

The INSIDE GAME



The Official Newsletter of SABR's Deadball Era Committee

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"Let's get this lumpy, licorice-stained ball rolling!"

February 2004

From the Chairman A Photo Worth 1,000 Words

BY TOM SIMON
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When you finally receive your copy of *Deadball Stars of the National League*, spend 15 minutes or so scrutinizing the panoramic photo that wraps around the cover. You can learn a lot about the Deadball Era that you won't find in any book.

The photo depicts Chicago's West Side Grounds during the game on August 30, 1908, in which the Cubs defeated the Giants, 2-1. This was the game after which I. E. Sanborn, writing in the *Chicago Tribune*, dubbed Jack Pfister "Jack the Giant Killer." See the Pfister bio on page 121 for Sanborn's full quote.

"Singularity enough, the crowd today was not nearly so large as the Thursday or Saturday gatherings," wrote William F. Kirk in the *New York American* (quoted in G. H. Fleming's *The Unforgettable Season*). "The total count today could not have been over 17,000—and on a bright Sunday afternoon. 'It was the newspapers that scared 'em away,' declared Charley Murphy. 'They had altogether too much dope this morning about the terrible crush yesterday.'"

There are a lot of reasons why graphics designer extraordinaire Glenn LeDoux and I chose this photo for the cover. First, it is a metaphor. See how the crowd in the foreground of the front cover is hunched over, staring intently at the action on the field? They are like us hovering above them, nearly a century later, anxiously diving into the contents of this book to discover their world.

Second, you will never get bored of this photo, and each time you look at it you will discover something new. Did they have foul poles in the Deadball Era? Check out the tattered American flag on the back cover and you have your answer. (You can see a newer

Photo, continued on page 3

Deadball Stars Live Again

BY JIM CHARLTON, SABR
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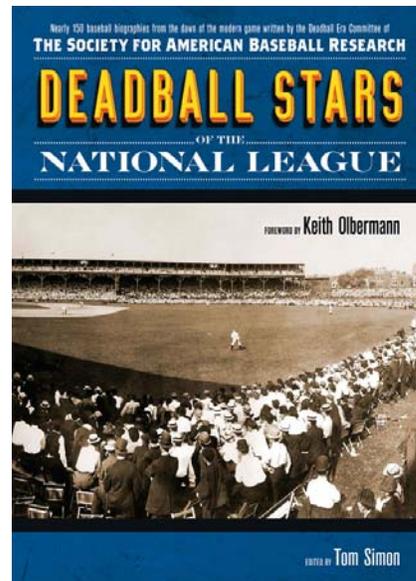
The long-awaited *Deadball Stars of the National League* is finally off press, and the end result is well worth the efforts and the wait. Even with the number of fine books that SABR has published over the years—titles such as the *Negro League Book* and the *Home Run Encyclopedia*—I truly think that this is SABR's best-looking publication ever. With hundreds of photos, some rarely if ever published, the in-depth biographies of all the Deadball era stars of the senior circuit, and reproductions of nearly every player's autograph, it is a great addition to baseball literature.

Beginning January 16, copies of the perfect-bound soft cover were shipped from Cleveland to all SABR members. Members closest to Cleveland received their copies first, but all members should have their copy within

three to four weeks. Each contributor to the book will receive two complimentary copies in addition to their member's copy. We had wanted the book shipped in calendar year 2003 but various design and printer delays and the holidays combined to make that impossible. Thank you for your patience.

The limited-edition hard cover was back from the binder on January 16th, and 500 jacketed copies will be shipped from the printer to Cleveland. All copies were in the mail to those who have previously ordered the book by January 28, which will let everyone celebrate Bill

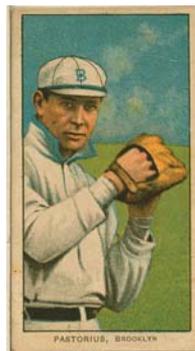
Deadball Stars, continued on page 4



What's Inside...

Page 2 An Exception to the Rule

Steve Constantelos retells, through newspaper accounts, the "greatest game ever played" in Pittsburgh on August 22, 1908, between the Pirates and the Dodgers.



Poor Pastorius ...

Plus...

Pages 3 & 4 Book Reviews

Trey Strecker covers a book of Deadball short stories and Jim Elfers examines the history of baseball in the Outback.

An Exception to the Rule

Compiled by Steve Constantelos from 8/23/08 *New York Times/Washington Post (NYT/WP)* [basically the same, with variations], *St. Louis Post-Dispatch (StL P-D)*, and 8/29/08 *Sporting Life (SL)* accounts. (sbconstant@hotmail.com)

August 22, 1908—It was hailed as “the greatest game of baseball ever played in ‘the Smokey City’ of Pittsburg. Pennant-contending Pittsburg battled the second division Brooklyn club, with recent acquisition Irv “Young Cy” Young hurling for the Pirates and Pittsburg native, Jim Pastorius twirling for the visiting Superbas. Not necessarily the stuff “greatest games” are made of.

Nor was the weather auspicious. After a heavy bout of afternoon showers, the contest started a half an hour late, at 3:30. After an uneventful first inning, the rains came again, and tarps were spread over home plate and the pitcher’s slab. They were removed after 10 minutes, only to be returned before a pitch was thrown for another 15 minutes of delay. This was not the last downpour the game would see, but was its final interruption. Nor was the first inning the final scoreless inning, in fact, 15 more would go by before one team would triumph in the seventeenth...

Hearing that pennant-rival New York had won earlier in the day, the Pirates buckled down after the delays, determined to pull this game out amid the lakes of mud and water. Sawdust was spread over some spots, but the field was still poor. Despite the precipitation, mud, and general air of gloom, no errors were committed in this game until late, when substitute Pirate leftfielder Spike Shannon bobbled a ball hit to the outfield. Throughout the contest, Brooklyn kept its line-up intact, while Pirate manager Fred Clarke substituted liberally at the left field position.

The players popped up often, and there were a number of harmless hits and excellent defensive plays. Pirate rightfielder Owen Wilson, for one, “made several circus captures.” Centerfielder Roy Thomas, recently picked up by the Pirates after being discarded by the Phillies, was the defensive star of the game: “Time and again whirlwind play of this fleet coffin salesman turned what seemed sure defeat into—well, another chance.” In the fifth, Thomas made an amazing catch, where “after catching the ball he slid for 10 feet on his stomach through the grass” (*StL P-D*). (*The Washington Post* claims

“at least 25 feet,” while the *New York Times* judiciously says, “many feet”). Who hit the ball is not clear, as the *NYT/WP* account claims it was pitcher Pastorius while the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* says it was Tommy McMillan. The *NYT/WP* account says that Pastorius was robbed with men on second and third, two outs, but the order of the baserunners (McMillan on third, Tommy Sheehan on second) is not possible, according to the boxscore. The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* account has Sheehan on first with two outs with McMillan flying out to the sprinting, diving Thomas. In the thirteenth, Thomas also nailed Pastorius at the plate with a “lightning long throw” from center after Hummel hit the ball a country mile, inspiring the surely desperate pitcher Pastorius to risk scoring from second.

Both pitchers had pitched “gilt-edged” ball all afternoon, but with two outs, and Owen Wilson and George Gibson disposed of, pitcher Young rapped a single over second base in the seventeenth inning. Thomas next singled to right, and Young advanced to third (The *NYT/WP* has him “stumbling uncertainly to second” and only advancing to third with Tommy Leach’s at bat). Next came an intentional walk to Leach. Moeller then came to the plate and promptly hit a Texas leaguer (*StL P-D*, *SL*) (or “little slow bounder,” according to the *NYT/WP*) over second base.

The *NYT/WP*: On Moeller’s hit, “Young lurched toward the home plate, paced by the frantic [base coach] Clarke, who swore, prayed, implored, and wept, step by step. True and fast came the life throw of [Harry] Pattee from deep second to the plate, but under the outstretched arm of [Lew] Ritter at the plate there stumbled a little bunch of soiled white with the run that told the score:” 1-0. The *Washington Post* adds, “It was the gladiator Young who won his own game in the seventeenth inning. Half lifeless he stumbled over the glad gum with the one lone tally after a fearful run from third on the short single of substitute outfielder Dan Moeller, and the greatest of all games was over.” And the *Sporting Life*: Young “just managed to score by a desperate slide.”

Local boy Jim Pastorius had pitched the whole sad, exciting game for the visiting Brooklyn. The experience only added insult to his dismal 4-20 year—a cruel fate for a pitcher with only a slightly below average 2.44 ERA. The Dodgers would finish in their usual 7th place, while Young went 4-3 for his new club, which finished tied for second with the Giants, one game behind the Chicago Cubs, who overtook the two June leaders with well-known late season heroics (and controversy).

The contest nearly tied the NL record for length of a 1-0 game. Chicago and Boston had also played a seventeen-inning game in 1901 (in which Chicago’s Long Tom Hughes beat Boston’s Big Bill Dinneen). NL entries Providence and Detroit played an eighteen-inning game on August 17, 1882 (Providence’s Montgomery Ward defeating Detroit), to establish the record length of a 1-0 contest, held until 1967. Incidentally, Charley Radbourn, Ward’s fellow Providence pitcher, played right field that day, and won the game with a home run.

Back to the sopping wet Pittsburg field, in the waning afternoon of August 22, 1908: “When [Pastorius] was defeated the small crowd of 3,767 rose and cheered him to the echo as he was led blindly from the field, sobbing like a child” (*NYT/WP*). A justified case of crying in baseball if ever there was one.

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Silverman, Jeff, ed. *Classic Baseball Stories: Twenty-Two Legendary Stories from the Diamond*. Guilford, CT: Lyons Press, 2003. 290 pp. \$9.95, paper.

REVIEWED BY TREY STRECKER
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Jeff Silverman, the prolific editor of *Lardner on Baseball*, *The Greatest Baseball Stories Ever Told*, *The Greatest Boxing Stories Ever Told*, *The Greatest Golf Stories Ever Told*, and *Classic Golf Stories*, has now compiled *Classic Baseball Stories*. This pocket-sized volume collects twenty-two pieces of classic baseball writing in various genres, including fiction, history, reportage, and poetry. In these selections, “the fictions and the facts” represent the complexities of both “human nature and baseball nature.”

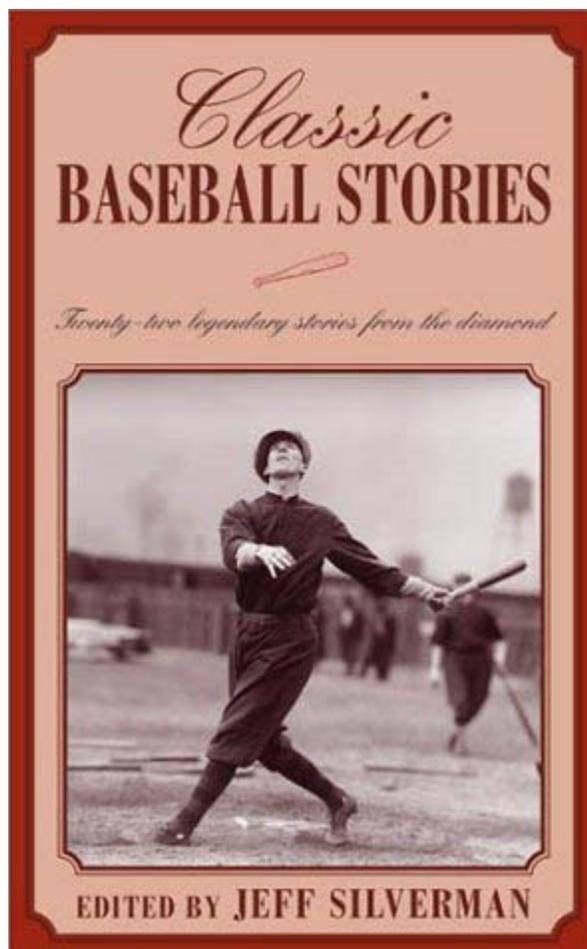
These texts, Silverman observes, “have legs—like Cobb and Brock and Rickey Henderson; personality—like Ruth and Stengel; power—like Big Mac and the Big Train; craft—like Koufax and Mathewson; grace—like DiMaggio and Williams; courage—like Robinson and Aaron; durability—like Ripken and Ryan; and character—like Clemente and Gehrig.” The fiction offers a reliable lineup of baseball standards: Zane Grey to Burt Standish to Ring Lardner. Lester Chadwick, P.G. Wodehouse, Gerald Beaumont, Finley Peter Dunne, and Charles Van Loan all take their cuts. The history consists of familiar (i.e., classic) excerpts from Henry Chadwick’s *Ball Player’s Chronicle*, Sol White’s *History of Colored Base Ball*, Candy Cummings’ “How I Pitched the First Curve,” Albert Spalding’s *America’s National Game*, and Alfred H. Spink’s *The National Game*. The book’s prose pieces are rounded out by the stellar baseball journalism of Damon Runyon (on Babe Ruth), Hugh S. Fullerton (on the Black Sox), and Ralph D. Blanpied (on Joe Oeschger and Loen Cadore’s 24-inning duel in 1916), as well as ghostwritten articles by Christy Mathewson and Grover Cleveland Alexander. And batting clean-up is the might Casey—a perennial favorite. Silverman also reprints two Grantland Rice poems, “Casey’s Revenge” and “The Slide of Paul Revere.” While these poems are undoubtedly “classic,” I am a little troubled that these three safe selections are the only poems included here.

For me, the indisputable highlight of the anthology is the hilarious description of a most unorthodox baseball league. In “A Whale of a Pastime,” General Frederick Funston recounts the 1893 battle for the Herschel Island League’s

Artic Whalemen’s Pennant, when the crews from several stranded whaling ships played a season on the packed Artic ice. According to Funston’s account, written regulations mandating that every game be played at its scheduled time regardless of weather conditions forced one game to be played when the temperature was 47 degrees below zero, and “during blizzards the air was so full of flying snow that the outfielders could not be seen from the home-plate.”

Baseball’s Classic Stories presents these twenty-two gems of the diamond with minimal commentary. Although the stories, which appear in no particular order, date from 1867 to 1921, Silverman’s disappointing introduction displays little awareness of baseball history from the 19th century or the Deadball Era. More than half of the baseball names dropped in the introduction’s five scant pages are from modern times, and the most substantive comments about the game and its history appear on the book’s jacket. The jacket blurb—copy I realize may have been written by the publisher rather than the editor—invokes the well-worn nostalgia for baseball’s pure and innocent past, “before multimillion-dollar salaries, luxury boxes, and player strikes,” and ignores the more complex reality of early baseball’s turbulent history.

The literature itself, however, is first-rate. And since most of these classics are likely to be familiar friends for SABR members and other baseball readers, *Classic Baseball Stories* should provide a worthwhile literary companion for nights by the hot stove or afternoons on the bleacher boards.



Photo, continued from page 1

version of that same flag, incidentally, in the photo on page 90, taken two years earlier.)

Did you know that someone had attached lettering to a wire fence above the grandstand at West Side Grounds to read CHICAGO NATIONAL LEAGUE BASEBALL CLUB? But keep reading. See the remnants of a couple more words? Glenn figured them out: FOUNDED 1876. I’ll be interested to learn what discoveries you make.

“After the game a cushion battle between 3,000 in the stands and 5,000 in the field raged for 15 minutes, during which many women were injured and their hats demolished,” noted the *New York World*, taking a jibe at the rowdies of its rival city. “The police were powerless. In this way the crowd expressed its joy over the victory.”

Even if you’re a Giants fan, don’t you wish you could have been there?

***A History of Australian Baseball: Time and Game*, by Joe Clark. Foreword by Ken Gulliver, preface by Don Knapp, published in November 2003 by the University of Nebraska Press. A Bison original, paper 179 pages. ISBN 0-8032-6440 price \$29.95**

**REVIEWED BY JAMES E. ELFERS
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Concise, compact and comprehensive, *A History of Australian Baseball: Time and Game* tells the story of the sport in the antipodes from its beginnings in the middle of the Nineteenth Century to the present. Baseball has a surprisingly long and storied history "Down Under," and Joe Clark covers it all.

Australian baseball's origins are shrouded in myth. Most sources claim that expatriate American gold miners introduced the game in 1857. While games at the mines may have occurred, the earliest documented games were played at Melbourne in 1853 at the behest of an American merchant seaman named Samuel Perkins Lord. Although Lord was ultimately unsuccessful in introducing the game, American expatriates gradually garnered a following for the sport. By 1900 it had become the winter-time recreation of choice for Australia's cricket players.

Baseball in Australia is tied intimately to cricket. Most Australian cricketers try their hand at baseball and vice versa. Historically, baseball was the "ugly sister" of antipodal sport, suffering from lacks in equipment, personnel, and venues. Until fairly recently, its best athletes were lost to cricket or Australian Rules Football. Nonetheless, it has always maintained a following, even during wartime. Clark relates that during a lull in the Battle of the Somme, American doughboys and members of an Australian regiment played five games against each other.

Clark's bare bones and brisk approach lends itself to fast reading but also, on occasion, makes the reader wish for more. Case in point, the story of the "The Disaster Tour of 1897." (p.24) In 1897 a team of Australians toured the United States playing base-

ball, replete with bad weather, player injuries, and agents absconding with cash deserve. This deserves a book of its own, or a least a longer chapter.

Another weakness is Clark's own failure to hit the ball out of the park. He points out "American baseball historians writing about Australian baseball would do well to actually examine *Australian* sources too." (p.46) He rightly takes to task Ken Burns and Charles Alexander for cavalierly dismissing the Australian phase of the Giants-White Sox tour of 1914; both ignored tons of Australian press clippings. Yet Clark himself, in discussing the tour's impact, quotes nary a word from the Australian press.

Unfortunately for Deadball fans, the bulk of Clark's book is set in the 1980's-1990's and concerns itself with the birth, death, and political machinations behind the Australian Baseball League, an attempt to establish professional baseball as an independent spectator sport in Australia. Despite the presence of Dave Nilsson and scads of American cash, the league was doomed almost from the moment of its inception. As tragic as the tale is, American readers are not likely to find the backroom

deals, nasty schisms, and general mendacity of great interest.

Despite its flaws, *A History of Australian Baseball: Time and Game* is the first and likely only comprehensive history of "that yank game" in Australia, and as such, deserves to find an audience.

Deadball Stars, continued from page 1

Doak's birthday in style. I am sure when readers sees what a magnificent edition it is, and what a value it is at \$35, that there will be a rush to purchase the several hundred remaining copies. When the supply of hard covers is exhausted, that is it (unlike the paperback edition, which could well see a second or even third printing at some point).

Deadball Stars of the National League is the first SABR title that has not been made available to book stores, wholesalers and libraries through our usual distributor, the University of Nebraska Press. Instead, Brassey's Inc, a reputable mid-sized trade house in Virginia, is the publisher. Their edition will be available in stores in February at \$24.95; it is the same edition as SABR's soft cover. Brassey's is very excited about *Deadball Stars*; they have publicity plans in the works, they have orders in-house from Barnes & Noble, Borders, Baker & Taylor, and other large accounts. Salesmen will call on independent stores this month. And finally, there is interest from the History Book Club.

I think everyone on the Deadball Era Committee and everyone involved with the making of this book should be very pleased, especially the estimable editor Tom Simon. A tip of the cap to Tom.

