McCovey Cove was particularly crowded during the period when Bonds was chasing the home-run record.

would quickly run away from the plate toward right-center, which would be 421 feet at its deepest. The left-field foul line would be 339 feet and 399 in straightaway center field. There would be sharp angles in both right-center and left-center. The right-field wall would be 24 feet high (another historical gesture—an homage to Willie Mays, who wore number 24) to prevent easy home runs down the line, and also add to the dramatics of “splash hits” that land in McCovey Cove. Magowan’s interest in the fans’ perspective would limit the

public approval to remove certain restrictions that applied to the Port’s China Basin site and to change some of the infrastructure before they could begin construction. The Board of Supervisors authorized a special March 1996 election in which Proposition B would come before the voters of the City and County of San Francisco. Prop B, as it came to be known, involved land-use restrictions, the most important of which were to increase the limitations on building height from 40 to 150 feet and to waive parking requirements near the ballpark.



*AT&T Park, Peter Magowan's dream come true*

dimensions of foul territory as well, since the seating is designed to get the fans as close to the action, especially behind home plate and near the infield.

The dreaming came easily to both Magowan and Baer, as did their collaboration with Spear. They now faced the difficult parts: how to get public support for their planning, and then find a way to pay for it. The first step was to put a ballot measure before the San Francisco voters to gain approval for the construction of the ballpark. While it would be built with private funding, the Giants still needed

In the buildup to the vote, Magowan and Baer wasted no effort in cultivating strong citywide support for the measure. While the terms of Prop B differed from previous referenda in making no demands for public money to build the park, Magowan and Baer were wary about possible negative residue carrying over from the 1987 or 1989 ballpark ballot defeats. They hired a professional political consultant, Peter Hart, who recommended polling in those neighborhoods that voted “no” in the 1987 and 1989 ballpark referenda. As part of the campaign, they approached three important community leaders in the city to head a

“San Franciscans For a Downtown Ballpark” committee, State Senator Quentin L. Kopp, Roberta Achtenberg, and Rev. Cecil Williams, each of whom represented a different constituency in the city’s social and political fabric.<sup>77</sup> The campaign then began to solicit support from a number of individuals who could coalesce into strategic groups and be listed in the official San Francisco Voters Pamphlet. Leaving no stone unturned, Magowan and Baer managed to convince nine people who voted no on the two previous city ballpark measures to stand as another group in the Voters Pamphlet entitled “Old Foes, New Supporters of a Downtown Ballpark.”<sup>78</sup> Weeks prior to the vote, Magowan and Baer made their way around town with a scale model of the new ballpark, displaying it at prominent venues for voters to see.

All the planning, organizing, polling, and campaigning paid off for the Giants in a stunning victory at the polls. Proposition B was approved by San Francisco voters by a substantial majority of 66 percent. The local papers celebrated the news. “Giants Ballpark: Home Run” ran the headlines in the *San Francisco Examiner*; “S.F. Voters Say Play Ball” was the headline in the *Chronicle*.<sup>79</sup> Politicians, campaign workers, Giants officials, and average baseball fans celebrated all over town, including at the Double Play, a bar where supporters of Proposition B toasted the home team.

Once the vote was approved, Magowan and Baer could get to work on the financing. The projected cost of building the ballpark was \$357 million. Magowan explained that from the outset the plan to raise capital was multifaceted. The first stage was a brilliant marketing ploy aimed at 1996 season-ticket holders. Over the following winter they received a

promotional package in a cardboard box shaped like home plate. Inside was a pop-up view of the new ballpark, a film showing an architect’s rendering, with information about the design and construction, and a brochure on the charter seat program. The mailing campaign proved quite successful. The sale of charter seats coupled with an advertising campaign provided much-needed capital. Magowan and Baer were pleased with the results: “We raised \$75 million by selling licensing fees at \$5,000 for the best seats.”<sup>80</sup>

They then moved to get corporate sponsorship for ads within the ballpark. Naming rights were \$50 million; other advertising brought in \$50 million. With this amount of capital commitment, they looked to borrow the rest. Their first choice was Bank of America, an old San Francisco bank with ties to the Giants. Walter Shorenstein owned the Bank of America building and Bob Lurie was one of the tenants. But Bank of America said no. They then pursued another bank with a local history, Wells Fargo, but they also said no.<sup>81</sup> Finally, Magowan and Baer traveled to New York City and presented their plan to Chase, which approved the loan. The City of San Francisco also provided some help. Using a tax-increment financing plan, the city provided \$12 million in infrastructure (amenities outside the ballpark including closing streets, street lighting, a transit stop, and utilities connections).<sup>82</sup>

Magowan and Baer had accomplished what had been previously thought improbable. They had overcome all the disappointments, false starts, and near misses of recent Giants attempts at trying to build a new ballpark. They had managed to get City Hall, the community, local businesses, and neighborhood groups to support the idea of a downtown baseball venue at a location agreeable to

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<sup>77</sup> Quentin Kopp, a conservative politician, was wary of using public funds for private projects and did not support the other two ballpark initiatives in San Francisco. Roberta Achtenberg, a former Board of Supervisors member, was a prominent attorney and Democratic politician, and the first openly lesbian government official approved for a government position by the United States Senate. Rev. Cecil Williams was pastor of Glide Memorial Church and a leading advocate for African-Americans, gays, and lesbians. Williams’s church grew to a congregation of 10,000 and provided many social services in the city.

<sup>78</sup> Germaine Wong, *San Francisco Voter Information Pamphlet and Sample Ballot*. (San Francisco: Office of the Registrar, the City and County of San Francisco, 1966), 63-65.

<sup>79</sup> *SFC* and *SFE*, March 27, 1996.

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<sup>80</sup> Peter Magowan, interview with the author, June 25, 2013.

<sup>81</sup> Peter Magowan, interview with the author, June 3, 2015.

<sup>82</sup> Kevin Delany and Rick Eckstein, *Public Dollars, Private Stadiums: The Battle over Building Sports Stadiums*, (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 195. Tax-increment financing (TIFs), used throughout the country by local municipalities to promote development, diverts property taxes on the land into the construction costs. See Joanna Cagan and Neil deMause. *Field of Schemes: How the Great Stadium Swindle Turns Public Money into Private Profit*. (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 1998), 175.

all. With public approval and the crucial financing



*Barry Bonds makes a deposit in McCovey Cove*

in hand, they now had a “shovel ready” project. On December 11, 1997, they broke ground at China Basin and the building of the new ballpark was on its way. Pacific Telephone and Telegraph of California had paid \$50 million for the naming rights; the new stadium would be called Pac Bell Park. Magowan and Baer hired Kajima, a Japanese construction management firm, to coordinate the building of Pac Bell. Kajima in a sense “rode herd” on the structural engineers and the construction company, Haber, Hunt & Nichols.<sup>83</sup> The two Giants executives visited the construction site almost on a daily basis to keep up with the progress, a far cry from Horace Stoneham’s passive connection to the building of Candlestick.<sup>84</sup> The attention to detail and the superb management of the project produced spectacular results. Pac Bell Park opened on April 11, 2000, 27 months after the groundbreaking ceremonies. The Giants finally had their downtown home. Coming full circle from Opening Day on the West Coast 42 years before in Seals Stadium, the Giants’ opponent in the first game at Pac Bell Park was the Los Angeles Dodgers, a fitting historical echo at the dawning of a new century of baseball in San Francisco.

Once Pac Bell Park opened in 2000, there was a dramatic shift in attitude, perception and the team’s fortunes. To many in San Francisco it was love at first sight. Players marveled at the playing field and locker-room facilities. Taken by the ambience and location, fans flocked to the park, establishing

sellouts for every home game. The longtime voice of the Giants, Lon Simmons, suffered through many cold nights at Candlestick; when he first saw Pac Bell Park, he remarked, “Finally the Giants have a ballpark that looks like San Francisco.”<sup>85</sup> The neighborhood around the park throbbled with life and activity. Mike Krukow, one of the Giants’ broadcasters, noticed the way the ballpark immediately connected with the city’s character. “It was an old soul the day it opened. You had the feeling it was in San Francisco even before the bridges.”<sup>86</sup>

The coherence and sheer beauty of the new ballpark brought the deficiencies of Candlestick into sharper focus. Everything about Pac Bell accentuated the gap between the new and the old: the location of the ballpark amid a thriving neighborhood; the attractive combination of brick and steel in the façade; the proximity of downtown; the views of the Oakland hills from the upper decks; the sight of the Bay Bridge from the right-field seats; even the weather was better, due to adjustments to the ballpark’s configuration after some wind studies. There was nothing like any of this at the remote location of Candlestick, 10 miles from downtown. After only one month in the new ballpark, players, fans, broadcasters, and sportswriters alike shuddered to think of Giants baseball at Candlestick.

The dramatic comparison of appearance and the location between Pac Bell and Candlestick extended also to the fortunes of the home team. For the 40 years the Giants played at Candlestick, they went to the postseason five times; they won division titles three times and the NL pennant twice. They won no World Series. Once they moved into Pac Bell Park in 2000, things changed quickly. In their first four years there, the Giants went to the postseason three times and won a NL pennant. Overall, in the 16 years (as of 2015) that they have played at AT&T Park (the ballpark changed its name in 2004 to SBC Pac Bell, and then in 2006 to AT&T Park), the Giants have been to the postseason seven times, have won four pennants and three World Series.

The move to the new ballpark has strengthened and cemented the Giants connection to the city of San

<sup>83</sup> *Kajima News and Notes*, Summer 2000, Vol. 13: 3. Newsletter of the Kajima Corp.

<sup>84</sup> Peter Magowan, interview with the author, March 29, 2016.

<sup>85</sup> Quoted in Brian Murphy, *San Francisco Giants: Fifty Years*, (San Raphael, Ca: Insight Editions, 2008), 179.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid*.

San Francisco, as well as enhanced its status as one of the great franchises in baseball. According to national journals like *Forbes* or business internet sites like bizjournals.com, the Giants rank in the top five major-league baseball franchises for profitability, team worth, success on the field, and overall stability. A good example of that stability can be seen in the smooth succession of recent corporate management. When Peter Magowan retired in 2008, Bill Neukom became chief managing partner; and then in 2012, when Neukom left, Larry Baer became the chief executive of the franchise, an organization that no longer is run by a single owner like Stoneham or Lurie, but has a board of directors to whom the chief managing partner reports.<sup>87</sup> During this period of change, the ball club has remained not just efficient and secure, but phenomenally successful.



*Seals Stadium, original home of the San Francisco Giants*

## Recently Published Research

*This column highlights recently published articles on topics that may interest members of the Business of Baseball Committee. If you are aware of a source that publishes articles of interest to the readership, please alert me so that I can monitor it.*

Mathew Dowling, “Apples and oranges? Establishing equivalence in comparative sport policy research,” *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics* 14, no 2 (2022):191-206

The notion of equivalence is important in the context of comparative studies, such as those that compare performance across sporting nations or

those that compare good governance across different sport organisations. However, despite its importance, the concept has been interpreted and employed in different ways, resulting in the term being misunderstood or conflated. This article examines the concept of equivalence, discusses how issues of non-equivalence can arise, and identifies potential strategies that can be employed by researchers to ensure it is more appropriately addressed. We examine and apply three main types of equivalence (construct, sample and functional) to two empirical cases, (1) the SPLISS analysis of critical success factors in elite sport policy and (2) Play the Game’s Sport Governance Observer to demonstrate how researchers attempt to overcome or at least mitigate the problems of equivalence and how, despite these efforts, there remain equivalence-related problems that limit the reliability and credibility of comparative elements of the study. We conclude our paper by discussing the implications for comparative sport research and specifically how future comparative sport research may be enhanced.

Patrick C. Gentile, “MLB’s Neocolonial Practices in the Dominican Republic Academy System,” *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 46, no. 3 (Jun 2022): 269-92

This essay investigates the early stages of the Major League Baseball (MLB) pipeline by focusing on the Dominican academy system. Once an international player is signed to a professional contract, they report to the team’s academy in the Dominican Republic. All 30 teams have an academy located on the island, where they house, feed, train, and educate players on American culture. I argue that MLB maintains a neocolonial system by having a system of insufficient education, discrimination, and surveillance based on Haitian nationality, and by communicating the American dream to its prospects. MLB controls its prospects economically and culturally in these instances, which is strictly neocolonial. I analyze, with attention to internal discourse and reference to neocolonial literature, how MLB justifies and maintains this system, rhetorically.

Christopher M. McLeod, “Are Athlete-Owned Leagues a Viable Alternative for Professional Sport?” *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 46 no. 1 (February 2022): 51-74

<sup>87</sup> For a more complete discussion of recent Giants ownership and corporate structure see Mark L. Armour and Daniel R. Levitt, *In Pursuit of Pennants* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 368-384.

Sport leagues have been critiqued for their cartel-like behavior, monopsony power, and many occupational health risks to athletes. Athlete-owned sports leagues are an alternative way of organizing professional sport that may benefit athletes and the industry. This article examines the viability of athlete-owned leagues by reviewing theory and research on worker-owned firms and applying the findings to sports leagues with athlete ownership, with a focus on the Premier Lacrosse League. Five criteria are shown to affect the viability of worker ownership: heterogeneity of interests, capital-labor ratios, time horizons, motivation and efficiency, and conflict with capitalists. When applied to the sport industry, athlete ownership is likely in sports like beach volleyball and skateboarding but unlikely in sports like American football and soccer. Athlete-owned sports leagues have some benefits when compared with capitalist-owned leagues, but they will struggle in markets with incumbents.

Po-Lin Pan, Joe Phua, and Chang Wan Woo, "Understanding How Consumers Perceive Brand Personality Through Sports Sponsorship," *Journal of Sports Media* 16, no. 2 (Fall 2021): 87-110

Sports sponsorship has been considered a key branding strategy for various marketing objectives, but little research has investigated how consumers perceived sponsor brands through sports competitions. This study aimed to examine whether team performance and gender differences jointly impacted consumers' perceived brand personality and how team identification and self-brand connection moderated such impacts on perceived brand personality in the context of sports sponsorship. A 2 (team performance) x 2 (gender) between-subjects experiment was designed with team identification and self-brand connection as two moderators. Results indicated that team performance, team identification, and self-brand connection yielded individual and joint influences on perceived brand personality. Specifically, team performance exerted significant effects on five dimensions of brand personality, while team identification yielded significant effects on brand responsibility, aggressiveness, and simplicity. Self-brand connection moderated the effect of team performance on brand responsibility and activity. The empirical evidence further illustrated that consumer-level factors came into play to influence perceived brand personality. In support of affect-

transfer hypothesis, team performance that evolved emotions greatly impacted consumers' perceived brand personality, as they rated a sponsor brand as more positive in terms of brand responsibility, activity, aggressiveness, simplicity, and emotionality.

Balazs Polcsik and Svilvia Perenyi, "Residents' perceptions of sporting events: a review of the literature," *Sport in Society* 25, no 4 (2022): 748-67

Increasing attention has been devoted of late to perceptions of sporting events among host city residents. However, a comprehensive literature review that collects and summarizes the content of research in this area lacks scholarly approaches. This study aims to review the literature published between 2000 and 2020 in indexed, peer-reviewed periodicals on perceptions among host city residents. It also analyses the selected 43 papers in the sample with reference to theoretical approaches, methods and findings. It seems that understanding perceived potential social impacts of sporting events in a particular city is essential to the overall success of these events among local communities. Findings from the wide spectrum of studies reviewed can be used in event planning, communication strategies, implementation and reduction of negative impacts, while capitalizing on opportunities. Highlighting key topics and trends in the literature, this analysis also identifies both limitations and possible new research approaches.

Marco Runkel, "Player Mobility and Competitive Balance Regulation in Professional Sports Leagues," *Journal of Sports Economics* 23, no. 4 (May 2022): 479-500

Competitive balance regulation is more widespread in North American than in European sports leagues. The present paper addresses the question whether this observation can be explained with the help of differences in the degree of player mobility. Using an extended version of the workhorse contest model of sports leagues, the paper shows that the answer depends on the kind of competitive balance regulation. While player mobility may help to explain the difference with respect to salary regulation (e.g., salary caps), the choice of revenue sharing schemes turns out to be independent of player mobility.

Duncan, Samuel. "Applying Dyer's Star Theory to Sport: Understanding the Cultivation of Athlete

Stardom" *Physical Culture and Sport Studies and Research*, vol.94, no.1, 2022, pp.35-45.

Sports stars and heroes have always been a product of the times in which they have existed and, as such, athlete stars, largely constructed by and through the media, have evolved over time. In particular, the meanings of characteristics that have defined stars of different generations have changed as society's expectations and social norms have evolved. This can be understood through Richard Dyer's (1998) star theory, which states that to cultivate their stardom a celebrity must resonate with the ideals, values, and spirit of the time. This theoretical paper aims to highlight how Dyer's star theory – originally developed as a means of understanding the construction of movie stars by mainstream media – can be used to understand the ways in which athlete stars can promote star attributes to cultivate their stardom by displaying modern values and presenting themselves as both "ordinary" and "extraordinary." By creating a framework for understanding the process of creating athlete stardom, we are also able to begin to understand how athletes' social media activities and stardom will evolve in the future, thus creating an important tool for athletes and their managers responsible for enhancing their brand. To expound and enrich the theory a survey of sports fans is included. The survey responses provide insights into how the expectations of fans can influence social athlete social media strategies and the cultivation of athlete stars.

Antonio S. Williams and Zack P. Pedersen, "Legacy Branding: The Posthumous Utilization and Management of Athlete Brands," *International Journal of Sport Communication* 15, no. 2, (2022): 85-92

The passing of basketball icon Kobe Bryant at the beginning of 2020 was devastating for many different sporting and cultural communities. However, the plethora of opportunities Bryant left his family, and the management of those entities by his estate, thereafter, shed light on a neglected area of branding research. How athletes are able to prepare their estates to continue to benefit from their name, image, and likeness, even after death, is a substantial topic in regard to the legacy that various athletes are able to establish. Through an analysis of various posthumous branding

phenomena, as well as a comparison with other posthumous celebrity brands, this commentary discusses the current issues faced by athletes, such as ownership and protection. An understanding of current barriers to greater posthumous earnings will benefit how athletes and researchers alike construct and evaluate brands, respectively. Future research should address how prevalent forward thinking is to athletes' brand building toward a successful post athletic career, as well as the current status of estate planning and brand communication by athletes and/or their brand managers.

Grace Yan, Hanhan Xue, and Chad Seifried, "Representations of Wrigley Field Redevelopment(s) in the *Chicago Tribune*: Neoliberal Discourse and Urban Politics," *Sociology of Sport Journal* 39, no. 1 (March 2022): 1-13

Since the concept of redeveloping Wrigley Field became prevalent, the *Chicago Tribune* has notably constructed a variety of narrative strands on related urban dynamics. Through a framework that connected post-Gramsci insights of hegemony, discourse, and critics of spatial and economic neoliberalism, this study examined how the newspaper strategically assembled discourses in mediatizing urban politics surrounding the Wrigley renovation. First, the newspaper fostered hegemonic consent that endorsed the redevelopment(s) by promoting old tropes of economic development and market growth despite mounting evidence to the contrary. Second, it also produced a parallel discourse that expressed moderate recognition and sympathy to the interest and experience of the community. Without fundamentally challenging neoliberal power, however, such discursive construction was a strategic and instrumental intervention that reinforced the contingencies and boundaries of neoliberal hegemony. Through such investigations, this study shed light on the ongoing rearticulation(s) of the media regime that strategically produced neoliberal rationalities, subjectivities, and discursive antagonism as it assisted to shape urban imageries and political economies of sporting spaces.



## Team Ownership Histories Project

By Andy McCue

The project (<https://sabr.org/bioproj/topic/team-ownership-histories>) continues to grow and evolve.

In the past few months, we've added John Bauer's essay on the ownership history of the Padres and Mark Stangl's piece on the Cardinals is in the editing process.

Also in the editing process is Bill Lamb's ownership history of the Indianapolis Hoosiers of the Federal League. This is part of an expansion of the project in which we search for ownership histories of teams in the Negro Leagues, AAGPBL, Federal League, Players League, Union Association, American Association and even the National Association. Several defunct National League franchises have already been completed and posted.

The newest work joins earlier essays on the Mets (Leslie Heaphy), the Boston Braves (Bob LeMoine), the Red Sox and Yankees (Dan Levitt and Mark Armour), the Indians (Dave Bohmer), the Dodgers (Andy McCue), the New York Giants (Bill Lamb), the Diamondbacks (Clayton Trutor), San Francisco Giants (Rob Garratt), Miami Marlins (Steve Keeney), Phillies (Rich Westcott), Blue Jays (Allen Tait), Mariners (Steve Friedman), St. Louis Browns (Greg Erion), both versions of the Washington Senators (Andy Sharp), the Montreal Expos (Joe Marren) and the Royals (Dan Levitt).

Working on drafts are Mike Hauptert (Cubs), Brian Ertz (Reds to 1968), Steve West (Rangers), Nick Waddell and Jeff Samoray (Tigers), Ed Edmonds (Reds from 1968), Ken Carrano (White Sox), Gary Olson (Twins), Seattle Pilots (Andy McCue), Pittsburgh Pirates (Joe Wancho and Blake Sherry) and Dennis Degenhardt (Brewers).

That leaves the Milwaukee Braves, Atlanta Braves, Washington Nationals, Colorado Rockies, Los Angeles Angels, Houston Astros, Philadelphia/Kansas City/Oakland Athletics, Tampa Bay Rays, and Baltimore Orioles.

Anyone interested in the un-assigned teams or those of defunct franchises should contact Andy McCue at [agmcue48@gmail.com](mailto:agmcue48@gmail.com) or [amccue@sabr.org](mailto:amccue@sabr.org).

Society for American Baseball Research  
Business of Baseball Committee  
555 N. Central Ave, Suite 416  
Phoenix, AZ 85004  
[www.sabr.org](http://www.sabr.org)

### *A Call for Submissions*

The Business of Baseball Committee has more than 700 registered members. We are sure many of you are doing research that would be of interest to your fellow SABR members. Please consider sharing your work in the newsletter, which is especially well suited to preliminary versions of work you may wish to publish elsewhere. *Outside the Lines* is an excellent outlet for the publication of your research on any topic of baseball that occurs "outside" the playing field. Submissions can be directed to Mike Hauptert at [mhauptert@uwlax.edu](mailto:mhauptert@uwlax.edu).

### **MLB Team Employee Directory Project Update**

The [Business of Baseball Committee](#) has embarked on building a historical database of major league baseball employees. Sean Lahman has been helping compile the data, and we are in the queue with SABR's web consultant to turn our efforts into a more formal database.

We have a terrific group of volunteers who have made this project possible: to date we have completed roughly 1500 team-seasons and have another 100 or so assigned. Nearly all the media guides that we have access to either electronically or in hard copy have been either assigned or entered (other than 2020, 2021 and 2022). If you have access to historical media guides or other sources of employee information and would be willing to either copy the key pages for others or enter the data yourself, please let us know, and we can let you know if we need the team-seasons. We are also working on tracking down additional media guide team employee pages.

Please contact project coordinator Dan Levitt at [dan@daniel-levitt.com](mailto:dan@daniel-levitt.com) with any questions or comments.



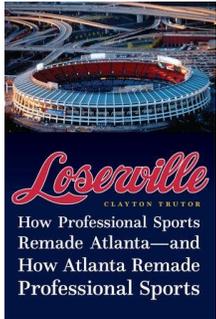
## New Book of Interest: seeking a reviewer

*How Professional Sports Remade Atlanta—and  
How Atlanta Remade Professional Sports*

By Clayton Trutor

University of Nebraska Press, 2021

In July 1975 the editors of the *Atlanta Constitution* ran a two-part series entitled “Loserville, U.S.A.” The provocatively titled series detailed the futility of Atlanta’s four professional sports teams in the decade following the 1966 arrival of its first two major league franchises, Major League Baseball’s Atlanta Braves and the National Football League’s Atlanta Falcons. Two years later, the Atlanta Hawks of the National Basketball Association became the city’s third major professional sports franchise. In 1972 the National Hockey League granted the Flames expansion franchise to the city, making Atlanta the first southern city with teams in all four of the big leagues.



The excitement surrounding the arrival of four professional franchises in Atlanta in a six-year period soon gave way to widespread frustration and, eventually, widespread apathy toward its home teams. All four of Atlanta’s franchises struggled in the standings and struggled to draw fans to their games. Atlantans’ indifference to their new teams took place amid the social and political fracturing that had resulted from a new Black majority in Atlanta and a predominately white suburban exodus. Sports could never quite bridge the divergence between the two.

*Loserville* examines the pursuit, arrival, and response to professional sports in Atlanta during its first decade as a major league city (1966–75). It scrutinizes the origins of what remains the primary model for acquiring professional sports franchises: offers of municipal financing for new stadiums. Other Sunbelt cities like San Diego, Phoenix, and Tampa that aspired to big league stature adopted Atlanta’s approach. Like the teams in Atlanta, the franchises in these cities have had mixed results—both in terms of on-field success and financial stability.

We are seeking to begin a book review series for the newsletter. If you are interested in reviewing this book, please contact Mike Hauptert at [mhauptert@uwlax.edu](mailto:mhauptert@uwlax.edu).

### BUSINESS OF BASEBALL COMMITTEE

The Business of Baseball Committee co-chairs are Dan Levitt [dan@daniel-levitt.com](mailto:dan@daniel-levitt.com), and Mike Hauptert ([mhauptert@uwlax.edu](mailto:mhauptert@uwlax.edu)). Hauptert edits *Outside the Lines*. The committee’s website is at <http://research.sabr.org/business/>. You should stay in touch with the site as we improve the look and add content.

## 100 Years Ago

*Federal Base Ball Club v National League*

By Michael Hauptert

Major League Baseball as we know it today began with the creation of the National League in 1876, when William Hulbert convinced seven teams to join his White Stockings in defecting from the National Association. The formation of a new league was built on the promise of financial riches in the form of a monopoly of the professional baseball market.<sup>88</sup> Hulbert delivered on his promise, and more. Not only did he deliver a monopoly, but nearly half a century later the Taft Court codified it with its decision in *Federal Base Ball Club v National League*. That ruling stands to this day.

### *The Federal League*

The Federal League of Base Ball Clubs played its final game on October 3, 1915, but its legacy endures, thanks to the 1922 Supreme Court case, *Federal Base Ball Club v National League*, which was the last gasp for the Federal



William Hulbert

League (FL), and a lasting gift to Major League Baseball (MLB). The ruling granted MLB exemption from the antitrust laws of the United States, effectively making it a legal monopolist and monopsonist. A monopsonist is a firm that acts as the only purchaser in a market – the opposite of a monopoly, in which a market has only one

<sup>88</sup> See Hauptert (2015)

producer. MLB is the only North American sport that has blanket immunity, though others enjoy limited immunity in regard to television rights.<sup>89</sup>

The Federal League debuted in 1914 and lasted two seasons. Like previous challengers to the established “major” leagues, Federal League teams signed players away from MLB teams. As before, it led to chaos in the form of wildly shifting rosters. In 1914, FL teams enticed 79 players to jump from their MLB teams. As a result, 37% of FL rosters were made up of players who had been on MLB teams the previous season. Viewed from the other side of the ledger, it meant that MLB teams lost 14% of their players to the FL. From the players’ perspective, the biggest benefit was not the change of scenery, but rapidly escalating salaries. While we do not have reliable FL salary data, the average MLB salary rose from \$2640 in 1913 to \$3587 in 1914, a whopping 31% increase. Only the 32% post WWII jump exceeded this salary windfall until free agency began.

The eventual settlement of the baseball war in 1916 saw the owner of the FL Chicago Whales, Charles Weeghman, purchase the Cubs, and a select few FL owners move into the coveted ownership ranks of MLB. The settlement involved financial payments to other franchises, none of which joined the established MLB outright. The Baltimore Terrapins were frozen out of the settlement, leading the franchise to file suit against the National and American Leagues, along with several Federal League officials for conspiring to monopolize the professional baseball industry.<sup>90</sup>

### *The Supreme Court*

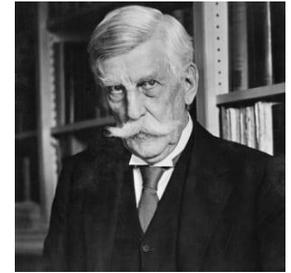
Baltimore won the first round of the legal battle in 1919. They were awarded damages of \$80,000, which, under the provisions of the *Clayton Antitrust Act*, were automatically tripled to \$240,000. The decision was appealed and overturned by the Appellate Court and in turn appealed to the Supreme Court, leading to the famous decision in 1922 that baseball was not subject to America’s antitrust laws, on the grounds that it did not meet the criteria of interstate commerce as set forth in the *Sherman Antitrust Act*.

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<sup>89</sup> For an overview of professional sports and antitrust legislation, see Farzin (2015).

<sup>90</sup> See Levitt (2012) for a history of the Federal League

Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. wrote the unanimous decision that MLB was not covered by the *Sherman Antitrust Act* because it was not interstate commerce. Travel by teams



across state lines to play *Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.* games was merely “an incident” to the business of staging baseball exhibitions, which were “purely state affairs.”<sup>91</sup> This cemented the status of baseball as a monopoly. It did not by itself change the behavior of baseball clubs, but it did embolden them. The Supreme Court sanctioned behavior the baseball magnates had been practicing for nearly half a century.

Since 1922 the MLB exemption has been upheld in *Toolson v New York Yankees, Inc.* (1953) and *Flood v Kuhn* (1972). In 1998 Congress passed the *Curt Flood Act*, which eliminated MLB’s antitrust exemption for labor relations with players.<sup>92</sup> The act had little noticeable impact however, as Marvin Miller and the Major League Baseball Players Association (MLBPA) had already dramatically changed the balance of power in labor relations. Collective bargaining made the *Flood Act* a mute cause, but if the MLBPA ever dissolves itself, it would become relevant.

Because MLB was declared exempt from antitrust laws, it was free to implement anti-competitive behavior. As had been aptly demonstrated over the past fifty years, the NL (and then MLB) held a dominant position in the market for professional baseball, occupying the most important markets, which made it difficult for rivals to enter the industry. The financial gamble of doing so, as had been demonstrated multiple times, was onerous. The only viable competitor to the MLB monopoly over the half century following the 1922 decision was the Pacific Coast League (PCL), and even that is a questionable rivalry. The leagues did not compete head-to-head in any markets, with a 2000 mile buffer between their nearest cities. Few players actually eschewed the opportunity to play in MLB, and the best PCL players were routinely purchased by MLB clubs. MLB has not faced any competitor

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<sup>91</sup> *Federal Baseball Club of Baltimore*

<sup>92</sup> This applied only to players, and not any other labor groups, such as umpires.

leagues since 1922, unlike the other North American professional sports leagues.

### *The reserve clause*

The most prominent result of the *Federal Baseball* decision was the preservation of baseball's reserve clause. The reserve clause was born in December of 1879, officially presented to the league by Arthur Soden, owner and president of the Boston entry in the National League. The concept, however, predated Soden. In fact, it was one of the originating ideas for the formation of the National League three years earlier.



*Arthur H. Soden*

William Hulbert, president of the Chicago White Stockings, founded the National League in 1876, taking with him seven franchises from the National Association. The promise of geographic exclusivity, controllable player salaries, and a monopoly on the

highest level of baseball was enough to get his fellow owners to join him in the new venture. From the beginning, Hulbert regularly pled with the owners to show salary restraint. In 1879 he became the first of many league officials to proclaim that baseball's very survival hinged on reducing salaries. A major step in this direction was taken at the league meeting held in Buffalo on September 29<sup>th</sup> of that year. One proposal was to establish a salary schedule. This was determined to be impractical, and a reserve system was employed instead.<sup>93</sup>

The plan that was adopted became the reserve clause. It was known initially as the "Buffalo clause," named after the location of the meetings at which it was introduced. The seminal topic at the meeting was how to reduce player salaries. A two-part plan was proposed and eventually adopted. Uniform player contracts were instituted, and a reserve system was created.

<sup>93</sup> Chicago Tribune, September 30, 1879, p 5

The issue of player contracts was addressed and a plan was proposed "for remedying the innumerable evils growing out of the non-usage of a regular contract for all men. Players in some nines had liberties which they were refused in other clubs. This was held to be detrimental to said teams in securing players, besides having a tendency to demoralize them."<sup>94</sup> Unsaid, but well understood, was the issue that non-uniform contracts bred competition for players, and competition meant higher player costs and lower profits for owners.

Owners convinced themselves that the financial results of the previous season proved that salaries had to be reduced.<sup>95</sup> "We believe that players insisting upon exorbitant prices are injuring their own interests by forcing out of existence clubs which cannot be run and pay large salaries except at large personal loss. The season financially has been little better than that of 1878, but the expenses of many of the clubs have far exceeded their receipts, attributable wholly to high salaries. In view of these facts, measures have been taken by this League to remedy the evils to some extent for 1880. It has been decided that uniform contracts shall be used by each club, and that no money shall be paid players until it shall have been earned. In other words, that no advances will be given. Contracts will hereafter extend from April 1 to Oct. 31 inclusive, seven months, which will give players nearly half the year for the pursuit of other employment. It is hoped that the restriction regarding advance money will work beneficially to persons who risk their capital in support of National sport."<sup>96</sup>

The prohibition of advance payments was aimed directly at cutting off the practice of "revolving," in which a player under contract to one team, would sign a contract, complete with a signing bonus, during the season to play for another team the following year. Not only did this lead to roster chaos and spiraling salaries, but it created untoward conflicts of interest when a player contracted for one team played against the team he was bound to for the following season. Revolving was one of the

<sup>94</sup> Chicago Tribune, September 30, 1879, p 5

<sup>95</sup> These financial results were never made public. In fact, the only available primary evidence, the account books of the Chicago White Stockings, suggests the opposite. The teams were making very good money.

<sup>96</sup> Chicago Tribune, October 2, 1879, p 5

evils that Hulbert campaigned against when the NL was founded.

All team owners “signed a written contract binding themselves to keep said agreement, which was, that each club should name five men in their club who should be held inviolate; that is, no other club would have a right to approach them or sign them without the consent of said club. . . . All the delegates believe that this rule will solve the problem of how to reduce wages, and feel confident that it will be lived up to.”<sup>97</sup> “As a matter of opinion, no one can doubt that ball-players are paid too much.”<sup>98</sup>

Originally the reserve was applied only to five players per roster, allowing the rest to shop their services elsewhere. Initially, it was seen as a sign of honor by players to be reserved. Hulbert even advocated the idea that reservation was job security and was requested by the players. History has shown this was hardly the case. It would be nearly a century before the players would regain their bargaining power.

The owners claimed the reserve clause was not about depressing salaries, but preserving the integrity of the game. They pointed to the obvious conflict of interest that resulted from a player performing in a game against a team for which it had already signed a future contract. It was not uncommon for that same player to then use the new contract to extract wage concessions from his current employer and then renege on the new contract. Obviously neither party lacked self-interest in this charade.

“Although the Reserve Rule . . . [is] intended to ‘secure good players at small salaries, players were paid well above the average wage and gained little sympathy on that score.’”<sup>99</sup> The average NL player earned 68% more than the average non-farm wage, and that was for a job that lasted only about half the year. The average non-farm wage is calculated on a typical 60 hour work week. So not only were players paid substantially more, but they worked far fewer hours for that wage. That, however, is not how competitive wages are determined.

Competitive wages are determined by the revenue a worker adds to his employer’s bottom line. This is known in economic parlance as marginal revenue product (MRP). In a competitive market, a worker’s wage will be equal to the additional revenue his hiring provides for his employer. Research is clear on this point: as long as players are restricted from shopping their services to the highest bidder, they are underpaid. This was true in 1880 and it remains true to this day for those players who are not yet eligible for free agency.<sup>100</sup>

In its report on the meeting, the *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser* opined that “players need not imagine that the privilege will be abused. They will be rated according to their value and reasonable salaries will be paid. The aim of the League is to reduce expenses so that clubs can live . . . of course the agreement about picked players does not make the signing of contracts by them compulsory, but at the same time it is for their interest to stay in the League and there is not the slightest doubt that every sensible player who has the opportunity will remain where he receives fair recompense for his services and square treatment.”<sup>101</sup>

The “reserve clause,” which was literally a clause in the standard player contract granting the team the right to renew the contract at its discretion, was eventually expanded to include every player on the roster. Of course, the players had no similar right to extend their contract if they wished, nor did they have the ability to end the contract prematurely, as another standard clause allowed the owners to do. The dreaded ten-day clause gave the team the team the right to terminate the contract with ten days’ notice and a train ticket home. Even before 1922, the owners were playing with a stacked hand.

The fate of the clause, while in wide use throughout professional baseball by 1922, had come under attack several times, always in the guise of a competitive league, which ignored the clause, enticed players to jump leagues for higher salaries and in some cases promises of the elimination of the reserve clause. In each case, the NL eventually won the battle. It took some time in the case of the American Association, and they merged with the

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<sup>97</sup> Chicago Tribune, October 2, 1879, p 5

<sup>98</sup> Chicago Tribune, August 26, 1877, p 7

<sup>99</sup> Moore, p 234

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<sup>100</sup> This has been demonstrated in numerous studies. See, for example, Hauptert (2009a, 2009b), Scully (1974, 1989), and Zimbalist(1992a, 1992b)

<sup>101</sup> Sullivan, p 114

American League. Like the Federal League, the other challengers (Union Association, Players League) were vanquished outright.

The reserve clause lasted until December 23, 1975, when arbitrator Peter Seitz ruled that the clause was not perpetual but was only in effect for one year. So, when Andy Messersmith and Dave McNally did not sign contracts for the 1975 season, the reserve clause was applied to their 1974 contract, permitting their teams to renew their contracts unilaterally for 1975. But, Seitz ruled, because they did not sign a 1975 contract, there was no reserve clause to apply to 1976. In other words, the reserve clause extended only one year. The ruling by Seitz made Messersmith and McNally the first true free agents.<sup>102</sup>

Despite the increased bargaining power made possible by the player's union, players are still not entirely free to pick and choose their terms of employment. Collective bargaining has resulted in free agency, but only after six years (for most players). And players are still subject to a draft, which limits their choice of initial employer. The inequity of this pay gap between younger and older players was one of the hot-button issues in the 2021-22 labor dispute.

### *The Supreme Court and Professional Sports*

The Supreme Court has had numerous opportunities to reconsider the role of antitrust laws as they apply to professional sports. Thirty years after *Federal Baseball*, MLB appeared before the Supreme Court again, in *Toolson v NY Yankees, Inc. (1953)*. George



Earl Toolson was a Yankee farmhand who sued on the grounds that the reserve clause prevented him from pursuing a career in professional baseball. He was a career minor leaguer in the Yankee system, and believed that he was good enough to play at the Major League level, but was blocked by a talented Yankee team and a reserve

clause that prevented him from seeking other employment. *Toolson* was the first direct attack on the reserve clause.

The court upheld its precedent, indicating that the inaction of Congress since 1922 suggested its intent to leave MLB exempt from antitrust laws. Unlike the 1922 decision, this was not unanimous. Two justices dissented, arguing that the baseball market had changed since 1922, most notably the growing importance of interstate broadcast revenues to MLB's bottom line. In *Toolson*, however, the court drew the line of antitrust exemption for sports at baseball. They concluded that antitrust laws applied to other sports, and ruled that way explicitly in 1955 in *United States v International Boxing Club of New York*, and in 1957 in *Radovich v NFL*. The court admitted that MLB was not unlike the NFL in regard to antitrust laws, but felt they were compelled to honor the existing case law from 1922, and that Congress should revoke baseball's exemption if it wished to do so.

In October of 1969 Curt Flood was traded by the Cardinals to the Phillies. He did not wish to play in Philadelphia, and requested that he be allowed to seek employment on his own terms, i.e. he wished to become a free agent. His request denied, Flood filed suit in January 1970, seeking to eliminate the reserve clause, arguing that it was a collusive measure that reduced competition, in violation of the *Sherman Antitrust Act*. Flood lost at two lower levels before the Supreme Court agreed to hear the case in 1972. In *Flood v Kuhn*, a divided court (5-3) upheld MLB's reserve clause. In a narrow sense, the case was about the reserve clause, but in a broader ruling the court upheld MLB's blanket antitrust exemption. While a majority of the court believed the exemption was an anomaly, they nonetheless determined that any revocation should be enacted by Congress, not the courts. The case ultimately cost Flood his career. The Phillies traded him to Washington before the 1971 season, and Flood joined the team, but retired after playing only 13 games.

The NFL provides an example of what kind of competition baseball may have faced had the Supreme Court ruled differently in any one of its three baseball cases. Since 1922 the NFL has had to face off against no less than 14 competing

<sup>102</sup> Catfish Hunter was freed from his contract in December of 1974 by an arbitrator's decision, but that was because the Oakland A's had violated one of the terms of the contract, thus leading to its dissolution, making Hunter a "free" agent.

leagues.<sup>103</sup> In 1986 the United States Football League even successfully sued the NFL for monopolistic practices. Antitrust exemption for MLB has made it virtually impossible for another league to compete. There has been no serious attempt since the demise of the Federal League in 1915. But if it were revoked, we could see more expansion as a way to fend off competition.

The NFL does not have blanket antitrust exemption, but the *Sports Broadcasting Act* of 1961 gave it limited exemptions to allow sharing of TV revenue. This act also applies to other North American sports leagues. It is the only antitrust exemption other leagues enjoy.

*Other impacts of antitrust exemption*

While the reserve clause is the most famous result of MLB’s legal monopoly status, it is not the only one. Because it is exempt from antitrust laws, MLB is able to write contracts and enforce agreements that make it virtually impossible for a competitor league to exist. MLB dictates contract details at the league level for broadcasting rights, merchandise licensing, stadium use, and relations with the minor leagues. These tactics would not be possible in a competitive market.

What would happen if Congress or the Supreme Court were to strip MLB of its monopoly privilege? Some argue that revoking MLB’s antitrust exemption would prohibit it from supporting farm systems and could lead to the collapse of the minor leagues.<sup>104</sup> This seems unlikely, however. At the start of the 2022 season, there were 69 professional baseball teams in seven leagues that are not affiliated with MLB. History also suggests that farm systems, while efficient, are not necessary for the provision of future talent. Prior to the rise of the farm system, which MLB originally fought, there were hundreds of independent minor league teams that served as a training ground for future MLB talent. In December of 2020 MLB axed 42 minor league teams, reducing the number of affiliated clubs by 26% overnight. And while the long-term implications of that move are still unknown, the

<sup>103</sup> The competitors: AAFC, the APFA, the WFL, the USFL, the UFL, the Alliance of American Football, two different versions each of the XFL and arena football leagues, and three different versions of the AFL before merging with a fourth in 1966.

<sup>104</sup> Grow (2012)

immediate impact was little noticed beyond the affected communities. This diminution of the minor leagues took place despite (or because of?) MLB’s antitrust exemption.

Without antitrust exemption, MLB could not enforce geographic exclusivity for teams nor prevent them from moving without league permission. Contrast that with the NFL, which saw the Raiders move from Oakland to Los Angeles, and then back again, and successfully sue the league for attempting to stop them. And that was only the beginning of teams that unilaterally decided there were greener pastures in other cities. The same type of franchise movement has occurred in the NBA and NHL. When the Montreal Expos relocated to Washington D.C. in 2005, they became the first MLB team to move since 1972 – and they did it only with the permission of the league.



Antitrust exemptions allow sports leagues to package broadcasting rights, implement

*Al Davis had the Raiders on the move* blackouts, and share broadcast revenues in order to shore up weak (i.e. small market) teams. They write exclusive contracts with broadcasters that prohibit them from broadcasting other baseball games. This makes it more difficult for competing leagues to move into markets or secure television contracts of their own.

If MLB was not a legal monopoly, it could not impose standard pay on minor leaguers across all teams and levels, nor would the league be able to impose a limit on the number of minor league franchises with which an MLB team affiliates, or the number of players it employs. Antitrust exemption paves the way for MLB to bundle the licensing of all team memorabilia (including affiliated minor league teams) into exclusive contracts and strike leaguewide sponsorship deals. Without such protection, potential vendors would have thirty different MLB teams and hundreds of minor league teams with which to negotiate, instead of the MLB monopoly.

*Conclusion*

Exemption from antitrust laws reaches far more areas of the baseball business than just player contracts. While players have largely unfettered themselves from the reserve clause chains, MLB still profits handsomely from its status as a legal monopoly. In no small part, it helps explain why the value of its franchises collectively tops an estimated \$60 billion.<sup>105</sup> Sports leagues argue that they cannot exist without restricting competition among their members. While there is some truth to that as it pertains to the quality of on-field competition, it is also a convenient reality that being a monopolist is enormously profitable.

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### Contributors

**Rob Garratt** has been a SABR member since 2011. He previously contributed a biography of Horace Stoneham to the SABR BioProject.

*Outside the Lines* is published semi-annually, each spring and fall. Contributions should be sent to Mike Hauptert at [mhauptert@uwvlax.edu](mailto:mhauptert@uwvlax.edu).

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<sup>105</sup> Ozanian and Teitelbaum (2022)