



## SCOUTING

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# SABR Scout Committee Newsletter

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## AN INTRODUCTION

Greetings!! My name is Bill Clark. I'm the international scouting director for the San Diego Padres - and the new chairman of SABR's scouting committee. I've been a scouting supervisor at the major league level for 33 seasons, working in the upper Midwest for 25 years, prior to becoming and international guy. I was with Cincinnati for 18 years, Atlanta for 11, and worked for the only bankrupt team in baseball history - the Seattle Pilots. Beginning with my days as a Legion player (1947-49), I've been involved in baseball for more than a third of the entire history of the game.

I played against Mickey Mantle in his last Legion game (1948), was the youngest graduate ever (at age 17) of George Barr's Umpire School, hold a degree in journalism from the University of Missouri, have been a sports-writer during the off-season for many years, currently write a monthly column for International Baseball Rundown and a quarterly column for The Scouts Newsletter. I'm a member of the St. Louis Scouts' Hall of Fame.

I'm a Korean War veteran, a Unitarian, a bird-watcher and amateur botanist whose main hobby is wildflower photography. I've been married to Dolores for 45 years and we have five grown children. I'm 68 years young.

I'm still an active master weightlifter and serve the U.S. All-round Weightlifting Ass'n as national secretary. I hold more than 100 lifting records for lifters 55-over and am in seven National and International Lifting Halls of Fame. I have published a lifting newsletter continuously for 41 years.

I started as a bird dog with the Atlanta Braves in 1956 and alternated scouting and umpiring in the Central Mexican, Nebraska State, and Pioneer Leagues until my family got too big and my salary too small. I became a part-time scout with Pittsburgh in 1965 and a full-timer with the Pirates in 1968. Hopefully, this brings some credibility to my new role as the chairman of this committee. I'm not so much a trained historian as a part of the history we hope to read.

I have no computer, nor do I plan to ever own one. I use a typewriter which often does not spell properly and never corrects itself. So be prepared for that. I also write many letters in long-hand scribble.

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### THE NEWSLETTER

I plan to make this newsletter available six times a year. That schedule depends on the amount of action we can generate. It will be published as my schedule allows. I'm still on the road year-round for the Padres for at least another year...so I'll be in touch between trips.

### THE COMMITTEE'S DIRECTION

SABR means research...and that's our goal...research. How we accomplish that research and what happens to it is the meat of the committee.

First - our committee immediately becomes a part of a triple effort to put together a Scouts' Section in the Baseball Hall of Fame. The Scout of the Year Foundation is devoted to underwriting the section, gathering data on living scouts, and honoring three of those scouts each year at the annual major league meetings. Ted Spencer and the staff at Cooperstown is set to assemble, file, and make available all the data concerning scouts from 1845 forward.

Spencer has been working with various major league organizations to gather data on scouts, but neither party has the time to make that research a top priority.

Thus - our committee. Remember - SABR means research!

We can become the foundation for the Scouts Section in the Hall of Fame and members can unearth a treasure house of stories about the scouts who have built baseball into the game it is today. We have the dual goals of establishing a solid data base and telling the world all the tales which scouts tell and retell.

### OUR PLAN OF ATTACK

Generally speaking, your chairman has divided his thinking into three scouting eras. First, the century from Elysian Fields to World War II. Second, the two decades from WW II to the draft, which began in 1965.

Prior to World War II, scouting was a very inexact profession. Who knows what records exist, if any. Most scouting notes may be buried in the attics of the descendants of the scouts who operated in the slow-paced, hit-and-miss time when baseball was a game, not a business. It is here that we have our greatest challenge.

The 20 years between the war and the origin of the draft was a period when baseball developed true professional scouts in a structured scouting scenario. It is an extremely important period.

Finally, when the draft began, personal achievement as a scout was judged more by the order of your draft list than by the players a scout signed...because the scout had almost no control over the selection list. Live in a sparse area and you never got a high draft if your club was a regular finisher in the top half of the standings. This period also saw the rise of the great scouts who covered the major leagues and made their names by engineering major trades.

So - as we work, we must consider scouts from each of these three periods.

### THE STRUCTURE

This newsletter is going to active and retired scouts that I personally know have a feeling for the history of the game; to those I know who have a love from the history of baseball and a knack for getting to the bottom of things; to those who work in baseball's offices as general managers, scouting directors, public relations folks and are willing to help sift thru the files of your particular organization; former members of the committee who are still interested.

The perfect scenario would be to have one person willing to work directly with each of the 30 major league organizations. That may be a scout or an administrator with a particular club - or a newspaper man who has covered a club for years and knows the legends and sagas passed from scout to scout in that organization.

It will be much easier to move forward if we have someone responsible for each organization. Let's see what we can produce in the weeks to come.

### THE STARS

One of the first projects will be to research each of the 250-plus members of the Hall of Fame and see who, if any, scouted those players and brought them into the game.

Second, our next project will be to work on the All-Star list beginning with the first game in 1933.

### THE ROSTERS

Not players' rosters, but scouting rosters. As we work with each club, we need to compile a roster of that club's scouts by year - as far back into the past as we can.

### PRESS GUIDES

They'll help with the post-WWII era and many will tell you who signed a particular player. But they often are only politically correct, awarding a high profile scout when someone else found the player and did all the ground work. Finding the true sleuth may be an intriguing trip.

### AN INEXACT SCIENCE

Those of us in the scouting business have known for a long time that scouting is hardly the science of hitting, fielding, pitching. It is instinctive - even though today's scouts use stop watches, radar guns, motivational tests, computers, etc.. It is using friendships and processing tidbits of information. Take Andruw Jones as an example. A local coach in Curacao told the Braves' part-time scout there about Jones. The part-timer brought Andruw to a workout with the international scout. In time, Jones worked out for the assistant to the general manager and wasn't signed until he was eligible age-wise at a Curacao night in Fulton County Stadium in Atlanta...eight months after the now-forgotten coach's recommendation. To whom do you credit the signing of Andruw Jones? To the part-timer? To the international director? To the special assistant? All were vital in signing Andruw Jones. So - welcome to our inexact science.

WHAT NEXT??

Between now and Jan. 1, we'll be in the building mode. I would like to hear from each of you personally about what you can do and will be willing to do regarding our restructured committee.

Consider these:

1 - Do we have a chance for a website?

2 - Do we develop an e-mail address book?

3 - If so, regarding the two items above, SABR can handle the costs. What we need is someone to develop the web site.

4 - How do we handle data? Remember, Ol' Clark works with paper (and that includes a fax), but data must be stored in two places - paper with Clark and in someone else's computer system. I assume this person will be the heart of our committee. I can handle paper by the truck loads via fax, but that's it.

5 - The electronic/digital world belongs to the rest of you. Just keep me posted on what the hell is going on.

6 - Your ideas. Projects you'd like to undertake - now or in the near future. If you are friends with any organization and are ready to make contact, get it on.

7 - My fax number is 573-474-1449. It is a straight fax, not hooked up to a personal phone nor to a computer. It serves only as a fax - so if you use it and it is busy, it shouldn't be busy long. It is used to stay in touch with some 50 nations around the world...as well as the weight-lifting world. Fax is the preferred method of communication.

8 - My home phone is 573-474-4510. My wife is at home most of every day and there's an answering machine in case she isn't. The recorder is for a brief, 30-second period - so simply leave your phone and who you are (and the fact that this is a SABR call). I'll get back to you.

9 - I have no mobil phone...nor do I plan to get one. (I also don't do coffee, mayonnaise, garlic, onions, mushrooms, ketch-up, salt, sugar, soft drinks, brain sandwiches, movies, sit-coms, and game shows.)

10 - Snail mail works. My address:

Bill Clark  
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IN CLOSING

We'll have at least one more newsletter this year - possibly two - if we have enough response to this message. Hey - this project should be great fun and hugely beneficial to the history of our great game.

One final note - if you talk with my wife, identify yourself and let her know you're with SABR. Otherwise, the phone may go "click."